Chapter I

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The trial by love is of course, Mallard's basic subject. In his fictional world, Jonathan Baumbach has stated, love is the only "redemptive grace - the highest good". And the "defeat of love, love rejected, love misplaced, love betrayed, loveless lust" are primary evils. This trial by love subsequently urges Mallard's protagonists into frequent self-examinations through which they realize their past errors and their need to be worried about other people. That is through love and suffering their fundamental motives change from 'Eros' to 'caritas.' It is primarily through trial by love that the Mallard hero diminishes his own ego and enters a new life, a life that transcends the worldly aspirations into that spiritual, cosmic realm.

In Mallard's fiction, he writes of the opposing needs of the inner and outer world of his protagonists. His fiction depicts the shattered dreams and the private worries of the spirit, the aspirations of the heart and the pain of loss. Mallard's characters usually begin as egocentric, frustrated individuals with uncontrollable desire for women and irresistible passion for wealth.
Money or the lack of it acts a continuous theme in Mallard's fiction. The fact is not that they want more money. It is rather that the fulfilment of their egoistic motives depends so much on money and material prosperity. As a result, they show a pressing desire to move on from one place to other in search of pretty women and abounding wealth. But they are unaware of the corruptive forces of the new world. Therefore, their weaknesses for women and wealth force them to get acquainted with seductresses who take out all their energies and divert them from their ambition for bright future. Their weaknesses act as tragic flaws in their character, which drag them down when they are about to reach their aim.

In Mallard's fictional world, he dramatizes his protagonist as he moves towards moral maturity through self - transcendence. Mallard usually indicates the manner of maturation from 'Eros' to 'caritas' by means of a character's learning to live outside the myth that has been dominating his life. Mallard's first novel The Natural is a mythic handling of a fantastic baseball hero whose career shows his development from obscurity to the heights of glory and back to insignificance. 'Roy Hobbs' the protagonist, continuously craves to become the greatest baseball player, but always remains
overwhelmed by his innate weakness for women and finally meets with an irresolute end. Immediately after he wins fame as a baseball player, he is pulled down by a temptress. Roy does the same mistake repeatedly because he is innocent, inexperienced and hence incapable of moral or spiritual growth through struggling and suffering. Goldman has rightly told:

Mallard's works are more than chronicles of Jewish life. His "mood is wide ranging but his theme is consistently the individual's need for suffering to attain self-knowledge".

When we meet Roy for the first time, he is on his way to Chicago to become the best baseball player. He travels by a train that passes through a dark, 'thundering tunnel' (p.9). On the train, he accidentally meets Harriet Bird, "a girl in dressy black dress,.....her hair a froth of dark curls, she held by a loose cord, a shiny black hat box ....."(p.14). Roe's strong desire to enjoy sex with her, takes him close to her. When Roy makes physical contact with Harriet, the train is again passing through a dark tunnel. "As he went through a tunnel, Roy placed his arm around her shoulders, and when the train lurched on a curve, casually let his hand fall upon her full breast"(p.34). Here the novelist consciously
relates Roe's sexual gesture towards Harriet with the darkness of the tunnel so as to show the ominous nature of their love affair.

Harriet seems to be a destructive force, an agent of punishment. She is a lonely figure and her strength is self-oriented. When Roy enjoys sex with Harriet, he discovers to his great surprise that she has a sick breast which in Mallard is a sign that she is incapable of either nurturing the hero or bearing her own offspring. She questions the intention of his actions, the meaning of his conception of heroism.

"What will you hope to accomplish, Roy?"
He had already told her, but after a minute remarked,
"Sometimes when I walk down the street I bet people will say there goes Roy Hobbs, the best there ever was in the game."
She gazed at him with touched and troubled eyes.
"Is that all?"

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She slowly shook her head. Isn't there something over and above earthly things - some more glorious meaning to one's life and activities?
In baseball?
'Yes'
He racked his brain-
"May be I've not made myself clear, but surely you can see that yourself alone- alone in the sense that we are all terribly alone no matter what people say- I mean by that perhaps if you understood that our values must derive from......." (p.32).
Roe's answer is not the proper one as it mirrors his egoistic pride. "I bet someday I'll break every record in the book for throwing and hitting" (p.31). Here salvation lies in providing right answer to the question as to what his quest is. But Roy cannot harmonize his professional self which can be perfected through constant training and his sensual self which can be controlled through struggling and suffering.

Harriet is a seductress, whose physical attractions Roy does not overcome. After his arrival at Chicago, he has almost forgotten her but she rings up to him and invites him to her room in the hotel. And then he has a strange meeting.

As he shut the door she reached into the hat box which lay open next to a vase of white roses on the table and fitted the black feathered hat on her head.....In her hand she held a squat, shining pistol(p.38-39).

He is greatly confused and cries out in loud voice.

“What's wrong here,” she said sweetly,
‘Roy, will you be the best there ever was in the game?’
‘That’s right’.
“She pulled the trigger. The bullet cut a silver line across the water.
He sought with his bare hands to catch it, but it eluded him, and to his horror, bounced into his gut.......,
she, making muted noises of triumph and despair, danced on her toes around the stricken hero" (p. 39).

Thus Roy is struck down by Harriet in a "mythic enactment of the psychic wound", with a silver bullet in his gut.

The 'stricken hero' then wanders through America, spending his 'long long years of suffering' (p. 61). For Roe's meeting with Harriet makes him suffer for fifteen years, thus prolonging his dream of becoming the greatest baseball champion, until he appears again in the second part of the novel, before he joins the 'New York Knights'. Now also he wants to materialize the dream that was shattered with a silver bullet for he thinks "if you leave all those records that nobody else can beat-they'll always remember you. You sort never die" (p. 147).

In the second part of the novel, 'Batter up', Roy appears with greater over confidence, making everyone think that he would surely come out this time as "the best there ever was in the game" (32). Roe's over confidence does not help him to become the best baseball player of the Knights, because Roy does not learn anything from his past sufferings. Roy forgets his past and soon
craves to fulfil his sexual desire with Pop's 'red-headed' niece Memo Paris.

When the July stifle drove her out of her room she appeared in the hotel lobby in black, her hair turned a lighter, golden shade as though some of the fire had burned out of it, and Roy was moved by her appearance that she, despite green eyes brimming for Bump, was the one for him, the ever desirable only(p.83).

His passionate longing for the pretty Orange-hairdo Memo Paris, Bailey's ex-mistress, corresponds his former desire for Harriet. Roe's desire to have sex with Memo is so intense that he does not bother to learn from Bump's luck, knowing fully well that he is 'filling Bump's shoes'(85). In spite of Pop Fisher's warnings and his own uncertainties, Roy pursues Memo. Her uncle describes her as 'unlucky' which she "always has been and I think that there is some kind of whammy in her that carries her luck to other people. That's why I would like you to watch out and not get too tied up with her" (p.119-120). He again warns, "she is always dissatisfied and will snarl you up in her trouble in a way that will weaken your strength if you don't watch out"(p.120). But Roy cannot differentiate between his dream of becoming the baseball
hero and his urgent desire to win over Memo. "He was gnawed by a nagging impatience- so much more to do, so much of the world to win for himself... something he desperately wanted. Memo, he sighed"(p.87).

One night Roy takes Memo out, hoping to fulfil his sexual desire. Soon we know that Roy fails to enjoy sex with Memo and they meet with an accident on their way back which gives Roy 'a black eye'(p.117). As a result, Roy cannot play well in the next game against the Braves. He gets 'exactly no hits'(124). Here the writer deliberately reveals the destructive influence of Memo's sexuality on Roy.

Like Harriet, Memo has a sick breast which indicates her sexual infertility and moral decay. 'Memo Paris', seductive agent of Judge Goodwill Banner and Gus Sands, is clearly a propagandist of the business of sensuality. That she may be a national figure of sensuality is suggested by Roe's seeing her "as a truly beautiful doll with a form like Miss America"(p.156). She is, indeed a doll, an object of surface beauty with little emotional harmony or internal unity. And as a beauty contest winner, she has placed value on those superficial aspects that assure victory. But she chooses
Hollywood dream factory and there she fails, not because she lacks outward beauty, but because she lacks ability. She has no inner means to lean upon. All she possesses, is a limited self that has been conditioned by her external beauty.

I won a beauty contest -------then they took a screen test and though I had the looks and figure, my test did not come out so good in acting and they practically told me to go home(p.113).

Memo, obviously working for Judge Goodwill Banner and Gus Sands says that she will marry Roy if he has sufficient money. And her needs of money are not only conditioned by her fear of poverty, but also by what society has legalized as necessary ingredients for happiness; maids, fur coats, houses, cars etc. And she has learnt from the society that it is perfectly relevant to sell herself in order to acquire those things. Memo, acting as judge Goodwill Banner’s deputy, has reduced her own humanity and hence has the capacity to diminish others.

After Roy achieves popularity once again with his wonderful performance against the Clubs, Memo welcomes him to a party at her house. We observe that Memo Paris does not allow Roy to have a union with her. She prolongs it often, and on the day she has
fixed for Roy, encourages him to overeat to the extent of having 'a severe stomach ache' and going to her room, he collapses.

During the period of sickness, the Judge exploits Roe's weaknesses for women and wealth for his own benefit. He tries to tempt Roy through Memo Paris with an attractive pay-off.

The Judge then hissed, 'you may lose Miss Paris to someone else if you are not careful'.
Roy bolted up. 'To who for instance?'
'A better provider'(p.195).

Memo Paris also stresses Roy to betray the Knights in the last series, so that by the Knight's defeat, the Judge Goodwill Banner will have complete control of the company.

Roy at last yields to the evil practices of Memo and the Judge out of his lack of ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong. Roy chases after Memo though he realizes "there was something about her, like all the food he had lately been eating, that left him, after the having of it, unsatisfied, sometimes even with a greater hunger than before"(156).

Max Mercy helps Roy to learn from his past, but Roy too is self-centered. He cannot even divide good from evil or understand that his present condition is the direct result of his past actions.
Roy tries to conceal his past from Mercy and more significantly from himself. Because he does so, Roy cannot achieve the integrity of self which he so badly needs; he continually feels lost and sorry. He craves for the sense of well-being, he had as a boy. But he will have to undergo many more trials by love to learn from his past experiences, to have a harmonious, unified, value oriented personality.

In Mallard's fiction, morality can be achieved by learning how to love. In all the novels and many of the short stories, the act of giving love is the ultimate scope of a man's capacity for a free act. "Love is sacred in Mallard's universe; if life is holy, love is a holy of holies".6

The lady named Iris Lemon acts as the moral representative in The Natural. It is she who introduces in the novel Mallard's rich moral values, his stress on the value of suffering and discipline in human life. According to Mallard, a selfless love which manifests a set of values or moral code can only be achieved when suffering accompanies love.

Iris Lemon appears in the novel when Roy is experiencing a horrible slump, and is struggling to come out of it. At the time of
his slump, Memo Paris avoids him and Roy feels frustrated. Then the father of an admirer of Roy tells him that his son is in the hospital, and that the news of Roe’s successful hit will help his son’s well-being. Roe’s recovery thus becomes a moral necessity. It contains not just the personal glory of Roy, but the recovery of his unknown fan. And while playing the game against the Cubs, Roe’s fate takes a new form unexpectedly at the sight of a woman rising up from her seat, in order to show that she has great faith in him. Here begins his association with Iris Lemon—“...a young black hairdo woman, wearing a red dress...” (p. 135). With Iris’s faith in him, Roy wins the game and rises once again to the heights of glory. By drawing strength from his regard for Iris, he becomes capable of drawing strength from the audience which she represents. Iris has gained the quality of true love by her sexual experiences and sufferings and hence Iris’s presence assures Roy a kind of spiritual rebirth. For Mallard “Suffering is a precondition of existence, the one possible mode of goodness and engagement in this world. One must suffer if one is to preserve one’s integrity”. On a clear, blue night, on a “deserted beach, enclosed in a broken arc of white birches” where “the wind was balmy and the water lit
on its surface,"(p.144) Roy confesses his past to the soothing, understanding Iris. Iris's gentle, comforting manner redeems Roy, at least for the time being and by revealing his self to another person, Roy is able to free himself from the prison of self.

Shortly afterwards, Iris is invited by Roy to a park wherefrom they drive to Lake Michigan and enjoy an evening there. Iris tries to explain Roy the abandoning of ego that is essential for a hero. The hero lives not for himself but for others. With selfish motives, the hero becomes nothing. Iris mentions her own sacrifice when she stood up in the stands before thousands of people.

"I felt that if you knew people believed in you, you'd regain your power. That's why I stood up in the grandstand. I hadn't meant to before I came. It happened naturally. Of course I was embarrassed but I don't think you can do anything for anyone without giving up something of your own. What I gave up was my privacy among all those people"(p.145-146).

Iris tries to teach Roy the value of human experience so that by learning from the past, Roy can truly judge and evaluate his troubled life. Iris asserts that suffering in reality 'educates'. She tries to explain:

'Experience makes good people better'........
'How does it do that'?
'Through their suffering'.
'I had enough of that', he said in disgust.
'We have two lives Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live with after that. Suffering is what brings us towards happiness'(p.148).

Here Iris means suffering teaches us to want the right things physically as well as spiritually and hence provides pleasure. Mark Goldman observes:

Mallard’s fiction suggests certain moral equations. Knowledge of self equates knowledge of the world; to want the right thing is to make the right choices.¹¹

Iris is the victim of a sensual man twice her age, an unmarried mother in her teenage. She has suffered a lot. But then, she has sacrificed herself to the care of her daughter, finding in it the meaning of suffering. She later discloses this:

'Except for my baby I was nearly always alone, reading, mostly, to improve myself, although sometimes it was unbearable, especially before I was twenty and just after. It also took quite a while until I got rid of my guilt, or could look upon her as innocent of it, but eventually I did, and soon her loveliness and gaiety and all the tender feelings I had in my heart for her made up for a lot I had suffered. Yet I was tied to time – not so much to the past – nor to the expectations of the future, which was really too far away'........(p.197).
Iris's story acts as an ironic match to the life of Roy; for Roy has suffered but unlike Iris, has learnt nothing from his past sufferings and hence incapable of extending a love that is unselfish to others. As far as Roe's suffering is concerned, it is basically an inner mental struggle. As Sidney Richen says "Roy is the image of the unintegrated man".

Though Roy sees Iris more worthwhile than Memo, he retreats from her when she reveals him the fact that at thirty three she is a grandmother. While making love with her, she speaks:

'I forgot to tell you I am a grand mother'.
He stopped. Holy Jesus.
Then she remembered something else and tried, in fright, to raise herself.
'Roy, are you'-
But he shoved her back and went on from where he had let off.(153).

For "attitude to the role of paternity is crucial in Malamud and Roy refuses it". From that time onwards, Roy avoids any significant and meaningful involvement with her. "if he got serious with her it could only lead to one thing-him being a grandfather . God save him from that for he personally felt as young and frisky as a colt"(p.155).
The process of making a moral man is the method of learning to love, but Roy does not seem to understand that. "Evil is the denial of love and furthermore the lack of reciprocity". Then Roy starts chasing after Memo, the opposite of Iris Lemon. Thus Roy's inability to learn from his suffering, his conscious avoidance of Iris and his search of Memo pull him towards moral downfall.

On the day of the final try-off against the Pirates Roy hits the ball towards the crowd where it accidentally falls upon 'a dark haired woman in white dress'(209). She happens to be Iris Lemon. Roy takes the wounded Iris in his arms to the clubhouse where she reveals to him that she is pregnant. In a moment of excitement, stooping down "he kissed her mouth and tasted blood. He kissed her breasts, they smelled of roses. He kissed her hard belly, wild with love for her and the child"(210). Roy approves Iris because it is Iris who helps Roy "battle past the limitations of humpton (Hobbs) within." And after his failure in the last match, he lashes Memo and the Judge in a fit of anger and gives back their money.

In the end we see Roy walking out of the baseball world with sad realization that "I never did learn anything out of my past life, now I have to suffer again"(p.222). Here we realize that, though Roy
has suffered, his suffering does not help him in acquiring the necessary spiritual refinement. Of course, Iris leads him to a better understanding of himself and towards self-transcendence. But Roy, not taking suffering in its right perspective does not reach love for “love is suffering”. Here Malamud implies that Roy must suffer again and learn from his suffering, discarding his ego, for Roy is in search “above all, for some lost unity with the self.”

‘Frank Alpine’, the hero of Malamud’s second novel The Assistant, resembles Roy Hobbs of The Natural, in his ambition to gain recognition by establishing ‘something worthwhile’ (p.30) and in his highly passionate temperament. In the beginning, Frank also cherishes a false self-image. Having realized that he is a failure in life, he tries to compensate by following the exciting life of crime, the kind of life depicted in Hollywood epics. But Frank treasures another image in mind, the image of St. Francis who has consoled him, since his days in the orphanage.

Frank Alpine comes to Morris Bober’s grocery store as an assistant with the aim of coming closer to the Bober’s young and pretty daughter Helen. On seeing Helen, he feels that the girl is a pathetic figure like him with “something starved about her, a
hunger in her eyes he couldn't forget because it made him remember his own------"(p.51). This affinity with sombreness makes Frank pursue Helen. Initially Frank looks upon Helen lustfully and one day, unable to control his lust, he climbs up the bathroom window to have a glimpse of Helen bathing. Frank is so overwhelmed by her naked appearance that he immediately fancies her in bed. "Her body was young, soft, lovely, the breasts like small birds in flight, her ass like a flower. Yet it was a lonely body in spite of its lovely form, lonelier. Bodies are lonely, he thought, but in bed she wouldn't be"(p.64). At the same time he thinks that in the act of spying, "he was forcing her out of reach, making her into a thing only of his seeing........."(p.64).

Frank begins at a low level as a liar and as a thief; 'he cheats customers', 'steals from Bober's cash box everyday' and 'spies on Helen in the bathroom'. The fact is that all these evil deeds annoy Frank, even then he continues. While working in the grocery, Alpine forces his eyes on Helen. He starts chasing her and finally wins her sympathy by expressing his noble aims to her. Helen Bober, like her father "had wanted a college education but had got instead a job she disliked". Her mother Ida advises her to marry
Nat Pearl, a law student and beloved of the American materialistic dream. Helen thinks that she loves Frank and to a great extent misunderstands the real Frank with the one whom she dreams about, the one who marries her, goes to college for a M.A. degree and settles down with her in California near her parents. Unconsciously moved to Frank, she realizes that, in Frank there exists capabilities which Nat lacks. According to Helen Frank is her man of “possibilities”¹⁶ and she tells him “......don’t make a career of grocery. There’s no future in it”(p.96). He expects him to discipline himself so that she can love him earnestly. “......I want to be disciplined, and you have to be too if I ask it. I ask it so I might someday love you without reservations”(p.118-119).

Helen does not permit Frank to make love to her, for she fears that the same thing that happened earlier between herself and Nat will reoccur, that Frank, might start viewing her as an object of sex. “Frank’, said Helen,.......I suppose I felt I wanted to be free, so I settled for sex. But if you’re not in love sex isn’t being free, so I made a promise to myself that I never would any more unless I really fell in love with somebody. I don’t want to dislike myself .........”(p.118).
Thus by refusing him sexual love, simply as an effort to save herself from anymore spiritual pain, she unknowingly helps Frank in his transcendence from 'eros' to 'caritas'. In this way she starts by beginning for him a very painful trial by love, a trial which teaches him to love her not for his advantage, but for what he can do to her.

She gives him the classics named ‘Madame Bovary’, ‘Anna Karenina’, and ‘Crime and Punishment’ and Frank reads them honestly, resulting his moral upliftment. So what Helen provides Frank is the discipline essential for life. Thus “she...... show(s) him the right way though she does not know the right way.”

Frank learns many good things from the grocer while he resides with the Bobers. For example, Frank has a wrong idea about the Jews. He imagines that the Jews suffer, because “That’s what they live for”(p.74). One day he asks Morris Bober, “...... Why is it that the Jews suffer so damn much, Morris ? It seems to me that they like to suffer, don’t they ?”(106). Bober replies:

‘Do you like to suffer ? They suffer because they are Jews’.
‘That’s what I mean, they suffer more than they have to’.
'If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want. But I think if a Jew don't suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing!

'What do you suffer for, Morris?'

Frank said.

'I suffer for you', Morris said calmly.

Frank laid his knife down on the table. His mouth ached. 'what do you mean?'

'I mean you suffer for me' (106).

Therefore "anyman who suffers greatly, and also longs to be better than he is, can be called a jew". Here Frank becomes sensitive to the values of honesty, suffering, goodness and compassion. Now will begin "the apprenticeship of Frank Alpine...... to the discipline of Jewish suffering ".

Frank has made up his mind to put back the money he stole from Morris's cash register. Accordingly he puts back the last six dollars into the cash drawer. Then Helen comes there and requests him to meet her in the park. Frank knows, what she plans to tell is that she loves Frank. Thinking he might need some money he steals a dollar. Morris who has already suspected Frank, catches him red-handed and asks him, " why didn't you ask me to lend you a dollar instead to steal it?" (p.139). Frank confesses that he has been
stealing since his arrival at the store but has also been putting back the money. But Morris gets terribly angry and turns him out.

In the evening, at the park, he sees Ward Minogue trying to pull Helen off to the bushes. Frank beats Ward away, and himself rapes her right there. Afterwards she cried, ‘Dog – uncircumcised dog’ (p. 144). By forcing himself on her, Frank loses all his chances of winning Helen.

Frank always works hard for the fulfilment of his ambition and in the end destroys everything with a stupid move. Frank’s former comment about the irony of his fate is notable here. He tells, “I work like a mule for what I want, and just when it looks like I am going to get it, I make some kind of a stupid move, and everything that is just about nailed down tight blows up in my face” (p. 29). This is the paradox of Frank’s existence. “He meant to do good yet compulsively continues to do harm”.  

Soon afterwards, Frank laments and curses himself for the irrelevant act. “He moaned; had got instead of a happy ending, a bad smell. If he could root out what he had done, smash and destroy it; but it was done, beyond him to undo .......... He had lived without will, betrayed every good intention” (p. 149). He feels
miserable and undergoes long self-imposed penance in order to achieve discipline in life.

After committing rape on Helen, Frank tries to get her forgiveness. Now to be free of guilt Frank is expected to love Helen with unselfish love, "without hope of requital. He must further redeem the beloved, redeem evil by offering himself as a willing victim". He strongly feels his obligation to the Bober family. When Morris is caught in fire, Frank immediately rushes to the spot and rescues him. He gets ready to work in the store without money till Morris recovers in order to lessen his obligation towards Morris's family. Then Ida says "You have no debt. He has a debt to you that you saved him from the gas"(p.155). Frank is polite in his reply. "Anyway I feel I have a debt to him for all the things he has done for me........ That's my nature when I'm thankful, I'm thankful"(p.155). He also assures Ida that he would not trouble Helen anymore. He swears Morris of his honesty and expresses his wish to live there and do something for Helen. "You can trust me now, I swear it, and that's why I am asking you to let me stay and help you"(p.169). He begs Helen's pardon and says ' nothing can kill the love I feel for you'. But Helen looks upon him scornfully and
says love is a 'dirty word' in his mouth. Frank goes on suffering in the store only for the sake of Helen because "Love is suffering".  

Now Frank does not look at Helen lustfully but treats her as his 'little sister'(p.209) whom he looks after and supports at the cost of his own economic well-being. And all he asks for himself is the privilege "to suffer and sacrifice everything selfish for that love". Thus Frank Alpine’s love grows from sensual level to one that transcends sexual dimensions. His search for love takes him to the "threshold of religious experience".

Helen's attitude towards Frank changes when one night she herself has noticed, Frank working in the store with red, burning eyes, reflecting sleepless nights. She has realized with gratitude that "He had kept them alive. Because of him she had enough to go to school at night"(207). She thinks, Frank's attack on her in the park is not fully his own fault, but it is the outcome of her continuous denial to him. She feels that in spite of the sameness of his appearance "he had changed........he's not the same man"(p.207). And after this perception she adopts a more moderate attitude to him.
During Morris's funeral when Helen throws a rose flower into the grave, Frank falls into Bober's grave while attempting to see what Helen has thrown into it. By falling into the grave, Frank acquires the final identification with Morris, which is the final act of self-sacrifice. His coming out of the grave as Morris is a symbolic rebirth. Thus Frank's rebirth leads him to Morris's compassionate life in the grocery store.

'Your father is better off dead', said Ida. As they toiled up the stairs they heard the dull cling of the register in the store and knew the grocer was the one who had danced on the grocer's coffin (p.198).

Thus, "By accepting Morris's ethic, Frank puts his own suffering into a context that gives it value".25

Like Morris, Frank dedicates himself completely to the store and he sacrifices his energy to support Ida and Helen. Baumbach says:

Malamud's universe is perversely whimsical; it grants boons but tarnishes them in the process; no gain is without loss.26 Taking the store as his 'bride' and accepting the anxieties it provides, Frank has "relinquished childhood and became a new man."27

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Malamud's next novel A New Life is about modern man's search for identity at social and emotional planes. Its protagonist 'Seymour Levin', "progresses not like Frank Alpine from evil to good, but from weakness and fear to strength and courage. As instructor at an agricultural college, Levin fumbles his way through sex and into love, through teaching and into understanding". Levin is in search of true love, a real human companionship. But his colleagues at the Cascadia college are having little emotional depth and each is an addict of some ruling desire which separates him from others. As a man with deep sense of loneliness, Levin craves for 'lost youth' and company. He feels jealous of the married people of the faculty for the years of solitude they have eluded. "Each day his past weighed more. He was, after all, thirty, and time moved on relentless roller skates. When, for God's sake, came love, marriage, children?"(p.117).

Like Malamud's former heroes, Levin too is a victim of sensuality. "Desire butchered him........ How escape the ferocious lust that enflamed and tormented his thoughts as it corroded his will?"(p.129). Naturally he too meets with the wrong women, who disappoint him. "often with the wrong kind. One or two made hash
of me”(p.186). His first attempt to make love is with the waitress Laverne in the country barn. The affair has all the specialities of a comic misadventure. Initially Levin feels an uncontrollable passion for her physical beauty and “considered falling in love with her but gave up the idea”(76). Later we find, just as Levin is trying to bring about a union with Laverne, the jealous Syrian student, Sadek runs off with their clothes. Levin cannot bring himself to conclude the affair. Hence we have the funny scene of Levin and Laverne walking back to Easchester at midnight with very little clothes in the freezing cold. Levin gets frightened that he might lose his job if the affair is exposed to the public. “...... Levin’s astronomy was the astronomy of fear, in particular, of losing his job. If he could get rid of the girl and her horse blanket he might make it, with or without pants sneak into town and quickly be home”(p.78). Reaching Laverne’s home safely after much anxiety, Levin feels for her a ‘certain tenderness’ and plans another union with her.

“I’m grateful to you in more ways than one, Laverne”, he said haltingly.
“Couldn’t we meet sometime-under better circumstances, and.......” (p.80).

But Laverne rejects the proposal with scorn.
After his comic episode with Laverne, Levin's sense of loneliness increases. Levin's affair with his colleague Avis Fliss is the outcome of his search for companionship. He goes to her one night in the office and talking shortly for a while, they decide to make love in the office itself. Soon Levin learns that Avis has a sick breast to be operated upon and he retreats back from the act out of pity for her. "Poor dame, he thought. She has little, why should I make it less?"(p.125). He tells her that they can have an affair when she feels better.

The next girl who enters Levin's life is Nadalee, his student at Cascadia. She excites Levin's sensuality but Levin feels "The girl trusts me, I can't betray her. If I want sex I must be prepared to love, and love may mean marriage"(p.130). Finally Nadalee entices him to meet at her aunt's motel. Though they spend an amusing week in the motel, the affair comes to an end soon. The girl, Nadalee gets angry when Levin denies to increase her grade in the examination. Though Levin has disobeyed a fundamental moral code in sleeping with the girl, he acts as a man of principle as far as academic activities are concerned. And by this affair Levin learns that it is very difficult to divide morality in real life.
Levin moves from woman to woman in search of genuine love. His first three ladies do not satisfy him. And as a result, there emerges in him a 'crawling self-hatred'. In the end he falls in love with Pauline Gilley, the wife of his immediate superior—professor Gerald Gilley. His relationship with Pauline occurs on a spring day in the woods quite accidentally. It is a pleasant spring day, and Levin advances into the forest for bird watching with his binoculars. Soon he senses that he is being watched by somebody and looking around, he sees Pauline. The meeting ends up successfully. "He (Levin) was throughout conscious of the marvel of it—in the open forest, nothing less, what triumph!" (p. 185). He views the experience as the realization of his dream of true love. He tells Pauline "I never had it this way before" (p. 186). Later he confesses his past to her. He tells Pauline about his past life as a drunkard, a life of total disgrace. By revealing the humiliation of his past, Levin shows his readiness to establish a deeper human relationship with Pauline.

But Pauline is the wife of his colleague and the mother of two young children. Although he consoles himself that the affair is a matter of convenience, not romance, he cannot get away from the
feelings of guilt. After reaching room he “thought in terms of experience with her, not necessarily commitment. Hadn’t she herself denied he was obligated to her?” (p. 189). Soon there develops a kind of piercing pain in his body that disables him sexually. Levin understands that it is essential for him to make a commitment when he suffers ‘a fiery pain in the butt’ (p. 197) for love is commitment. He realizes that his suffering has been caused by suppressing what he should give. “Love ungiven had caused Levin’s pain. To be unpained he must give (her) what he unwillingly withheld” (p. 200). But when he gives, he cannot give himself completely; he gives only a part of himself, still expecting “no tying down with ropes, long or short, seen or invisible – had to have room to move so he could fruitfully use freedom” (p. 201).

What Malamud is describing here is the trial by love. Malamud seems to suggest that if you go wrong in the test of love you miss everything. Because of his denial of love, he “suffers terrible rectal pain” and learns something from his suffering. According to Sandy Cohn, “what actually causes him pain is not sin but his guilt over his failure to be honest with himself.” Thus his efforts to enter into a new life are valid since he learns through his
sufferings the fact that his past is important to his future; it cannot be and should not be denied. And Levin must, like all Malamud’s major heroes learn from the past sufferings and work upon it to transcend it. From that time onwards the Levin – Pauline love affair changes into what Levin thinks ‘a true love affair’, which in fact is another form of ‘eros’.

Even after much suffering Levin becomes ready to deny his love from any inconvenience it might cause him. So when his landlady discovers that Pauline has been coming to his room and asks them not to meet there, they start meeting each other less until finally “out of love, he gave her up.” But “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”. Out of ignorance, Levin avoids commitment in love affair for he associates commitment with lack of freedom. “he had already lost—the terrible thing—his freedom to feel free”(p.314). He thinks that he has fallen in love with Pauline because he is a responsible, moral man, and so he must give her up for the same reason. He thinks that he should resist the ideas of Gilley, and he
can do that only if he is personally a moral man. He cannot oppose Gilley's immorality in censoring texts or in preparing syllabi, if his own actions are unworthy. Levin attempts to feel relief when Pauline stops seeing him because of mixed feelings of guilt and love for Gerald. Then there happens Prof. Fairchild's death. Immediately after the funeral Pauline comes to Levin to tell him that she still loves him. "I want a better life, I want it with you" (p. 311). Hearing this Levin sits still. "The destruction of love she could not commit he had accomplished" (p. 310). He tells her, however, that he avoided her for the time being in order to save her from the guilt. After her confession when he is alone, Levin tries to revive his earlier love for her.

After undergoing severe suffering Levin realizes the truth that the source of freedom is the human spirit. Once he can separate himself from his own imaginary ideas, he grows in moral awareness and responsibility. Here Malamud employs Levin's short separation from Pauline to suggest his protagonist's increasing conception of moral responsibility and its relationship with love. "The strongest morality resists temptation; since he had not resisted he must renounce the continuance of the immoral. Renunciation was what
he was now engaged in; it was a beginning that created a beginning" (p.240).

Levin's embarrassment regarding the acceptance of Pauline is ended when she reveals her plan to make their relationship known to her husband. She tells that she will part with Gilley and live with Levin.

Levin thinks that he feels no love for her and that the situation becomes more complicated when he learns from Avis that Pauline and Duffy had been lovers. He feels resentful towards her. He thinks that she has hidden the fact from him. It crushes his ego. Now he gets worried about her plans for him and feels his identity being challenged by what he imagines to be her efforts to manipulate him.

Soon Levin has an important insight which suggests the renewal of his identity, overcoming all these difficulties. He realizes the fact that even when his love for her vanishes, Levin should surrender to the ideal of love. "He, S. Levin, the self again betrayed by the senses, did not presently desire her, in no way diminished her as one worthy of love" (p.316). Also he understands that his identity as a self can be gained only by the reduction of his own ego.
and that Pauline's relationship with Duffy does not bring any change in his search for identity.

Levin's relationship with Pauline Gilley is of utmost importance to him; it is because of her that he came to the west to begin his new life as an English teacher. Pauline prevents his going back to his old life. Levin tells Pauline immediately after his arrival at their house "I've reclaimed an old ideal or two", "They give a man his value if he stands for them" (p.15). While in love with Pauline, Levin discovers "I've got to keep control of myself. I must always know where I am" (p.202). Here Levin tries to rebuild his sexual impulses into desirable forms of values based on self discipline and moral stability. Malamud associates with Pauline, his constant symbols of fruitfulness and fertility-lemons, Oranges and the smell of flowers. She confesses that her children are adopted and therefore, in spite of her having children her maternal longings have not been satisfied.

In the end Levin takes a crucial decision that if Pauline continues to love him, Levin also will love her. Thus Levin, "by changing his attitude to the respective claims of self and other...... enters on his second life, the real ' new life'." Here Levin has
changed from a sensual lover to a man capable of loving on
principle, a man capable of accepting responsibilities for Pauline.
Thus Levin's commitment to Pauline is the outcome of a
"mortification of the ego very much like what Frank Alpine imposed
upon himself".35

Self-transcendence involves the capacity to act on one's ideas
and principles. To prove Levin's transcendence, Malamud shows
Levin fighting for Pauline's children, without whom he might feel
better and fighting for Pauline, not to have her, but for her. Levin
finally gives up his 'eros' and moves towards 'caritas'. Thus in the
end, we see that Levin is capable of transcending his past and
achieving moral growth by passing through a trial by love.

On Pauline's desire when Levin goes to Gilley to demand the
custody of children, Gilley reacts by pointing out the troubles of
marrying a chronically disordered woman and destroying the
stability of an already readymade family. Gilley earnestly wishes to
retain the custody of his children. He informs Levin that by
accepting Pauline as his life partner, he will have a woman 'born
dissatisfied'(p.330) and full of everlasting complaints about the
emptiness of her life. "she always said she felt she should have
done better" (p. 330). Then failing to discourage Levin, Gilley tries to take revenge on Levin by asking him to leave college teaching altogether as a condition to keep the children with Pauline. Yet, for the sake of Pauline, Levin accepts Gilley's conditions knowing fully well that a 'fanatic' like Levin will keep his word.

When Levin, against all difficulties seems going on with his plans, Gilley is amazed. Gilley asks:

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

Because I can, you son of a bitch" (p. 337).

We find Levin assumes responsibility as he says he can. It is the decision taken by a moral man, a man who has learnt what freedom and responsibility means. Levin's decision to start a new life with such responsibility 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". With the brief but powerful line, Levin takes upon hi0mself responsibility and he achieves a kind of heroism in sacrificing his career for the principle of love, a love in itself non-existent, a memory beyond feeling. As
Jonathan Baumbach says "........ yet the world for all its potential goodness, is not good, and the good man, the man capable of love is inevitably the sufferer, the sacrificer, the saint." Thus accepting responsibility for being in love with Pauline, Levin chooses to marry her, and take over the burden of her children, sacrificing his career.

On their way back Levin understands from Pauline that she is two months pregnant with his child. This aids Levin to restore his interest in her, and he feels "her body smelled like fresh – baked bread, the bread of flowers"(p.343). Pauline tells him that she is willing to undergo an abortion. According to Malamud, the attainment of fatherhood is a sign of maturity. So Levin out of love for Pauline does not allow her to do so. He is definite about the child and says 'I want the child' (p.342). His love for Pauline is now changed into "a new and non-romantic form". Thus having gone through the Malamudian symbols of passion and commitment, Levin finds true freedom in liberation from the prison of self. He gives Pauline as a special gift the gold hoop earrings which he has bought and kept for her. This act of Levin is suggestive of his true love for her. In this way Levin attains moral awareness and identity.
through love. He becomes a morally responsible man by his commitment to Pauline and her children, as for him morality is "a way of giving value to other lives ...... As you valued men's lives yours received value"(p.239).

Like Malamud’s earlier heroes, we meet ‘Yakov Bok’ when he is on his way to go away from ‘Shtetl’ in search of a new life in Kiev. ‘Yakov Bok’ is a man full of physical desires, which he feels, he will never fulfil in ‘Shtetl’. He tells “The truth of it is I'm a man full of wants I'll never satisfy, at least not here. It's time to get out and take a chance. Change your place change your luck, people say”\(^\text{39}\)(p.12).

But Bernard Malamud's protagonists hope for material success only to make beginnings of their own downfall. Likewise, Yakov's search of money and social reputation in Kiev, ends in his imprisonment. As he is ferried across the river Dnieper, by an anti-semitic boatsman, he gets frightened and drops his phylacteries (prayer books) in the water. Earlier he cuts off his Jewish beard in order to hide his identity. “Cut off your beard and you no longer resemble your creator,”(p.9) Shmuel warns him. By leaving the Shtetl and denying his religion in order to become a freethinker like
Spinoza, Yakov isolates himself from Jewish community and Jewish faith.

Initially Yakov Bok looks upon the rescue of Lebedev as the starting point of his good fortune. And when Lebedev offers him a good job as an overseer at a higher salary, he congratulates himself on his good fortune. This good luck seems doubled, when Lebedev's daughter Zinaida extends him her sexual courtesy. Even though Bok gets ready to succumb to her seduction, he refuses her as he discovers that she is having her period. He feels it as a hint not to go forward because she is 'unclean'(p.52). He tells her, "I don't know your condition. Excuse me" (p.52). Here he understands that in spite of his assuming himself as a free thinker, his heritage is much harder to leave than he thinks.

Yakov's fostering and life experience have trained Yakov to consider love as a luxury, because he is a poor man, deserted by his wife 'Raisl'. Later in the novel she tells "I was barren. I ran in every direction........ Whether I stayed or left I was useless to you, so I decided to leave. You wouldn't so I had to. I left in desperation to change my life"(p.286). Here we find Yakov Bok like S. Levin feels unable to love and this "psychic flaw" in him acts as the root
cause for his wife's childlessness and later on her leaving of Yakov Bok. His rather misadventure with Lebedev's daughter Zinaida focuses this defect in him. When the girl seduces Yakov, he waits for her to take the starting role. "For himself he was willing to experience what there was to experience. But let her lead" (p. 49). Later on he finds himself incapable of making love to her and confesses that love 'does not come easily to me' (49).

Yakov's severe imprisonment in Kiev prison for the false accusation of the ritual murder of a twelve year old Christian child, helps him to suffer for others. It is through suffering, love and dedication to others that he attains his identity. Arvindra Sant says, "by suffering in prison, Bok becomes the irascible man with the courage to stand against his oppressors and fight for his identity and inner dignity as a human being."

Yakov's reunion with his wife 'Raisl' in the prison has a progressive effect because by that meeting he understands that the fault of the failure of the marriage is partly his. Yakov says, "I've thought about our life from beginning to end and I can't blame you for more than I blame myself" (p. 288). Yakov's understanding of the causes of her desertion and his remembrances of the life with
her, lead him to choose a more understanding, soothing attitude to her. Yakov tells her “I've suffered in this prison and I'm not the same man I once was. What more can I say, Raisl? If I had my life to live over, you'd have less to cry about, so stop crying” (p.288).

Yakov's acquisition of spiritual growth is projected in his readiness to declare himself as the father of the bastard child. “he wrote in Yiddish, ‘I declare myself to be the father of Chaim, the infant son of my wife, Raisl Bok. He was conceived before she left me” (p.292). This assumption of fatherhood compensates for his initial failure of love and with his heroic acceptance of commitment he has come to “What is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian moral idea. His horrid life now has meaning and purpose........” 42 Thus his sense of commitment to Raisl and his love for her guides him to achieve his identity and individuality.

In Dubin's Lives, Malamud treats a middle aged man's search for a new life, and the complex relationship of work or art to his life. Its protagonist William Dubin is confused with the problems of sex, love and infidelity. Malamud has in mind “a man's crisis during a period of three years”, and the novel is “about one human being, not all human beings”. 43 Bell considers that “The novel is so
overloaded with exegesis that no character but Dubin emerges with any credible human clarity". Richard Gilman says, "The 'double-edged' title of the novel refers at an immediate level to the lives of Thoreau, Lincoln and Mark Twain whose lives Dubin wrote, and 'more poetically to the divisions within his own being'". Robert Rubenstein remarks:

'Dubin's Lives' opens out to address the limits of love and marriage, of familiarity, of self-fulfillment and fiction themselves by articulating the inconsistencies and emotional contradictions of real people.

Even though superficially the novel seems different from other Malamud's novels, it also deals with the same theme—the moral transcendence of a writer. According to Peter S. Prescott, the novel concerns with the common problem of "how shall a man create for himself a new life?" The answer to this question is "'self-transcendence' through 'love and suffering,'" which is the echoed message in all of Malamud's works.

'William Dubin', a successful biographer having won a presidential medal for his work on H. D. Thoreau, is caught in conflict between his rising sensual urges and his deteriorating physical and intellectual powers. He is fifty-six-year old and
is intensely aware of his age. As a result, he becomes detached to his wife Kitty and he fails in his profession too.

Dubin's marriage was an American pattern of the arranged marriage. Kitty, a widow with a small child had forwarded a matrimony letter to the personal department of a newspaper where Dubin worked. Though she was not that much interested, Dubin persuaded the relationship and finally they got married. Ever since the marriage both Dubin and Kitty are engaged in their own worlds, Dubin in his world of the dead and Kitty in her remembrances of her former husband 'Nathaniel'. Kitty dislikes Dubin's unresisting, mad pursuit of biographies. She goes on worried about her husband and evaluates his character as "Sometimes I think you've never felt young in your life; you've almost always interpreted it as obligation or lost opportunity" \(^{19}\) (p. 145). She always correlates Dubin with her earlier husband and sees Dubin inferior. Having provoked at this Dubin tells her that he never likes to share with her the benefits of her previous marriage. He also argues that he knows himself reasonably well and also life's "structure and spin and many of its ways of surprise, if not total pattern or order. I know
enough, in other words; to take my chances"(p.131). Thus they dispute over ‘taste, habit, idiosyncrasy’.

As a biographer by profession, Dubin thinks that “Biography—literary or otherwise—teaches you the conduct of life----- .You see in other who you are”(p.130). So he goes deep into the lives of others in biographies and as he writes them, tries his level best to understand his own self. Dubin tries to understand Lawrence so as to learn how to lead a better life when his creative talents and sexual powers are declining. Asked why Malamud chose Lawrence as the subject of Dubin’s biography, Malamud says he did so “because Lawrence’s theories about the significant relationship of sexual experience to the deeper sources of life and beyond into a kind of mystical universe gave Dubin things he could think about more than mere experience itself”.

Dubin’s affair with Fanny Bick teaches him the mysteries of the human flesh and life, thereby assisting him to maintain his psychic balance through commitment. Dubin prefers sexual freedom to restraint. His philosophy of life is ‘to live life to the hilt’ Dubin’s dream of life is ‘plentitude of life through love’(p.303) and this dream is materialized by Fanny Bick who arrives in his home
as a 'cleaning person'. From the beginning, Dubin is fascinated by
the erotic power of Fanny Bick. "Her light hair hung loosely down
her back, ....... Her abundant body, though not voluptuous, clearly
had a life of its own" (p. 21). Dubin feels her sexuality keenly and
gets worried "whether he had responded to her as his usual self, or
as one presently steeped in Lawrence's sexual theories, odd as they
were" (p. 23).

Fanny brings to his mind the picture of his daughter Maud,
and "he sensed in himself something resembling incest taboo once
removed - you don't bed down a girl your daughter's age - let alone
other inhibitions" (p. 32). She also advocates the concept of free sex.
"To me life is what you do. I want it to enjoy, and not make any
kind of moral lesson or fairy tale out of it" (p. 35). For her 'the most
satisfying pleasure of life' is to have sex with anyone she happens
to come across. "I am young yet. I don't do everything for a
purpose. I do something for fun" (p. 45).

Soon they embrace and kiss. After they kiss for the first time,
Dubin experiences a sense of enhancement and "was headily into
his chapter and feeling a long sense of future pleasure: savored the
joys of accretion, of laboring and constructing order: appreciative of
the self who served him best”(p.33). But soon Fanny quits the job when Dubin disagrees to make love to her in Kitty’s absence. Suddenly she leaves, leaving the biographer depressed by an intense sense of loneliness. Dubin thinks that being married doesn’t mean one should live with only one woman. He follows Fanny and compels her to spend a week with him in Venice.

The Venice adventure brings Dubin frustration and pain instead of long desired sexual pleasures with Fanny. He feels remorseful that a man of his age should make love with a girl of his daughter’s age. Yet he likes to enjoy because ‘I have it coming to me’. He remembers Kitty and justifies his action. He tells that he loves Kitty but looks for diversion in order to recreate past pleasures. His association with the girl increases day by day, but he cannot give her what she is in search of. Once he finds in the hotel room Fanny sleeping with a gondolier because the latter ‘needed me more than you ever did(p.83). Fanny asserts that she has no commitments to Dubin and leaves for Rome. We see Fanny boards the boat and waves goodbye to Dubin. Dubin “lifted his hat, feeling as he did, glad at least to be alone, and had then his moment of elation”(p.86).
Back home with a guilty conscience, Dubin does not tell anything about the trip to Kitty. He returns to his work on Lawrence and tries to be nice with Kitty. In the meanwhile Fanny's letter arrives and he fails to get rid of Fanny's thoughts. In the letter she seeks forgiveness for her misbehaviour and says that she is now living with a man named Arnaldo, still wearing Dubin's bracelet 'even in bed'. Dubin destroys Fanny's letter though he 'felt a punitive sense of self-disgust'(p.115). In anger he types out a few lines accusing her of moral scarcity. "you’ve cheapened and shamed me. Please don’t bother writing again.......")(p.115). But Fanny's memory haunts him very often. He finds that he cannot concentrate on his work, the biography of Lawrence. "He was not with it, whatever it was. It was whatever – with Fanny. He lived on memories of her; Lawrence would have scorned me for the little he’d had yet lived on"(p.124). And incapable of returning to ‘productive work', he finds that “his ego was more savagely self–obsessed"(p.125). Dubin's pursuit of Fanny is in fact “related to his anxiety about his own aging and the whereabouts and safety of his daughter". In the meantime Fanny's second and third letters arrive. Dubin burns the second letter but keeps the third because
in it she mentions that she has respect for him though "you don't seem to have much for me" (p.135). It satisfies his ego because Fanny has begun to respect him. One night he cannot sleep and goes on a walk all alone and loses his way in a blizzard. He curses himself more than anything else:

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? She doesn't deserve the feeling I give her. See what I've done to myself. I'm a broken clock-works, time, mangled. What is life trying to teach me? (p.152).

In the meantime Dubin changes his study from the house to the barn. But his decision to avoid Fanny fumbles the moment he meets Fanny. When she touches him, he flings on to her. They make love in the open field and Dubin rationalizes the affair as "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.210). Fanny also comes back to Center Campobello, and often sleeps with Dubin in his barn study. She buys the neighbouring farm and starts breeding goats.

Dubin's unrestricted attitude towards sex does not give him any happiness. According to Malamud, sexual liberation "means no
less turmoil than restraint". Now he will have to select between Fanny and his wife Kitty. Dubin has to weigh the passionate affair of Fanny with the lifetime he has lived with Kitty. Dubin desires sexual fulfilment with Fanny. 'What he desired, she (Fanny) gave him.' He likes Fanny's affectionate attitude towards him. But Kitty has fulfilled the important aspects in Dubin's life. She has helped Dubin to create stability and order in his life and has allowed him to act the roles of the lover, the father and the husband. What Kitty lacks throughout her life is the absence of romantic passion. Kitty loves Dubin, but the echo of her first marriage haunts her even after twenty years. He cannot make a proper choice because he likes to continue his relationship with Fanny without hurting Kitty.

Dubin's difficulties with the marriage occur because of his affair with Fanny and also because of his increasing sense of isolation from the rest of human community, including his wife. In fact Dubin does not realize the fact that he cannot attain true identity and true love unless he transcends his own self.

However his daughter, Maud helps him to redeem in the end. The man whom she loves is of Dubin's age; he is her 'father, lover and friend'. She never discards her jewishness – her determination
to keep her pregnancy is a clear evidence of this. By depicting the character Maud, Malamud shows the true, human Jewish spirit. That is the ability to look at life as a challenge, with endless courage of conviction, without bothering about the dangers and possibilities of disasters. Maud feels that she should accept life as it occurs so as to preserve the essence of Jewishness.

Fanny’s sympathy and love for Kitty act as the crucial motive in Dubin’s life. Once Fanny tells Dubin that she has seen Kitty at the market place. Fanny has felt sorry for her because of her sad appearance. Hearing this Dubin remembers that in loving Fanny ‘he withheld love from his wife and daughter’. So he feels committed to his wife and children. Helterman says “In a world of Malamud, a character must find out who he is and then discover for whom he is responsible”.53

Meanwhile Kitty leaves for Stockholm in search of Gerald, her son. Fanny comes there and compels Dubin to have sex in Kitty’s double bed. Dubin, who is now changed into a morally responsible man, does not permit Fanny to do so. Enraged Fanny asks him, when he is going to leave Kitty. But Dubin replies that he has no such intentions. “There are commitments in marriage. It takes a
while to reconsider each"(p.266). The angry Fanny leaves him proclaiming her stance:

One thing I do know is I'm not someone who's around just to keep your mind off old age........ But I have to be myself, Fanny Bick, a woman living with or married to a man who wants her – wants to live with her and enjoy their life. 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.267-268).

From this, we understand that she has now realized the purpose and direction of her life. At present she is more organized, integrated, and can make her own decisions. So Dubin thinks, when she leaves “Maybe I've done her a favour to let her go”(p.269).

The return of Dubin to his wife as a loving husband is the result of his realization of the moral obligations to his wife and children. “Dubin, weary of himself, wanted to be better than he was, free of twitches, ties, compulsive gestures. He wanted to be self-sufficient, in control, good to others, good to his wife........ I'm not doing anything for anybody”(p.301). The novel ends with Dubin’s accomplishing his responsibilities to Fanny from whom he has learnt a great deal about life. They are about to separate from
each other when Fanny all on a sudden asks Dubin if he loves his
top. Dubin's reply is 'I love her life'.

Thus in the end, Dubin emerges as a real hero who fulfils not
only his own humanity but also of others. In trying to protect his
own essential self and dignity from all kinds of assaults and
pressures, he transforms his limitations and sense of guilt to
commitment. Here we find Malamud not like earlier novels, turning
from the "'sad eyed ironist of human suffering' into 'an unself-
conscious celebrant of the self'".54

Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition is a kind of picaresque
novel with Fidelman's misadventures in Rome, Milan, Florence and
Venice trying to find his real path. His encounters with various
characters guide him to self-awareness as an artist and as a lover.
In effect, Pictures of Fidelman upholds the familiar Malamud theme
of man's moral growth through suffering, commitment and self-
sacrificing love.

The story begins in Rome, where Fidelman has arrived to
make a critical study of Giotto. Fidelman, the 'self-confessed failure
as a painter' wants both perfection of life and work. Soon he meets
Shimon Susskind, a Jewish refugee from Israel, who requests
Fidelman his second best suit to wear against the coming winter and some money. But the art critic, Fidelman refuses to give his suit.

"Am I responsible for you then, Susskind?"
"Who else?" Susskind loudly replied.......... 
"Why should I be?"
"You know what responsibility means?"
"I think so."
"Then you are responsible. Because you are a man. Because you are a jew, aren’t you?’
"Yes, goddamn it, but I’m not the only one in the whole wide world. Without prejudice, I refuse the obligation. I am a single individual and can’t take on everybody’s personal burden. I have the weight of my own to contend with”55(p.22-23).

Irritated, Susskind steals the art critic’s briefcase which contains his first chapter on Giotto.

By this very act Fidelman denies responsibility for anyone but himself; he tries to separate himself from his own heritage, his own past. Now Fidelman cannot proceed with his work because the missing chapter stands for his own past, a past about which he has no real insights. So the desperate Fidelman begins an urgent search for Susskind. Finally Fidelman meets Susskind, selling holy beads outside St.Peter’s Church and follows him to his home - an
extremely cold ice box, some one has rented him for the winter. On
that night Fidelman dreams of 'Virgilio Susskind', who asks him:

"Have you read Tolstoy?"
"Sparingly".
"Why is art?" asked the shade, drifting off.(p.34).

Fidelman, of course, does not understand the purpose of art or the
meaning of his alien past represented by Giotto. But 'Virgilio
Susskind' discloses the meaning of Giotto to him by presenting a
picture of St.Francis giving his 'gold cloak' to 'an old Knight'(p.40).

But Fidelman learns little from the dream. Art for Malamud tends
towards morality, and morality in his own words, "begins with an
awareness of the sanctity of one's life, hence the lives of others-
even Hitler's to begin with - the sheer privilege of being in this
miraculous cosmos, and trying to figure out why."56

The next day itself Fidelman gives Susskind the suit with the
hope of getting his suitcase and manuscript back. Susskind returns
Fidelman's suitcase; Fidelman savagely opens it, searching
desperately for the chapter on Giotto. Susskind has burnt it,
because "The words were there but the spirit was missing" despite
his 'triumphant insight'(p.41). Thus Susskind makes him realize
his deficiencies.
However Fidelman’s true liberation from the prison of self takes place in the last story, ‘The Glass Blower of Venice’. This time in Venice, Fidelman is forced by circumstances to do the humble service of carrying passangers through the flooded squares of the city. Fidelman meets Beppo, the bisexual glass blower, through his wife Margherita, with whom he is having an affair. One day Beppo discovers them together and immediately makes love with Fidelman. “Think of love”, the glass blower murmured. “You have run from it all your life” (p. 181).

After that they are inseparable lovers, with Beppo leading Fidelman to his real self. Fidelman’s attitude to Beppo’s love is continuous, without any reservation. Fidelman shows Beppo what is left of his art work. But Beppo advises him to destroy that work. “If you can’t invent art, invent life” (p. 180). Thus the glassblower liberates the artist of false pretensions by teaching him the art of blowing glass and the value of true love. The story concludes with an optimistic note. “In America he worked as a craftsman in glass and loved men and women” (p. 190). Fidelman thus secures his triumph over life and art through selfless love. Here we find Malamud is looking towards an aesthetic plane where the art-life
paradox ceases. He has said in an interview: "It isn’t life versus art necessarily; it’s life and art. On Fidelman’s tombstone read: ‘I kept my fingers in art’. The point is I don’t have large thoughts of life versus art; I try to deepen any given situation".57

The theme of blocked love and the lack of male-female communication are the major themes of Malamud’s novel The Tenants. ‘Harry Lesser’ the Jewish protagonist of The Tenants is a committed writer. “He lives to write, writes to live”58(p.23). He has already published two novels and is trying to complete his third novel. He has deep desire to make his book ‘ The Promised End’ a great success. “I, want to be thought of as a going concern, not a freak who had published a good first novel and shot his wad”(p.13). The third novel deals with love or the search of it and he imagines that his writing will teach him how to love. But the reality is that he doesn’t know much about love because of his separation from the outside world. So Harry Lesser is in a very critical situation.

After a while, Willie Spearmint, a black Negro writer enters into Lesser’s room. Harry is compassionate, sympathetic and generous minded and he upholds human values. He sees in Willie a potential friend. Willie on the other hand writes to live. His aim is

The strain and hostility between the two reaches its summit when Harry tells Willie that he loves Willie’s white girl friend Irene. Hearing this Willie in rage beats Harry and burns his manuscript, symbolically burning the white writer. But Harry thinks that the book can be destroyed, not the writer. So he starts writing the book once again with fresh hopes.

In the meantime Irene compels him to leave the book aside and spend sometime with her. But Harry remains firm in his aim. So Irene leaves him. “She wrote him a note........ ‘No book is as important as me’”(170). Irene is more humane and the fact is that she survives, physically as well as spiritually. In the traditional critical view of her, she is “the all too human female character...... whose gift of love tends to be a dubious blessing”. According to Lesse, love up to a point is no love at all and his life betrays his imagination. So Lesser cannot write what he cannot practice in reality.
Even after Irene’s desertion of him, he continues his writing only to find that the second attempt is not so good as the first one. He thinks “How can one write the same thing twice? It’s like trying to force your way back into yesterday” (p. 171). Here Lesser realizes that he cannot control the passage of time by writing a book, by inventing fantasies and substituting them in reality, because denying love is the greatest evil.
Notes and References


15. Bernard Malamud, 'The Assistant', 1957, Oxford University Press; P.30. All further references in this chapter are to this edition, indicated by page numbers parenthetical in the text.


17. Sandy Cohn, Bernard Malamud and The Trial by love (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1974), p.45; here after cited as 'BMTL' in this chapter.


31. Sandy Cohn, BMTL, p.68-69.

32. Ibid, p.69.

33. Ibid, p.68.

34. Tony Tanner, AF, p.333.

35. Robert Ducharme TTF, p.87.


38. Sidney Richman, BM, p. 92.


44. Pearl K. Bell, "Heller and Malamud, Then and Now", commentary 67.6 June 1979: 75.


49. Bernard Malamud, ‘Dubin’s Lives,’ New York (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1979)p.145. All further references in this chapter are to this edition indicated by page numbers parenthetical in the text.


54. Dean Flower, “Picking up the Pieces”, The Hudson Review 32.2 Summer 1979 ;305.


58. Bernard Malamud, ‘The Tenants’ (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p23. All further references in this chapter are to this edition indicated by page numbers parenthetical in the text.