Unlike the realistic, down-to-earth darkness of The Fixer, Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition (1969), is an extravaganza, blending surrealistic wit with dream fantasy and parody. After the sombre portrait of the fixer, the pictures are as exuberant as anything Malamud has written.

Pictures of Fidelman is an episodic novel made up of six stories written by Malamud over a period of twelve years ... each story is a picture and the six pictures together comprise an exhibition. All the stories deal with the misadventures of Fidelman who comes to Europe in quest of his vocation and in search of love and each successive story grows in beauty and dimension as Fidelman progressively "grows" in his awareness of life and art. Malamud's goal in these stories, he has said, is to have his comic hero "find himself both in art and self knowledge." Fidelman, the "faithful," does so, but he also discovers that both art and self are quite different from what he thought them to be. As is always in Malamud's fiction, Fidelman has to move towards salvation through various archetypal ordeals and humiliations. Once again the thematic core is "the search for romance, in life and in the stores of European art, and the discovery of reality of the quester's own
true nature and condition...."² The exhibition is of a "panel of pictures reminiscent of Hogarth" which sets forth Fidelman's progress "down and out to salvation."³

In the first story "Last Mohican," having failed as a painter, Fidelman like Frank Alpine decides to change his life, however confused his beginnings. Like Levin who goes west in quest of a new life and Yakov Bok who leaves the shtetl to acquaint himself with a bit of the world, he turns to art history and comes to Italy to write a critical study of Giotto. Fidelman's search for a meaningful life is symbolized in the oft-used journey motif; both literally and figuratively, the journey will continue from story to story till Fidelman learns to accept life in totality. He is full of aspirations and eager to begin some form of new life. But being a quint-essential Malamud hero, he seeks something for himself ("where's mine?") and is yet excessively protective of his own interests, but it is not long before he finds that he like all Malamud's heroes, is caught in "a compromised environment which offers a wide variety of frustrations to their particular aspirations ... and one of the effects of their sufferings in the compromised environment is to then redefine the form and content of that notional new life."⁴

Fidelman, the irrepressible Malamud schlemiel, attracts trouble right upon his arrival in the form of Shimon Susskind, a schnorrer (artful beggar), who starts right away to pester
him for charity. Not satisfied with the couple of notes the pedantic art critic reluctantly gives him, Susskind brazenly demands a suit. Fidelman, however, repudiates any demands made on him. He reorganizes his routine to avoid Susskind and devotes himself solely to the study of Giotto. Unconscious of his own ancient heritage he marvels and gushes over all the Roman history around him in Italy. "It was an inspiring business, he, Arthur Fidelman, after all, born a Bronx boy, walking around in all this history." And amidst such history this modern Wandering Jew seeks a new understanding of himself and a better fate.

Fidelman's flaw, as was Freeman's flaw in "The Lady of the Lake," is his effort to create for himself an identity by repudiating his past — his Jewishness and its history of suffering and need for mutual responsibility. Fidelman's failure to give his suit to Susskind is "the first of many incidents in which he fails to make the appropriate adjustments and adjudication between the claims of art and the needs of life." Fidelman's indifference to the wants of Susskind, shows that he has not understood the lesson in charity taught by Giotto's Saint Francis who gives his golden robe to a poor old knight; he fails as an art critic. This example is also the first of the many suggesting the interdependence of the two perfections, of life and of art.
Fidelman as yet has no faith in anything beyond the urgencies of the hungers of the self. But, in Malamud's world a real new life involves a radical change of attitude towards the self and others. "The search for a new freedom usually ends in an imprisoning tangle of relationships and commitments and responsibilities. The attempt to deny time and evade the impingements of history yields reluctantly and painfully to the discovery that ... to be born is to be born into history." However, we also know that "Malamud's uprooted protagonists continually seek forgetfulness through cultural metamorphosis." What Fidelman has to learn is that he cannot escape the schnorrer's demand for charity without diminishing his own humanity. Being Jewish makes him, out of historical necessity, responsible for his fellow Jews. Fidelman has rejected his Jewish history in favour of Roman history. However, to deny one's history is to deny one's capacity for growth, to deny one's past is to deny oneself a good future (and Fidelman's past is Jewish). But, as other Malamud characters had done, so will Fidelman, through his irresponsibility, initiate the painful process that will lead him to self-discovery, unselfish love and responsibility towards others.

It is Simon Susskind, the title character of the story, "the last honest man, honest to art and to conscience" and also mysterious refugee from Germany, Hungry, Poland, even from Israel, a Wandering Jew of desperate needs, who acts as the catalytic
character to bring Fidelman to realize his responsibility to fellowmen and also to himself. Susskind is really Fidelman's Double, creating a universal fable of human ambiguities: "who is his brother's keeper and why?" As Kirkby Albee of The Victim had said to Asa Leventhal, "Know thyself! Everybody knows but nobody wants to admit," the impecunious Jew Susskind will badger Fidelman with reminders of his responsibility on grounds of shared fate. Fidelman must give up his suit because Susskind and he share a common heritage.

In spite of Fidelman's best efforts to avoid him, Susskind follows him like the shadow of the history Fidelman has forgotten, making claims that both recognize — the claim that every Jew has on every other Jew as we saw in Philip Roth's short stories, "Defender of the Faith" and "Eli, the Fanatic." To Fidelman's despairing cry "Am I responsible for you...?" comes the pat answer "who else? ... Then you are responsible. Because you are a man. Because you are a Jew, aren't you?" (p.19). Nonetheless, Susskind does not succeed in getting Fidelman to give wholeheartedly and so he steals Fidelman's attache case containing the first chapter of his projected book on Giotto. Now with a curious reversal of roles the pursuer becomes the pursued. A harried Fidelman seeks the elusive Susskind and the search takes him through the Jewish ghetto, into synagogues and across a cemetery with headstones commemorating the deaths of Jews killed by Nazis. He is exposed to misery in a form and
degree unknown to him before. Slowly he learns. According to Mark Goldman, Fidelman, in his pursuit of Susskind, is seeking the "real missing chapter of his own past self." Fidelman's pursuit of Susskind reminds one of the comic flight of Invisible Man before the advance of Ras, the exhorter. "Although one is pursued and the other pursues, both discover themselves in relationship to the pursuer and the pursued. Their moment of self-realization is accompanied by a decision to stop running from others and from themselves." The search for Susskind has resulted in Fidelman an apparent change in attitude towards "the historical catalogue of human suffering" and at last he understands his responsibility towards Susskind as representing suffering mankind. In the suffering of Susskind, Fidelman finally comes to see "the root of all suffering, including his own perhaps ... and before the story ends, Fidelman the Esthete, through understanding if not through love, becomes Fidelman the compassionate, and Susskind the schnorrer becomes through Fidelman's vision. Susskind the schnorrer becomes through Fidelman's vision, Susskind the hunted, Susskind the outraged human being." Susskind becomes the measure of his humanity. If Fidelman fails as a human being, he can succeed neither as painter nor as critic. His obsession to recover the lost manuscript had made him oblivious of the meaning of all the scenes of Nazi atrocities but in his last dream Susskind as the Virgilian guide leads Fidelman to self-discovery and redemption. In the dream Susskind asks, "Why is art?" giving a
Yiddish twist to Tolstoy's title "what is art?" of an essay in which Tolstoy remarks, "There is one indubitable indication distinguishing real art from its counterfeit — namely, the infectiousness of art. If a man experiences a mental condition which unites him with that man and with other people who also partake of that work of art...." Fidelman as an arid art critic had not understood art and its relation to life. Now he realizes that he had missed the meaning of Giotto himself. He thinks of Giotto's painting of St. Francis giving his clothes to a poor man and immediately stuffs the suit he had so consistently denied Susskind, into a bag and runs out to find Susskind. This is undoubtedly his first step to self improvement but Fidelman has yet to grasp the full relationship between life and art. When he discovers Susskind, Fidelman also discovers that Susskind has destroyed his manuscript: "I did you a favour ... The words were there but the spirit was missing" (p.32). In rage, Fidelman once again chases the flying Susskind but stops suddenly, struck by a moment of true self-recognition, "moved by all he had lately learned, had triumphant insight" (p.33). This "acceptance of failure is the crucial moment of initiation, as when Yakov Bok accepts his imprisonment, or when Frank Alpine accepts himself as Jew. Now, reconciled to failure, Fidelman can proceed to live out his comic humanity." Moreover, as Ruth R. Wisse goes on to say, the character courageous enough to accept his ignominy without being crushed by it is the true hero of Malamud's opus. ..." Fidelman's insight was apparently concerned with the
realization that being an art critic was a wrong choice of profession and also possibly with the realization of some responsibility for Susskind.

However, the adventures that follow in the following stories show that the only insight that Fidelman has, after his experiences with Susskind, has more to do with art than with life; all that he seems to have grasped is that he should give up art history. This is not what Susskind had meant to teach him when he had destroyed Fidelman's chapter of a critical work on Giotto. The lesson that Fidelman was supposed to learn was that, "art and morals are, with certain provisos ... one. Their essence is the same. The essence of both of them is love. ... Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real...." Only love can free art or the self and as we will see it takes years of failure in both art and life before Fidelman learns to love and care for another so as to find fulfilment in himself.

In the second story "Still Life" Fidelman is back to his previously abandoned attempt to be a painter. He rents a part of a woman artist's studio to pursue his art and the story traces his progress as painter and lover. Being a schlemiel, Fidelman has a penchant for lucklessness and so initially he fails in both his artistic pursuits and in winning his landlady's heart. Moreover, his potential for becoming a schlemiel, his vulnerability and his ineffectuality show Fidelman to be an archetypal
Jew. Fidelman, "ever a sucker" (p.3+), strangely lusts for the cold, business-minded pittrice and pays for the privilege of loving her, like Gimple the fool, by being a slave to her: "carrying down four flights of stairs her two bags of garbage... sweeping the studio clean each morning, even running to retrieve a brush or paint tube when she happened to drop one — offering any service any time, you name it. She accepted these small favours without giving them notice" (pp.35-37). Through Fidelman's situation Malamud "challenges the last remnant of the hero-myth in Western culture, the myth of the artist as the final embodiment of that noble quest for purity and truth." Fidelman is quite like Prufrock in his inability to make any progress with his lady love. Moreover, his tragedy like Roy Hobbs' is that though he is capable of love he tends to bestow it on unworthy women.

Malamud's heroes, as we saw in the case of Roy Hobbs and S. Levin, are always desiring the wrong woman and for their misplaced desires pay heavily both in emotional and moral fee. Fidelman's love for the pittrice is selfish and what we already know from all the works of Malamud, is that his Jewish hero may not have casual affairs with women for that leads to endless complications.

But Fidelman's involvements is not the real subject of the story; it only shapes the plot. The question posed repeatedly
in the stories is: What is art? What is the relationship between art and life? These are the issues that are raised here. In "Still Life" Fidelman's love is selfish and lustful, therefore it blocks his artistic energy, "The insults and confessions of life" paralyse his artistic capacities. "Fidelman's work, despite the effort and despair he gave it, was going poorly" (p.39). Moreover, his background as art critic hampers him, "Sometimes I'd like to forget every picture I've seen, Fidelman thought. Almost in panic he sketched in charcoal, a coat-tailed 'Figure of a Jew Fleeing' and quickly hid it away" (p.39). Susskind is his double, his moral self whom Fidelman is reluctant to acknowledge. Once again in "The Naked Nude" Susskind is briefly glimpsed as a long-coated figure loosely dangling from a gallow rope — symbolizing Fidelman's attempts to smother his moral self. His fear of painting Susskind drives Fidelman to paint abstracts until he arrives at a blank canvas.

Unable to work he suffers much, and in quest for a meaningful life he wanders the streets of Rome, seeing the city, spires, cupolas, towers, monuments, compounded history and past time, but its spirit eludes him. Then, suddenly he was "struck by a thought: if you could paint this sight, give it its quality in yours, the spirit belonged to you. History becomes aesthetic!" (p.43). It is a labour of love therefore he succeeds in catching the immediate likeness of Annamaria in paint, and because art, love and life are inextricably woven
together, Fidelman inadvertently penetrates the secret of Annamaria's soul; she had borne a child, incestuously conceived, whom she has murdered (thereby the irony of the title "Still Life").

But it is only when Fidelman (a Jew) dresses himself as a (false) priest to paint another Rembrandt: "Portrait of the Artist as Priest" does Annamaria unburden her guilt-ridden soul. Once again Malamud has deployed the traditional archetype, the Madonna and Child, to help unfold the story. Fidelman becomes Annamaria's confessor and in the final comic tableau Fidelman, partly dressed as priest, gives absolution, penance and expiation through sexual love.

In the 3rd story "The Naked Nude" Fidelman finds himself in bondage to two Milan crooks who save him from being arrested by the police for pick-pocketing. The condition for freedom that they offer is that Fidelman reproduce the Titan painting of Venus of Urbino and help them steal the original from a nearby museum, for which they will substitute the copy. Fidelman hesitates to steal from another painter but his captors assure him that it is the way of life,"Art steals and so does everybody.... It's the way of the world. We're only human" (p.58). Aware that only compliance will get him his freedom, Fidelman agrees. However, in spite of his innumerable attempts at reproducing Venus, "things go badly for the copyist" (p.51). He puts over photographic
reproductions, studies Greek statuary and modern painting but the Venus eludes him. It is only when he paints "The Naked Nude" with love and as though he were painting an original that his creative block ends and the painting is a success. "Fidelman paints in all the totality of his lustful humanity. ("The Venus of Urbino, c'est moi," another Flaubert!) Indeed, the painting is representative of his spirit, which heroically survives the brutal oppression of the two gangsters...."20 Like Mitka in his writing, Fidelman can only paint a realistic picture of a woman when love inspires him.

In the last scene, during the exchange of the Titan with Fidelman's picture, he manages to bungle things up, steal his own picture and flee to freedom, "For by choosing his own creation he has chosen himself."21

The fact that Fidelman does not help to steal the Titan and thereby earn the monetary award offered by the crooks, shows his growing integrity. But that his spiritual progress is still incomplete is felt when we see Fidelman's proud obeisance of his painting. One realizes that perhaps his desire to steal his own work was motivated by self love as much as by any other; and what Fidelman must learn is selflessness such as Frank Alpine, S. Levin and Yakov Bok learnt before him.

It was five years after "Naked Nude" that Malamud took up Fidelman's story again in "A Pimp's Revenge." Once again
we find Fidelman trying to work out the relationship between art and life — a recurrent theme in *Pictures of Fidelman*. Each story focuses on this relationship so that Fidelman's failure as an artist is inextricably linked with his failure as a person. For Malamud the postulates of art and life are identical. The imperatives of art, as of life must not merely deal with aesthetics but with moral purposes as well. Art "tends toward morality" says Malamud, "It values life. Even when it doesn't it tends to.... Art in essence celebrates life and gives us our measure." This is the message of *Pictures of Fidelman* and this is the lesson that Susskind had tried to inculcate in Fidelman.

In "A Pimp's Revenge," Fidelman struggles to both paint his masterpiece "Mother and Son" and work out his relationship with a young prostitute, Esmeralda. He makes increasingly desperate (and futile) attempts to become an artist. Bemoaning his lack of success Fidelman blames circumstances — everything's been done or is otherwise out of style, though in moments of truth he admits, "I am afraid to paint, like I might find out something about myself" (p.83). He tells Esmeralda of his desperate need to paint a master-piece so that "much that was wrong in my life would rearrange itself and add up to more," for that way he says: "I could forgive myself for past errors" (p.87). For Malamud, art redeems life. Fidelman's inability to paint is the sign of the self's imprisonment as was Mitka's in his efforts to write.
Besides, his five-years long desperate efforts at painting one picture, Fidelman makes desperate efforts to make both ends meet in life. So that his self-indulgent efforts at painting will not be distracted by the petty concerns of everyday life, he takes advantage of the generosity of Esmeralda and begins pandering — "living off the proceeds of a girl's body" (p.79). By taking over Ludovico's profession and thereby his livelihood, Fidelman provokes Ludovico to tell him: "The basis of morality is recognizing one another's needs and co-operating" (p.31). This is a lesson of life Fidelman has still to learn, so preoccupied he is with his unprogressing career as an artist. The various encounters with life have not taught him anything either about art or life. Simultaneously, Fidelman fails in life, for he fails in love.

It is only when Esmeralda burns the problem photo does Fidelman begin to work out the relationship between his art and life. He paints with a new confidence, amusement and wonder. The subject of his painting-in-process changes almost imperceptibly from "Mother and Son" to "Brother and Sister," "to let's face it, 'Prostitute and Procurer'.... And though he considered sandpapering his own face off and substituting Ludovico as Pimp, the magnificent thing was that in the end he kept himself in. This is my most honest piece of work" (p.100). But "if the artist has again grown in self-realization, however, the man cannot live with his discovery."²³ Fidelman succumbs to the jealous Ludovico's
subtly-critical praise and in an effort to make the portrait of the artist as pimp truer to life, ruins it in an act of his own "self-abused spirit."

The fifth chapter, fittingly titled "Pictures of the Artist" is a mosaic of three pictures. The central theme of each again, is the relationship of art to life, and once again Fidelman refuses to choose between the two perfections. To W.B. Yeats' 

The intellect of man is forced to choose perfection of the life, or of the work....

Fidelman has constantly said "Both." His idealistic pursuit of the perfection of both art and life and the mode of realizing this ideal is the particular concern of the novel.

Now, in a frantic effort at originality, Fidelman progresses from being the artist as panderer to artist as huckster, peddling spontaneously placed holes in the ground which when seen together, constitute a sculpture. The holes symbolize the death of his artistic expression and therefore his failure as an artist.

When asked to explain his art, Fidelman proudly puts forward a theoretical claptrap about form being the content of art. Fidelman's listener, a poor young man, spends his last ten lires to see the exhibition, "hoping to be edified and
benefited" (p.108), but is left dissatisfied by the explanation offered. He begs for his money back to buy bread for his hungry babes, explaining: "Holes are of no use to me, my life being full of them" (p.108), only to be sent packing by Fidelman and so driven to suicide. Fidelman's art, holes in the ground, is meaningless and in life he fails to recognize his responsibility towards his brother.

The youth returns not long afterwards in the guise of a mysterious and threatening stranger and takes up the issue of form and content again, "To me..., is a hole nothing," and to prove his point he throws an apple core in a hole, explaining, "If not for this would be empty the hole. If empty would be there nothing" (p.110). Fidelman differs: "Form may be and often is the content of Art" (p.110). That Malamud thinks otherwise we know: after Dachau and Moscow trials, after Pearl Harbour, Hiroshima, Korea, Dallas and Vietnam, "who runs from content?" he asked when he accepted the National Book Award for The Fixer in 1967. Elucidating the moral basis of art, that it has the power of investing a human being with value, Malamud says, "To preserve itself [art] must, in a variety of subtle ways, conserve the artist through sanctifying human life."

The formidable stranger, as Malamud's spokesman tells Fidelman: "You have not yet learned what is the difference between something and nothing" (p.111). He proceeds to topple Fidelman into
one of his holes and fill the hole with earth, extinguishing both sculpture and its creator: "So its a grave.... So now we got form but we also got content" (p.111). Fidelman's life has perforce been fused with his art — a lesson he finds hard to learn.

The primary achievement of the second episode lies in its artistic presentation of the chaos that ensues from Fidelman's failure. Having failed as an artist and as man, he finds himself deeply plunged in chaos. Malamud presents this inner instability most effectively through the variety of styles introduced. Further, the narrative structure emphasizes the aimlessness of Fidelman's life.

In the second episode, after his encounter with the mysterious stranger and his burial in the hole, Fidelman is seemingly resurrected and has a vision of Susskind as Sussking, the reincarnated Christ, preaching the gospel of love, mercy and charity. The master exhorts him to give up the paints and brushes and follow him. But from artist as huckster, Fidelman progresses to artist as Judas. In a mock enactment of the last supper, Susskind predicts that one of those who eat at the table will betray him. The prediction comes true when Fidelman betrays him for thirty-four pieces of silver with which he buys paints, brushes, canvas. "This betrayal is Fidelman's betrayal of himself. His obsession with being a painter, a role for which he has little talent, has not only led him through a personal hell of degradation but has impelled him to treat people as objects."
From being a Judas, Fidelman proceeds to be an etcher. With the material he bought from the money paid for his treachery he obsessively works at his art in a subterranean cave. This section is purely surrealistic in tone and tenor. The sculptor, in a vision, is shown both inside and out looking at a weird collage of pictures.

Once again he paints with selfish unconcern for others. His sister (who had financed his trip to Italy and so is partly his life source) whom he has not seen for years, is lying on her death bed upstairs, but Fidelman has no time to visit her. Once again Susskind reappears in the dark cave as the source of light; he appeals to Fidelman's morality through a voice from a light bulb, urging him to visit her before it is too late. Fidelman in callous, customary unconcern retorts that it is no fault of his if people die. The light bulb warns him of the consequences of his pride and Fidelman at last pays heed.

In Fidelman-Susskind relationship lies the father-son motif which Malamud has used in all his previous novels. In Pictures of Fidelman, from the first story, Susskind has tried to guide Fidelman regarding the nature of moral responsibility. Fidelman has all along rejected Susskind's advice to give up his selfish preoccupation with art and involve himself in love and responsibility with others. Now, at last, Fidelman requests Susskind to "be my Virgil, which way to up the stairs?" (p.119); he is willing
to accept Susskind's guidance and be led out, as Dante was by Virgil, of the hell of his own creation. His ascent from the cave or the Inferno is also symbolically a journey from darkness to light. By giving up his art in an act of self-denial and going up to see his dying sister, Fidelman paves the way to salvation that follows in the next story. The story ends with Bessie's death; she ascends to heaven holding in her heart her brother's "hello."

Bessie was a part of his failed past which he had run from. He tells Susskind, "The truth is I hate the past. It caught me unawares. I'd rather not see her just yet. Maybe next week or so" (p.118). By Malamud's ethics Fidelman's facing up to his past (Bessie) is an affirmative gesture such as will ease the pain in his life.

The last story, "Glass Blower of Venice" has Fidelman emerging from the "under world of the tortured self." He gives up painting and makes both ends meet by performing menial errands such as carrying customers piggy-back across the flooded piazza -- a symbolic St. Christopher role. Having accepted his limitations Fidelman tries to make sense out of life without illusions and evasions. He, now, seeks his true identity by turning down all the false identities (as an art critic and as an artist). In Malamud's fiction the experience of failure 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." Fidelman fails and his essential potentiality to be a better human proves not in any heroic action, rather in his recognition of his failure as an artist.

Moreover, we have noticed Malamud's "reluctance to give up on anyone. Each being is unique, responsible and redeemable. None is beyond redemption, and in most instances love is the surest means of attaining it." Love is the ultimate, permanent and true value in Malamud's novels of successful quest. Fidelman the selfish critic, imposter, forger, pimp and Judas learns at last to give love instead of always taking it. With Margherita he experiences his first long liaison of his life. His relationship with women so far in the novel was functional but his relationship with Margherita is instinctual; it is not his lust that drives him to pursue her. "Fidelman now visited Margherita one or two afternoons a week, depending on circumstances and desires — mostly hers" (p.130). Thus "by changing his attitude to the respective claims of self and others he enters on his second life, the real 'new life.'" Moreover, in Malamud's world, the amount of love a hero willingly gives to others marks the amount of grace life will grant him.

Not finding everything he seeks in Margherita, Fidelman lets himself be taken over by Beppo who initiates him into homo-
sexual love so that for the first time Fidelman says "I love you" without reservation."'Think of love,' the glass blower murmured. 'You've run from it all your life.' He stopped running" (p.135). Fidelman learns as Levin had learnt that "the main source of conscious morality was love of life, anybody's life."30 There is the suggestion of outrage, salvation through sodomy (Beppo), but Malamud wants to jolt us only enough to wake us up. "Malamud is writing about love; and love, which is never 'normal' is not an automatic thing like hetero-sexuality.... Fidelman's submission to Beppo symbolizes his acceptance of imperfection in existence. Craft and art, love of men and women, not love31 is the subject of the novel.

Beppo completes the lesson Susskind had begun. Just as Susskind had destroyed his "lifeless" first chapter on Giotto, Beppo slashes up all of Fidelman's canvases, saying no art is better than bad art: "It's for your own sake. Show who's master of your fate — bad art or you" (p.134). Beppo's advice to Fidelman is simply: "If you can't invent art, invent life" (p.135), and he leads Fidelman "to the recognition of who he is: not the critic of Giotto, not the painter ... but the craftsman whose art is the product of the spontaneous response to life, and who is thereby enabled to bridge Yeat's division and achieve 'perfection' in life and work."32
Apprenticed to Beppo, both lover and spiritual father, Fidelman learns to blow glass— a wonderfully flexible medium. Its flexibility helps Fidelman understand "the possibilities of life" (p.135). Fidelman, "assisting for love's sake" (p.137) works for the first time in his life, instructed. In Malamud's fiction to be an apprentice ready to be tutored about life, carries much moral weight.

Slowly and painfully Fidelman learns to master the craft till ultimately, just before he leaves Italy for America, Fidelman does manage to produce one perfect red glass bowl.

Having learnt the craft of glass blowing and the art of love, Fidelman leaves Beppo, his lover and master, in acceptance of Margherita's desire that he do not break up her family life. He shows his responsibility towards the two people he has loved by going away to America where "he worked as a craftsman in glass and loved men and women" (p.140).

Fidelman's love for men and women is in no way a degeneration of his character: it is less an acceptance of homo-sexuality than an affirmation of unselfish love for all humanity. Thus, once more the Malamud hero, by the end of the story, shows signs of self-transcendence. Fidelman has had to learn to accept the failure of his former concept of a new life of personal satisfactions and univolvement.
Suffering teaches Fidelman a new humanity and awakens in him the possibility of a new life. To learn to lead a better life through suffering is the privilege of the Malamudian hero. Only experience and that too usually painful experience gives the necessary training to lead a more meaningful life.

However, a note of cynicism seems to have crept into Malamud's vision of life. In *The Fixer* Malamud's theme of love and responsibility had been taken to unprecedented dimensions. In comparison to the near idealistic, sacrificial love of Yakov Fidelman's experiences include brushes with prostitution, pimping and sodomy — all being love's substitutes.

In a private interview, Malamud admitted that perhaps after *The Fixer* he has been disillusioned. This was the outcome of the effects of the Vietnam war and the increasing violence against the Blacks in the U.S. Thus in *Pictures of Fidelman* Malamud is protesting against human degradation through the presentation of Fidelman's degradation.

Malamud articulates his anger through the form of the picaresque. As Stuart Miller tells us the picaresque expresses the anger of an artist against the world: "Behind the narrator of each picaresque novel, we feel the moralistic implied author shrieking hate at the world's or men's chaos, shrieking in rage at what the world has done to his personality."

Just as the form of the picaresque emphasizes the chaos of the world, Fidelman himself, in his frequently changing forms,
reflects the chaos within man. In uncertainty, symptomatic of his degradation, Fidelman moves from one relationship to another and from one profession to another. Thus both plot and character depict the chaotic, absurd nature of modern reality.

Having depicted the disheartening disorderliness, Malamud goes on to affirm that integration and order can be established through love. He goes about this task in a form not previously used by him. In presenting Fidelman as a failure, Malamud ironically promotes the cause for selfless love. Ostensibly Malamud seems to uphold the degradation and chaos but in reality he is relating the horrors of lovelessness.

Though the overall impression is one of disillusionment setting-in in Malamud's vision of the possibilities for man, still Malamud's outrageous experiments in love in *Pictures of Fidelman* ironically succeed in reiterating the need for love all the more forcefully. Fidelman's success or failure, as of each Malamudian protagonist, depends upon his capacity to love. Malamud has said, "Find and give what you can in love." What Fidelman gives in love is his grace. Benevolence and selfless love such as Yakov Bok had shown and discarded for acquisitive desires, resulting in dire consequences till Fidelman is forced to learn better.
Thus, though Fidelman's progress at first seems to be at cross purposes with the aim, we soon notice that Malamud has adopted a novel technique of fiction to dramatize the theme of love more effectively. Moreover, the novel marks a marked development in Malamud's fiction, for in this novel, for the first time, Malamud focusses on present-day reality. The simplistic optimism of the earlier novels is discarded by Malamud and a near pessimistic picture of degeneration is painted so as to persuade us to realize the restorative power of love.

Love, therefore, is crucial in Malamud's world. The theme of love is presented more through implication than through statement or through climatic development, thus making the theme both effective and interesting.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


5. Bernard Malamud, Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition (Britain: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969), p.16. All page numbers quoted in the chapter are from this text.

6. Ibid., p.333.

7. Ibid., p.333.


12 Lucie F. Ruotolo, p. 127.


17 Ibid., p. 117.


19 Ruth R. Wisse, p. 114.

20 Marc L. Ratner, p. 681.

21 Christof Wegelin, p. 83.


23 Christof Wegelin, p. 83.
24 Quoted by Christof Wegelin, p. 87.


26 Ibid., p. 139.


29 Tony Tanner, p. 333.


31 Robert Scholes, p. 34.

32 Christof Wegelin, p. 87.
