

HUMANISM IN THE NOVELS OF BERNARD MALAMUD



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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **Humanism in the Novels of Bernard Malamud** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy is a record of bona fide research carried out by P.K. Suleikha under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma or other similar title before.

Place : Ernakulam

Date : 04.03.05



Dr. Mohamed Elias

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Humanism in the Novels of Bernard Malamud** is a record of the bona fide research carried out by me and that no part of it has previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or any other similar title.

Place: Kodungallur

Date : 04-03-05


P.K. Suleikha

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*Dedicated to my grandson
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Chapter I

Introduction

Humanism, as exemplified in the literary theory of classicists like Matthew Arnold emphasized human values, as did the New Humanism of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer. More who made a plea for humanistic criteria in art and philosophy. However the focus has shifted in an anti-humanistic direction as a result of the first Saussurean radicalization in literary theory according to Catherine Belsey in *Critical Practice*.

In this context the notion of a text which tells a (or the) truth as perceived by an individual subject (the author), whose insights are the source of the text's single and authoritative meaning is not only untenable but literally unthinkable, because the framework which supported it, the framework of assumptions and discourse, ways of thinking probing and analyzing that it was based on and no longer stands (3)

Indeed, the author is dead, and with his death 'the subjectivity' inherent in the commonsense-based humanism

has ceased to have any authenticity for the purpose of critical judgement. Despite this, fiction continues to explore largely human predicaments, especially in the works of novelists like Bernard Malamud, whose generalization about Jewishness is as much authorial as textual. This is a fact that repeatedly emerges from statements in reviews and critiques which this study intends to analyse. The aim is to clarify the status of the still indispensably human relationship between writers, characters and readers. The literary experience presented in the fictional art of writers like Malamud certainly has vital relevance to the human rights issues of our time.

The achievement of Bernard Malamud is well-known and widely recognized. He is one of the major American writers of the Post Second World War period. He was and is a master of American prose. Jews and Jewish history, culture and religion are centrally important in his exploration of some of the basic issues facing all human beings. These issues include the importance of a correct understanding of human suffering, identifying the true nature of human condition and the responsibility that one human being has for another.

When Bernard Malamud died on March 18, 1986 he left behind eight novels, four collections of short stories and a reputation as a major American fiction writer of the century. In background, personality and accomplishments he epitomized the second generation American Jew, the Russian immigrants' son who climbed from poverty to success through the combination of talent, free education and discipline.

Richard R O' Keefe comments:

The reputation has been confirmed by the most varied and serious critical commentaries and scholarly investigations that have ranged from arcane explorations of Jungian archetypes to popular appreciations of baseball lore. Of appeal to the most academic of literary specialists, his work has also appeared in *Playboy* magazine and been made into popular Hollywood films. As a writer Malamud is very American. He is also very Jewish. His final literary value, however, may go deeper than both of those deep categories: the meanings and messages of his fiction may, in fact be universal (240).

Alan Cheuse and Nicholas Delbunco, the editors of *Talking Horse: Bernard Malamud on life and work* comment:

Few writers have had as respectful an audience in their lifetimes; few writers seem more likely to endure. There are conferences in his honour, a prestigious award in his name, even "The Bernard Malamud society" (founded in 1991) and a newsletter to which his adepts subscribe. His fiction thrives in paperback and translation, on bookstore and library shelves; the critical bibliography grows apace. (XIII).

The obituary for Malamud written by Philip Roth appeared in the *New York Times* book review on April 20, 1986. He is most often ranked in appraisals of his literary importance with Roth and Bellow. *Cynthia Ozick*, in her "Remembrance" of him in *Partisan Review* (464), described Malamud as the

writer who had brought into being a new American idiom of his own idiosyncratic invention; this was the writer who had introduced the idea of blessing virtue as insight, virtue as crucible - into the

literature of a generation mainly sunk in aestheticism or nihilism or solipsism.

Malamud has won many awards. They reveal his stature: the Partisan Review Fellowship, 1956-57; the Daroff Memorial Award and the Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters for his second novel, *The Assistant*, 1958; The National Book Award for *The Magic Barrel*, 1959, in 1964 membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters; both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for *The Fixer* in 1967; membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967; presidency of the P.E.N American center, 1979; and the gold medal for fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1983.

American Jewish novelists are mainly pre-occupied with the "complex fate" of being a Jew in America. Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow and Philip Roth render this experience of acculturation in their short stories and novels. Bellow dislikes being called a Jew; Roth is a severe critic of Orthodox Judaism. Both of them are aware of Jewish assumptions but their emphasis is on secular transethnic values. Malamud's position is qualitatively different. The stamp of Jewishness is invariably

assigned to the creative genius of Malamud. He is emphatic in asserting that there is a broad humanistic concern in all his tales about Jews. Malamud's comment that "Every man is a Jew though he may not know it" has led to a great amount of discussion concerning the underlying meanings in his fiction(7). He has seen his statement as indicating how history, sooner or later treat all men. Thus the Jews can be seen as exemplars of the injustices that eventually affect all human beings. He looks upon a Jew as a paradigm of human values and not as a creature of a chosen tribe. Malamud presents them as every man in his attempt to cope with the pressures, human demands and responsibilities of life. Roth accepts this humanistic promise in Malamud's writing and remarks: "What it is to be human, to be humane is hi subject. Connection, indebtedness responsibility, these are his moral concerns"(151). Malamud also sees suffering as something that all human beings must face; what they do with it determines the persons they become.

Leslie A. and Joyce W. Field have written that Malamud's "definition of Jewishness includes such universal human values as moral obligation to one's fellowman and the community;

acceptance of responsibility; being involved in the suffering of others; and learning from one's own suffering" (4). Malamud himself explains his point of view when he says that he writes about Jews because he knows something about them, though he is "not afraid to go from Jewish experience to non-Jewish experience". When he is specifically asked about his Jewish subject matter, his answer is:

As far Jewishness, it is there, and I draw from its love of morality to strengthen my own, and from its history as symbol of man's struggle, and use whatever other material excites my imagination. I am not a religious Jew. (13)

In his career as a writer, which lasted over half a century, Bernard Malamud adhered to a fixed regimen of work, producing a substantial and substantive body of fiction. He published eight novels: *The Natural* (1952); *The Assistant* (1959); *A New Life* (1961); *The Fixer* (1955); *Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition* (1969); *The Tenants* (1971); *Dubin's Lives* (1979); *God's Grace* (1982); and finally, *The People and Uncollected Stories* was published posthumously in 1989. There are four collections of short stories: *The Magic Barrel* (1958);

Idiots First (1963); *Rembrandt's Hat* (1973); and *Stories of Bernard Malamud* (1983), as well as the sixteen previously uncollected stories that appear in *The People and Uncollected Stories*.

Malamud has been grouped ethnically and thematically with Philip Roth and Saul Bellow, Isaac Bashevis Singer and J.D.Salinger, seen as kin to Kafka, Hawthorne -haunted, Dostoyevski- driven, and had his books compared with those of James Joyce, Henry James, James Baldwin and many others. In his early work Malamud introduced character transformations, symbolic redemptions and moral victories. His earliest critics were intrigued by his desire to wring from life a meaning in suffering. They also recognized an indelible sadness in his work. Malamud's thematic preoccupations – the mystery of human suffering, redemption and transformation, fate and the problem of human freedom, the conflict between art and life – were also connected to innovative narrative strategies and techniques. Joel Salzberg states in the Introduction to *Critical Essays on Bernard Malamud*.

In scanning his career, we find that there is more than one Bernard Malamud to contend with: the

benevolent humanist, sometimes approaching the mystic, the writer, repeatedly nurturing an unconscious anger and aggression; the philosophical pessimist, still seeking affirmations: and, most assuredly, the literary craftsman, almost compulsively exploring new subjects, techniques, and narrative forms. If the images that have been developed around Malamud and his work are various and often contradictory, the critical reaction to his fiction, past and present, has been no less diverse (3).

An examination of Malamud criticism and scholarship brings out its seriousness and scope. Of the many approaches to organizing an overview of Malamud criticism, the most convenient step has been adopted by Richard R.O'Keefe. The surprising amount of critical commentary falls into four categories.

The first, most prevalent and certainly the most obvious is the ethnic: discussions of Malamud's Jewishness – how he uses Jewishness and the tones he takes toward this delicate and sometimes controversial literary subject. The five categories of

discussion related to Jewishness in Malamud can be classified as cultural, religious, literary, linguistic and responses to the Holocaust. These categories are not mutually exclusive; often they are inseparable in discussion and have received a major amount of attention in Malamud criticism. Both the presence and absence of specifically "Jewish" content has provided material for critical comment and Malamud has been grouped with Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Henry Roth, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and other writers who try to define and characterize a "Jewish" school. Resurfacing of intense interest in the Holocaust both for historical and political reasons has stimulated discussion of Malamud's work in terms of its implicit indulging motif of post - Holocaust suffering and pity for its victims and survivors.

The second category is mythic. From the moment that the first reviewers of his first novel *The Natural* discovered that they were dealing with the Grail legend as well as with baseball, serious analysis of Malamud has included the searching out of myths, archetypes and Jungian meanings. Earl R. Wasserman's essay on "*The Natural* as Malamud's world Ceres" first published in *Continental Review* (4, No. 5., Fall 1965: 438-

60) defined a whole school of Malamud criticism. The idea of Malamud as a mythmaker was so persuasive and pervasive that Charles Sweet in his doctoral dissertation argued that Malamud's novels from *The Natural* through *The Fixer* bear a mythic substructure advancing the "brudermensh" ideal of a mythic hero quester ultimately concluding that all men are responsible for each other. Robert Alter saw Malamud as a maker of Jewish myth. Beth and Paul Burch discerned in his *Talking Horse* a "crosshatching" of Jewish and Greek mythic elements. There are many discussions of Malamud as a fantasist and mythmaker.

The third category is the philosophical, which possibly began with the readers noting the similarity between the names Morris Bober, *The Assistant's* humble sage and the philosopher Martin Buber. This school of Malamud commentary stresses existential motifs such as freedom by citing Malamud's characteristic use of the antithesis of freedom: prisons and other enclosures, literal or metaphoric and his frequent motifs of alienation, anxiety, suffering and self-transformation.

Finally, O' Keefe identified the cultural category. Critics have explored the influence of Hawthorne and Henry James

and of Malamud's own travels in Italy to account for his themes of "the Schlemiel Abroad", of innocence and art and their inversions and his ironically rendered Italian scene.

Rita. N. Kosofsky adds a postscript as an additional area of critical response or a fifth category. In treating Malamud's later novels critics discussed his concern with the conflict between indulgence and discipline, between experience and analysis, life and art.

There are many collections of critical essays, by Leslic A Field and Joyce W Field, Harold Bloom, Joel Salzberg etc. Edward A. Abramson's *Bernard Malamud Revisited* is a companion to the earlier Twain volume *Bernard Malamud* by Sidney Richman. Another useful book is *Talking Horse: Bernard Malamud on his life and work* edited by Alan Cheuse and Nicholas Delbanco which contains unpublished notes, responses, letters etc from the Manuscripts Room of the Library of Congress to which Malamud did not permit access when he was alive.

The writer's desire to be "of assistance" kept him making himself available to interviewers and doing his best to overcome his instinctive and principled resistance. *Conversations with*

Bernard Malamud edited by Lawrence M Lasher enlists twenty-eight interviews. This is the chief source of information about the writer's vision of his world and his work since he left little prose outside of the fiction. The interviews are a rich source of authorial commentary on a wide range of topics and are invaluable in providing a limited but often sharply outlined picture of the man behind the books.

With the long-sustained and extensive critical discussions of Malamud's novels over the years the researcher is amply provided with a variety of stimulating perspectives. The possibility of change and growth through an experience with someone else's pain, usually discussed under the theme of redemptive suffering has generally been accepted at face value as the corner stone of the humanism in Malamud's earliest work. Jill Louise O' Brian has done research on "The Humanism of Bernard Malamud in four selected novels." This study examines four selected novels by Bernard Malamud in the light of major assumptions about man and the universe broadly held by twentieth century humanists. Through an internal, descriptive, analytical study of character, plot and related imagery in *The Natural*, *The Assistant*, *A New Life* and

The Fixer the dissertation probes Malamud's artistic affirmations. These affirmations are compared with assumptions common to contemporary humanists. The study hopes to suggest whether "humanism" describes the quality of feeling, the type of orientation characteristic of Malamud's novelistic affirmations. Chitrlekha has her doctoral thesis on "Humanism in Bernard Malamud's novels." She argues that the protagonists of Malamud's novels struggle hard to find an escape from the one word tangles of their lives. The more they try to get rid of the tangle, the more they find themselves ensnared and entrapped in it. It is only after tasting the bitter experience of life that they realize its true meaning. There is naturally the emergence of Humanism. Here both O'Brian and Chitrlekha have probed into the tenets of humanism in relation to man and the universe. My argument is totally different from these. I hope to probe into the first five novels of Bernard Malamud and arrive at his dedication and commitment to the human. Bernard Malamud was a conscientious, dedicated writer, remarkably disciplined in pursuit of his art while at the same time striving to live the fully humane, morally responsible life his writing tried to illuminate. He has told the

interviewer Haskel Frankel "My Work, all of it is an idea of dedication to the human". I also hope to prove that Malamud was influenced by the Yiddish tradition and the novels under scrutiny illustrate the influence of Hasidism.

Malamud's thematic preoccupations are centered in his large and comprehensive moral vision, which arises out of the struggle to win freedom for the self through a victory over the self. His characters "are engaged in the enterprise" to "transcend" the self - to extend one's realm of freedom "(stern). He is intersected in man's "best efforts to produce a greater freedom than he was born with" (Benedict) He alluded to this fundamental "commitment to the human" - the idea of extending one's own freedom and thereby the freedom of others- as it arose in many fictional contexts, for example, sexuality and love, the commitment to art, the metaphor of prison and the centrality of the notion of suffering. He spoke of the "strong theme" of "self understanding in the work, since if one is to win the battle with the self, one must penetrate the mystery of the self" (Suplee). The notion of the "commitment to the human" as a major theme of his work got additional expression in the interviews when Malamud was questioned

about the nature of the relationship of the artist to society. Malamud was familiar with some Yiddish fiction in translation, in particular Sholem Aleichem and I.L Peretz. Malamud's parents were Yiddish speaking Jews who emigrated to America from a shtetl in the Ukraine, a centre of Hasidic influence. Malamud's family were not themselves Hasidim, but they were exposed to a basically folk tradition which permeated the culture of East European shtetl until its destruction in the twentieth century. Malamud recalls for us the humour of Sholem Aleichem and the irony of I.L Peretz. His tales infuse us with the same sense of mystery that we find in the recreated Hasidic tales of Martin Buber because he shares with all these writers a common past.

In his interview with Joseph Wershba Malamud has stated:

My premise in for humanism – and against nihilism. And that is what I try to put in my writings. My premise is that we will not destroy each other. My premise is that we will live on. We will seek a better life. We may not become better, but at least we will seek betterment (7)

In his interview, he has told Haskel Frankel:

My work, all of it is an idea of dedication to the human. That's basic to every book. If you don't respect man, you cannot respect my work. I am in defense of the human (21)

In his National Book Award Acceptance Address he has spoken about "an idea that animates my writing":

I am tired of the colossally deceitful devaluation of man in this day, for whatever explanation: that life is cheap amid a prevalence of wars; or because we are drugged by totalitarian successes into a sneaking belief in their dehumanizing propaganda; or tricked beyond self-respect by the values of the creators of our own thing-ridden society; as when demography counting two where there was one, by the law of supply and demand cheapens all; or because having invented the means of his extinction, man values himself less for it and lives in daily dread that he will – in a fit of passion, pique and absent mindedness – achieve his end. Whatever the reason, his fall from grace in his eyes is betrayed

in the words he has invented to describe himself as he is now: fragmented, abbreviated, other directed, organizational, anonymous man, a victim, in the words that are used to describe him of a kind of synecdochic irony, the part for the whole. The devaluation exists because he accepts it without protest. (215)

Like Faulkner Malamud sees humankind enduring, despite his recognition of the difficulties of life and human limitations. He is a writer who believes that the human spirit may be capable of overcoming the pressures in modern civilization that would destroy it. According to Malamud the most important task of a writer

is to recapture his image as human beings as each of us in his secret heart knows it to be, and as history and literature have from the beginning revealed it. At the same time the writer must imagine a better world for men the while he shows us, in all its ugliness and beauty the possibilities of this. In recreating the humanity of man, in reality his greatness, he will, among other things, hold up

the mirror to the mystery of him, in which poetry and possibility live, though he has endlessly betrayed them. In a sense, the writer, in his art, without directly stating it must remind man that he has in his human striving, invented nothing less than freedom; and if he will devoutly remember this, he will understand the best way to preserve it and his own highest value (216)

Bernard Malamud shares many thematic concerns with Nathaniel Hawthorne. Abramson states:

While Malamud cannot be said to be concerned with secret sin in all human beings, as in Hawthorne, he shares Hawthorne's belief that for an individual to grow morally he must be honest with himself in confronting those flaws that prevent him from being open and truthful with his fellows. In both authors' work these flaws create characters who are self-centred and cut off from others. Through experience with life, suffering, and introspection, Malamud's characters can frequently overcome their apartness from the human race and reach a point of

selflessness and an understanding of the difficulties faced by all human beings (6)

Malamud's response to the human condition is sensitive and is born of a compassionate understanding. He recognizes that man is a compound of good and bad, and yet has the potentiality to change for the better. His protagonists struggle for a "new life" whatever be their guilt-ridden past. We can see the idea of salvation through suffering in his novels which is developed in the work of Dostoyevski. Samuel Bluefarb calls this "the surrealistic mode of a James Joyce". (78). There are parallels with the work of Franz Kafka. Joel Salzberg quotes Neil Rudin's observation

Kafka and Malamud share the same concerns in their depiction of the misery and mystery of life, that both are anchored to the Yiddish literary tradition, and that they ultimately affirm love and responsibility as the only means of surviving an inscrutable world (XVIII)

The permanent value in Malamud lies in his belief in a moral humanistic code of behaviour, a belief in real not abstract commitment. All that he portrays of man's condition is

his pitiable plight; but his novels eventually affirm his belief that through self-scrutiny suffering and sympathy men can recreate their humanity.

Josephine Zadovsky Knopp in *The Trial of Judaism in contemporary Jewish* writing states:

Mentshlekhhkayt has as its fundamental premise the innocence of man, man free of the sins of the fall. It recognizes that within man run opposing tendencies toward good and evil and that within this context man is completely free to choose. It rests its ultimate faith in man's basic goodness and the implicit assumption that in the final analysis, he will always choose what is morally and ethically right ... (6)

Mentshlekhhkayt also encompasses the very strong sense of community that has traditionally been a feature of Jewish life. The paramount characteristic of this community feeling is the moral imperative of man's responsibility to his fellowmen. (7)

J.C. Landis has commented:

What is implicit in Malamud's first novel became explicit in *The Assistant* and in the novels that followed it ... the evolution of man into mentsh, the slow, painful discovery of the ways of mentshlekhkayt. (103)

In his first as in his later novels Malamud stresses the importance of locating our identity in genuine American myths arising from the folk. He also works the theme that suffering is essential to the development of an individual's maturity and dignity. Through Roy's example, played against the dense texture of world myth, the novel *The Natural* suggests that the struggle to attain heroic stature by an individual or a society is doomed to tragic failure when it fails to learn from what came before. A cumulatively shared collectively suffered experience. The struggle to know the self in the principal motif in Malamud's fiction. This is evocative of Hasidic teaching, when set within a Jewish context. Roy Hobbs, the hero of *The Natural* is a "schlemiel – schlimazel" character. And this is a novel without any Jewish characters. Roy's journey to self discovery is dependent on caring father figures and this is within the Hasidic framework. Roy's final defeat is turned into victory

because of his concern and responsibility for others. When Prof. Earl Royt came to the University of Calicut as a visiting Professor I had the good fortune to have discussions with him. Roy becomes a *mentsh* – a ‘decent’ human being – a compassionate human being who feels bad about doing wrong and who has the shock of realization of a beaten man, “I never did learn anything out of my past life, now I have to suffer again” (237)

The scrutiny of the second novel *The Assistant* reveals the inexhaustible moral stamina in Morris and Frank. Malamud does not look upon the Jew as "a specialist in alienation" as does Rosenfeld (69). He does not believe in the "stratified, antipodal postures of the Jew and the Gentile" to quote D.R.Sharma (37). His Jewishness therefore is

a symbol for the moral rehabilitation of man, a type of metaphor...both for the tragic dimension of anyone's life and for a code of personal morality.

Malamud's moral vision is akin to the universal human condition and places its centre in the heart of man. Morris Bober explains to his assistant that to be a good Jew all one needs is a good heart. Morris Bober can be called a *mensch* in

the true sense of the word. Although Morris may define Jewish Law as the Torah, the best principles that he chooses to live by are universal. Most of the laws of the Torah are universal, but there are many which Morris chooses to ignore that are directed particularly to the children of Israel. At the end of the novel Frank may develop into the moral center of the neighborhood, much as Morris was. To quote Abramson "we are left with the image of a man sitting alone in a cell like store, reading the Bible and thinking of St. Francis. His redemption is complete". The novel explores the theme of self-discovery within an aesthetic mode that intensifies the experience of a visionary journey. The relationship between Morris Bober and Frank Alpine takes on an added lusture of a zaddik and his disciple. Malamud emphasizes that freedom must be interpreted as the release of the bondage to the self. Frank's transformation is as dependent on his identification with Morris as it is on Morris identification with Frank. The name Morris Bober is very similar to that of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher of the twentieth century. The ideas and development of characters in *The Assistant* parallel the philosophy set forth in Buber's famous work *I and Thou*. The emphasis on personal inner

salvation, the doctrine of of the "zaddik" or the "righteous man", the importance if attaches to the relationship between the teacher and the pupil – all these prove that Hasidism permeates his novel *The Assistant*.

The next novel under scrutiny is his third novel *A New Life*. It is set in a much more identifiable place than is *The Assistant*, reflecting the twelve years that he lived in Corvallis, Oregon, and was an instructor in the English Department at Oregon State College. *A New Life* follows both *The Natural* and *The Assistant* in being critical of the aspects of American culture. Abramson states:

Whereas the earlier novels stress the limitations of American values in terms of national ideals of heroism, success and the American Dream, *A New Life* focusses more closely upon these values in particular time (the 1950s) and place (the West). It is the first Malamud novel that engages political issues that concerned America nationally and internationally ... that contains specific speculations on Korea, the cold war, Mc Carthyism, Hiss and chambers, loyalty oaths, the plight of liberalism, the

definition and duties of radicalism. These issues are intertwined with a strong sense of the setting: the American West with its mythological overtones (43).

In *The Assistant* Malamud demonstrates his commitment to redemption and renewal through suffering by clearly moving his hero upward to sainthood. In *A New Life* he achieves still more by enlarging his mythical material to include a more comprehensive theme, one that involves American society. Marc. L. Ratner states:

The title *A New Life* has a number of references to situations in the novel ironic and otherwise, but the novel itself is representative of a new view of American life, held by a number of post-war American writers who accept neither Mark Twain's nor Hemingway's nostalgia for the past innocence of American life nor Faulkner's burden of guilt for the failed possibility of America. Instead... more critical challenges are aimed at personal responsibility and moral choice in contemporary life.

Stanley Edgar Hyman, who later became a friend, colleague and was always a perceptive critic of Malamud,

identified the book as a fable of redemption on rebirth discerning this pervasively Malamudian motif. Levin's growth as a moral man reflects Malamud's idea of a writer's central purpose. Levin expresses opinions that parallel a remark made by Malamud in 1958. Quoting Camus he said, "The purpose of the writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself" (7). Levin is primarily concerned with values that underlie civilization and with disseminating them will students. Because of this concern, an important criticism of Levin is, to quote Ducharme, "his acceding to Gilley's demand that he abandon college teaching and thereby compromise the role of broader responsibility he had lately learned to shoulder". (125). At the end of the novel Levin achieves salvation by taking on responsibility for Pauline and her children. Abramson comments:

By abrogating his responsibility to future students, and, by implication, to the wider humanity that they represent, he allows his personal needs – what he can salvage his new life through Pauline, another human being – to overshadow his responsibility to society. While he may show courage and inner growth in taking on the burden of Pauline in spite of

Gilley's warnings concerning his shortcomings Levin shares with his protagonist of *The Assistant* Malamud's qualified religious success (52-53).

Malamud's attempt to present the theme of self-discovery in a realistic mode is shown in *A New Life*. Like all of Malamud's heroes Levin must learn to accept the sanctify of his past and the painful responsibilities of freedom. The importance of inner revival, the need for accepting the seeming limitations of past and present, the dominance of the heart over the head – these are the Hasidic themes in the novel under scrutiny.

Malamud moves from an academic setting to one of suitable historical density in his fourth novel *The Fixer*. He returns to a Jewish milieu that provides a solid base for a tale fraught with moral, religious and cultural complexities. The novel concerns the fate of Yakov Bok, a poor Jew in Tsarist Russia who undergoes great suffering during two-and-a-half years in prison. Based on an incident of anti-Semitism in Tsarist Russia, *The Fixer* forcefully articulates Malamud's commitment of humanism to a meta-Jewish secular ideal of life.

The novel is placed in a Jewish ^{shtetl}shetelt (village) in the Russia Pale (territory within which Jews were restricted). Yakov Bok, the protagonist is a Jew by birth. The Jewish history of the Passover supplies dramatic interest to the story. The central impulse transcends the Jewish framework to defend the interest of all humanity. The novel begins with the familiar quest in Malamud's protagonists for a "new life", for a deliberate rejection of the past and an impassioned search for a promising future. Yakov leaves his village for the city of Kiev hoping to improve his prospects. He is soon implicated in a false murder charge and the Black Hundreds, the organization of bigoted Russians, prepares false evidence to consign him to a solitary prison cell. Every barbaric trick possible is employed to terrorize him into confession, but Yakov is undaunted by the brutal treatment. After being imprisoned for two-and-a-half years he receives the indictment. When the book ends he is being escorted in a closed carriage to court for trial.

Yakov's moral growth occurs through the influence of his suffering on his views of the human condition, these views taking their most impressive form in his changing ideas on fatherhood. Becoming a father means he will be responsible for

the plight of other people and will have to extend his concern beyond himself even to the extent of having an outgoing love for all of suffering humanity.

Malamud does his best when he fuses realism with fantasy, when he evokes the Hasidic dream world of acknowledged limitation and unlimited possibility. That freedom must be interpreted as the release of bondage to the self is also emphasized in *The Fixer* where Malamud transforms the familiar metaphor of the prison into an historical setting. When we see *The Fixer* in the framework of Hasidism we realize man's potential to free himself from the determining bonds of past and present if he takes the journey within.

The next novel under scrutiny is *The Tenants* in which Malamud directly confronted a specific, contemporary social and political problem: the complex, inflammatory issue of racial antagonism. Reviewers and readers acknowledged and applauded his courage. *The Tenants* employed many of the major themes and motifs in Malamud's earlier work – the prison motif, the doppelganger, the relations between art and life, the insistence on man's humanity even as man displays his inhumanity. Jonathan Yardley in his review states that the

novel goes "beyond race and ideology to argue that suffering and yearning cross all barriers". It fuses two of the major themes of mature Malamud: the universal theme of man in ambiguous relation to creative activity and the tensions and dangers of the explosive relationship between Jews and Blacks in the United States.

The novel under scrutiny centres on the creative travails of Harry Lesser the Jewish writer and Willie Spear⁶mint, the Black writer who strive to establish themselves through their writing. Before they can produce their masterpieces they quarrel violently with each other. Willie destroys Harry's manuscript and Harry hacks at Willie's typewriter. The novel ends with the two writers killing each other. The Rabbi sermonises: 'Someday God will bring together Ishmael and Israel to live as one people. It won't be the first miracle!' (216). The idea of the human togetherness lies at the heart of the novel. The bleak and gloomy ending is an effective caveat – the morality of warning. The novel is a variation on the theme of brotherhood, and the value of love and compassion. Man must come to terms with the dark force in life and accept the stranger as himself. Malamud balances in between reality and

a surrealistic dream world and reminds us that man will never relate well to the stranger in his society until he learns to love the stranger in himself.

I have limited my study to these five novels of Bernard Malamud as I feel that the commitment to the human is dexterously handled in these five novels. I have not applied humanism as a philosophical doctrine. The emphasis is on the commitment to the human. I hope to trace the Hasidic influence in these five novels – the emphasis it places on personal inner salvation, the concern it shows on the folk and the stranger, the importance it attaches to the relationship between teacher and pupil, the joy with which it accepts the darkness of life and the significance it places on the telling of tales. Malamud was the son of Ukranian Jewish immigrants who were not themselves Hasidim. But he belonged to a culture that had been deeply influenced by the teachings of Hasidism. He remains within the Hasidic tradition: And his writing is in defense of human.

Chapter II

The Two Lives of Roy

While acknowledging that Renaissance humanism is the renaissance literary cult of the New learning, a revival of Greek and Roman studies, it may be noted that humanism, in its broad sense, is a concept as old as classical Greece and as modern as the present century. Subject to a wide diversity of expression, it is basically a philosophical outlook centred on the autonomy of a human being as a dignified, rational being possessing the source of truth and right. In this sense, the humanism of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More in the nineteen thirties was a reaffirmation of the primarily humanistic trend in liberal education. Earlier, Matthew Arnold, the greatest exponent of humanism in the Victorian period, strongly defended the significance of human studies in general education. Humanism has indeed emerged as a profound philosophy of mankind.

Humanism is a system of views of which man is the centre and sanction. It is based on subject for his dignity, recognition of his personality, concern for his welfare, and

creation of favourable conditions for his social life. It consists of a philanthropic outlook based on equality, fraternity and freedom. It is centred upon the primacy of man and a passionate faith in himself and does not go beyond the limits of what is human. Everything by man and for man is the central idea of all humanist ideologies and philosophies. Humanism sees man gifted with an immense strength and power, it perceives that he needs only to know himself and vibrate his inner vitality. He must give himself to other people and be useful to other people; otherwise the egotistic isolation deprives life of meaning and makes it absurd. These concerns are prominent in the novels of Bernard Malamud.

This chapter sets out to analyse Bernard Malamud's first novel *The Natural*. Humanism figures prominently especially in the end of this novel. The egotism of the protagonist, Roy Hobbs prevents him from becoming a great baseball player. He is overpowered by his lust, greed and selfishness. His frenzied pursuit of money, fame and sex, his refusal to learn from suffering and experience and his inability to come out of the shell of egotism lead to his moral disintegration. Suffering makes him realize the value of love and compassion. Roy

realizes his tragic flaw and becomes ready to face the consequences in further suffering. He becomes a better man. This change is the growth of the human being from selfishness to sociability and moral obligation. By the end of the novel, Roy Hobbs has grown to the extent that he chooses Iris over Memo, accepts the responsibility of fatherhood and recognizes the importance of love. He has eventually seen the importance and truth in Iris' understanding of human relations and of what can be learned through suffering. Through self-scrutiny, suffering and sympathy Roy Hobbs recreates his humanity.

Curiously enough, *The Natural* is a novel by a Jewish author about a gentile baseball player. However, ideologically it is to be seen in the context of a Jewish school of thought known as Hasidism. Hasidism is a movement in Orthodox Judaism that emphasizes joyful worship, mystical experience and close community under the absolute authority of a charismatic leader. The name comes from the Hasidim (pious or righteous ones), those spoken of in the Bible and rabbinical literature as particularly holy and close to God. He stressed communion with God not through ritual observance and scriptural study but through spontaneous prayer, ecstatic singing and dancing,

and other means accessible to the uneducated masses. The Besht taught through parables, encouraged an attitude of joyous celebration in the presence of God's creation, and developed a popularised version of Kabbalah, the medieval mystical tradition, that likewise emphasized direct experience over special knowledge. The movement expanded rapidly, spawning numerous sects named after the European towns of their origin. The leadership of each Hasidic sect is vested exclusively in the *zaddik*, or "rebbe", whose authority rests on spiritual inspiration, including alleged miraculous powers, and over time has become dynastic, handed down from father to son.

During the 19th century, what had begun as a radical revolt against conventional rabbinical authority became the most conservative branch of Judaism, largely in reaction to liturgical and social reforms inspired by the *Haskalah*, or "Jewish Enlightenment". This ultraorthodoxy is manifested in the retention of traditional dress and customs by contemporary Hasidism. Hasidic Jewry was nearly extinguished by the Nazi Holocaust, and today exists as a cluster of small, insular sects, mainly in Israel and in Brooklyn, New York. The American

Lubavitcher rebbe Menachem Schneerson sought to increase understanding between Hasidism and non-Orthodox Jews, and since his death in 1994 he has been hailed by some of his followers as the Messiah, whose imminent return they expect. Hasidic philosophy has been most effectively expounded in the mainstream of 20th century thought by a non-Hasid, the Australian theologian Martin Buber, who embraced the Hasidic ideal of constructive community and personal approach to the divine in his teaching that healthy social and spiritual relations are achieved through open, constructive dialogue between "I" and "Thou", whether one is communicating with another human being or with the deity.

Hasidic movement is a transformation or reinterpretation of the older Jewish mysticism. Some of the most interesting aspects of the movement are the emphasis it places on personal, inner salvation, the concern it shows for the folk and strangers, the importance it attaches to the relationship between the teacher and the pupil, the joy with which it accepts the dark side of life and the significance it places on the telling of tales.

We have come to a knowledge of Hasidism through the writings of Martin Buber who for over fifty years devoted himself to the retelling and recreation of Hasidic tales and teachings. Malamud remains within the Hasidic tradition because consciously or unconsciously he adopts its basic beliefs and values to his own individual talent. In *The Natural* the introspective quest of Roy Hobbs for understanding himself may be seen in the framework of Hasidism where the quest for God or the quest for the father is equated with self-knowledge and where, according to Gershom G. Sholem, in his book *Major trends in Jewish mysticism* "the surest way to God" is to journey into "the depths of the self" (187). Roy finally becomes a hero and achieves salvation in the Hasidic sense of the term. Though Roy has lost the game, the choice of Iris and his acceptance of suffering shows that he has found his soul.

The Natural explores the life of an American baseball player, treating the game of baseball in terms of myth. Roy Hobbs, the hero wants to become a great baseball player who possesses extraordinary heroic qualities. But he is a prisoner of his own prejudices and illusions. Baseball, like human relations, calls for a code of conduct based on felt responsibility

for others. Roy violates this code and hence his failure both in human relations and baseball.

Roy's self-centredness brings about his doom. He does not possess the vision necessary to see beyond his goal of breaking records. In Abramson's opinion Roy is interested only in

self aggrandizement and not in serving humanity.

In Malamud's fiction, self-centredness is always a primal sin that is severely punished until the individual changes his attitude (9).

The change occurs by the end of the novel when suffering brings the courage and confidence to endure further suffering. He exclaims: "I never did learn anything out of my past life, now I have to suffer again" (236). Suffering ultimately makes him realise the value of love and compassion.

Harriet Bird exposes the limitation in Roy's personality: ability without vision is not enough. She asks him whether he has read Homer, and all he can think about is "four bases and not a book" (32). She attempts to stretch his concept of his role as a future hero to include a sense of the importance of heroes

to the human race. Roy cannot understand what Harriet means, but it is clear that he has no goals other than those that will feed his personal vanity. As Earl Wasserman, in his article "The Natural: Malamud's World Ceres" points out:

it is the infantilism of the American hero Malamud is concerned with, the psychic and therefore moral regression of the gifted 'natural' who could vitalize society and reveal to it the capacities of human strength (53).

Roy becomes a self-confessed failure in Harriet's test. She shoots him in a ritualistic manner with a silver bullet. She then "making muted noises of triumph and despair, danced on her toes around the stricken hero" (41). The glorious dreams of Roy of becoming a splendid pitcher are dashed by Harriet. Roy is lost in the dark until he offers again after fifteen years in the second part of the novel. According to Abramson Roy is brought down "on account of his assuredness and lack of humility, as well as his self-centredness and a lack of a wider sense of responsibility" (11). He acquires these virtues - humility and a sense of responsibility in the end. It is a growth

from selfish infantilism of spirit to moral forbearance; from egotism to compassion.

The Natural, on the surface, is a story about a young pitcher who, on the way to a tryout with the majors, is shot by a crazed woman. He survives and makes a comeback fifteen years later as a Babe Ruth-type batter. The short "Pre-Game" section opens the novel and introduces Roy Hobbs as an innocent country boy in a man's athletic body. He sets out to conquer the world of major league baseball, quickly hobbled by a series of trials typically associated with an ingenue's initiation into the adult world of error, corruption, knowledge and suffering. At the conclusion of "Pre-Game", Roy is unexpectedly shot in the stomach by femme fatale Harriet Bird's silver bullet. The shooting forces a fifteen year old hiatus in his ball playing career.

Malamud does not show this lapse in sequence in the narrative but it appears as intermittent recollections folded into Roy's later thoughts and dreams. The second section, "Batter-up" constitutes the rest of the novel. It mirrors in expanded form the events of the first section. It takes the new thirty-four year old Roy fully into the world of adult experience through his

career as a New York Knight, his love affairs with Memo and Iris, and his contamination by the pervasive greed and selfishness around him. He descends even further into error and suffering before eventually attaining at the very end of the book self-awareness and expiation that mark the mature person. Eventually, however, Roy Hobbs does become a responsible mature human being.

Roy's limitations as a self-centred mortal and celebrated adolescent baseball star blind him to any insight or spiritual transcendence. What Roy has not yet learned is the fact that love and dedication to the needs of a larger group, the family, the team, mankind, are really the true Grail, and not the triple devils of fame, wealth and beauty which he self-destructively pursues. Daniel Walden, in his article "Malamud and his universal heroes", summarises the plight of Roy Hobbs thus:

Roy was a gifted natural who could have invigorated his team and American life, who could have had a fruitful relationship with a good woman, but whose fatal flaw was his inability to surmount his infantile yearnings. Blind to what could have been with Iris, attached to his own needs above all others, he was

wounded by Harriet, used by Memo and the gamblers, and failed to grow significantly. Harriet Bird hated to see a hero succeed, Memo cared only about using her hero, while Iris hated to see a hero fail. (155)

Roy's quest is a chronic self-indulgence for immediate gratification. For most of his life he learns nothing from his pain. Though Memo Paris resembles the destructive Harriet Bird, Roy's lust for her causes constant missing: "in his dreams he still sped over endless miles of monotonous rail toward something he desperately wanted. Memo, he sighed" (91).

Roy's overambition in baseball and greed in sex go hand in hand. His attitude to Memo Paris is completely sensual. Roy's pursuit of Memo betrays his selfish need to quench his lust. He makes a wrong choice in opting for Memo, the selfish, money-minded temptress. Memo who was averse to Roy first comes to like him probably for all the money and presents he received. Her association brings ill luck to Roy and her desertion causes a "slump" in his career. Nowhere are Memo's destructive qualities seen more clearly than in her alliance with the Judge and Gus Sands. She delivers the message from the

Judge to Roy that will mean betrayal of the team and final destruction of Roy's hopes of greatness. Roy's insatiable gluttony in the party arranged by Memo reveals, according to Tony Tanner, the "self destructive nature of his self-preoccupation" (325). Preoccupied with the thoughts of having Memo that night, he gobbles down so much food that he is hospitalised with a shooting pain in the stomach. His attempt to possess Memo at the last moment ends thus in failure.

The doctor advises Roy to bid good bye to barebell. It is inconceivable for Roy that he should quit the game for ever after having broken hundreds of records in a short time. The ritual of burying the broken bat "wonderboy" marks the end of Roy's career.

Roy is now a changed man. He not only receives the money offered by the judge but also gives stiff resistance to the evil conspirators – the judge, Gus Saads and Memo. He overcomes the conspirators in the fight. Roy has now grown from the state of enormous self love to that of "an overwhelming self-hatred" (236).

Thus through Roy's example, the novel suggests that the struggle to attain heroic stature by an individual or society is doomed to tragic failure if nothing is learned from what came before. Roy has achieved victory in his final defeat. He may have lost the world but he has gained possession of himself.

The universality of Malamud's pervasive theme – suffering and its transcendence is employed to a very remarkable extent in his very first novel, *The Natural*. Iris suggests that Roy could save himself future agony if he could only learn the lessons suggested by his own history – if he could learn to make the right choices. But Roy rejects Iris's wisdom for Memo's materialism until it is too late. Pursuing false love while ignoring true, Roy Hobbs is doomed to repent the past. At the end of the novel, desperately ill, his career destroyed, with his love for Memo dead and a new love for Iris growing in its place, he flings the gamblers' money back in the judge's face and goes hopelessly out to face an irrevocably hostile world. It is too late for Roy; finally responsible for his own fate, he has sacrificed his destiny for the desire of the moment. According to Ben Siegel, his suffering has taught him "the difficulty of becoming a

hero in society that demands its knights resist the fruits those of weaker flesh hasten to enjoy" (204).

The happiness which Iris Lemon described as maturation through suffering can be interpreted as redemption through suffering. What we need are the right goals, "right things" which suffering teaches us to want, possible, non-destructive things like love, service and self-sacrifice. The price is discipline, self-control and capacity for renunciation. Roy Hobbs learns this lesson too late. He becomes conscious of himself as a human being; he is willing to embrace the conditions that make him human and in doing so affirm himself as a participant in the human enterprise. He goes through the reality of human freedom and the morality of human affirmation. He learns that suffering is inherent in the human condition. In accepting the suffering he bolsters human solidarity and this gives his suffering a purpose. Roy exclaims: "now I have to suffer again" (236).

This is, as Sidney Richman, in his book *Bernard Malamud* calls it "the redemption through suffering" (43) that reveals the humanism of Bernard Malamud as illustrated in *The Natural*. Marcia Booher Gealy, in his book on Hasidism states that the

Hasidic emphasis on a personal inner salvation may be seen as a reply to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries crises in messianism. Martin Buber in his *Tales of the Hasidism* speaks about the Jewish mystic who insists that the way to God is to journey to the depths of the self (264). The Hasidic teachers refer to the past sages when they speak of inner salvation. Buber refers to the Rabbi of Lelov who insists, "we can be redeemed to the extent to which we recognize ourselves" (187). The quest for God means first the recognition of the self, a journey into the depths of one's own being which involves the awareness of death, repentance and rebirth.

In *The Natural* the quest of Roy Hobbs for himself can best be appreciated in the framework of Hasidism where the quest for God or the quest for the father is equated with self-knowledge. Roy must learn humility and come to terms with the limitations of his mortality, the reality of evil, and the terrible responsibilities of freedom and fatherhood. Roy finally becomes a hero; he confesses and repeats echoing the words of Martin Buber: "his heart accepts understanding and is converted to it" (314).

According to Sandy Cohen, Malamud believes that in each man there is capacity to learn from his suffering. In *The Economy of Love* he says: "Intending his novels and stories to be parables of possibility and regeneration, he reiterates his commitment to redemption and renewal through suffering" (19). Sukhbir Singh in his book on *The Jewish American Novelists* states that critics like Sidney Richman and Frederic Turner believe that Roy fails in life because he fails to rise as the greatest baseball player. Sandy Cohen appears to have a different view:

Only when Roy loses his baseball life is he in a position to gain his new and more natural life with Iris and his child which she carries. For Roy must suffer quite a bit and learn from his suffering before he can realize that if he tries to ignore his past he will be destined to relive it. (20)

Roy acquires humanistic vision at the end of the novel when he realizes "the potential of meaningful suffering, self-sacrifice, the power of love and the beauty of the human spirit" as pointed out by Sheldon Hershinov (11).

When we first meet Roy Hobbs he is on a train and is peering at his reflection in a window. As the reflection dissolves he feels "a spurge of freedom" (9), but the feeling is premature; not until the end of the novel will Roy accept the responsibilities that bring true freedom. The hero who looks at his reflection is a familiar one in Malamud's fiction, for one must know oneself to be free. The metaphor of the journey will be used again and again, and the journey is finally an inward one. In the beginning "talk about the inner self" was to Roy "like ploughing up a graveyard", but in the end he is conscious that he has to suffer again.

Pride is Roy's major flaw which goes before his fall. Harriet Bird, the destructive temptress marvels at Roy's feat of striking out the mighty Whammer Wambold:

the inspiring sight (she said it was) of David jawboning the Goliath Whammer, or was it Sir Percy lancing Sir Maldemer, or the first son (with a rock in his hand) ranged against the primitive papa (31-32).

After he defeats "the Goliath Whammer" Roy boasts to Harriet Bird: "you have to have the right stuff to play good ball and I

have it. I bet someday I'll break every record in the book for throwing and hitting". Soon, he answers her question, "What will you hope to accomplish Roy?" "Sometimes when I walk down the street I bet people will say, there's Roy Hobbs the best there ever was in the game" (33), which reflects his audacity.

His pride involves a denial of his mortality – the limitations of time, suffering and death. He is ashamed of his past. Roy tells Iris: "this was the shame in his life, that his fate, somehow had always been the same – defeat in sight of his goal" (157). He hides his identity from Max Mercy, the probing journalist. He remembers:

how satisfied he had been as a youngster, and that with the little he had had – a dog, a stick, an aloneness he loved (which did not bleed him like his later loneliness) and he wished he could have lived longer in his boyhood. This was an old thought with him (117).

Roy conjures up the illusion of himself as a boy with dog, driving Memo Paris and this shows his ambivalence about accepting pain and maturity. He denies the ravages of time to

Red Blow, who reminds him of the "short life in baseball" by declaring "To hell with my old age. I will be in this game a long time" (64). Roy's fear of suffering and death is manifested explicitly in the long conversation with Iris at Lake Michigan. Roy's pride, his fear of suffering, death and his preoccupation with boyhood – all these show that he is immature, especially if viewed in the light of Hasidism.

Hasidism emphasizes humility as the prime virtue, for Moses was "meek above all men". The word "zaddik" means "the righteous". It is the name applied to a Hasidic leader or rabbi. The zaddik, in his humility and concern for common people contrasted sharply with the conventional rabbi, who in his pride of scholarship looked only inwardly to his own needs and desires, as stated by Samuel H. Dresner in his book *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik* (240). Roy eventually abandons his pride and other vices; he becomes a zaddik, the righteous man; ready to take up responsibility and to suffer again.

Malamud frequently uses the figures of the "schlemiel" and "schlimazel" victims with a comic aspect, to depict the human condition. These figures bring forth compassion and

pathos rather than mockery and ridicule. Jewish writers from Sholom Aleichem to Bernard Malamud have depicted Job-like victims who may question their trials but ultimately accept suffering as a possible good. Malamud borrowed "schlemiel" from the yiddish writers Mendel Mocher Seforim and Sholem Aleichem, as remarked by Leslie Field in his article "Portrait of the artist as Schlemiel" (120). The "schlemiel" is that bungling clown of Jewish folklore. The "schlimazel" is his first cousin. In *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore* Nathan Ausubel states that the schlimazel "simply has no luck" and that "a schlemiel is a man who spills a bowl of hot soup on a schlimazel" (343). Schimazel is the butt of schlemiel's ineptitude.

Both types are combined in Roy Hobbs, king of bunglers. The schlemiel of Yiddish folk tradition is often an orphan, a lonely wanderer and a loner. Roy has acted the role of clown, in a small travelling carnival. Max Mercy, the journalist digs out a picture of Roy as a clown from the past as "the snubnose Boba, who despite the painted laugh on his pan, seemed sadeyed and unhappy" (170). But Roy does not have the holiness of the schlemiel, not until the end of the novel, when his choice and knowledge of self place him once again in the

position of fool and outcast. Here Malamud has used the figure of the schlemiel as a victim with a comic effect, to depict the plight of Roy Hobbs. In using the schlemiel, the beloved creature of Yiddish comic fiction, Malamud has demonstrated the influence of Yiddish folklore.

Roy tells Iris that his suffering has been undeserved. Iris tries to acquaint Roy with her deeper perceptions of life by teaching him the significance of suffering for moral discipline. She tells Roy about her perception on two levels of human life. When she tries to explain what she has learned from suffering, he chooses not to understand. Iris sees the importance of giving all to the game of life while Roy sees only the importance of being the best in the game of baseball.

Iris Lemon tells Roy Hobbs on the banks of Lake Michigan, "We have two lives Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness" (158). She also reminds him: "I don't think you can do anything for anyone without giving up something of your own" (155). The self-centred Roy is reluctant to learn anything out of his experience or suffering. Suffering is of no value and can bring no awareness for the better in a man who refuses to

learn anything from life. By the end of the novel suffering brings courage and confidence to Roy to endure further suffering. The words of Iris Lemon are like the words of a zaddik who quotes Baal Shem Tov: "suffering makes for proper insight and compassion" (485). Iris gently exposes Roy's self-centred ideas of success and heroism. He rejects his lust and because of her Roy finally probes his inner self.

Love any one and you are bound to suffer. *The Natural* shows that suffering is a necessary consequence of love. Roy's rejection of Iris may be seen as a negation of his deepest need to both give and receive love. *The Natural* shows that suffering is a necessary consequence of love. The need for love manifests itself as Roy's appetite for food. The association of food with love is accentuated in Malamud's East European Jewish background. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, in *Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl* speak about one of the chief ways by which a shtetl mother showed her love "by constant and solicitous overfeeding" (293). The Jewish mother sees food as a symbol of love and "how can there be too much of that?" (354). The food Memo offers cannot satisfy Roy whose hunger is more for the love the food symbolizes. When Roy

chooses Memo over Iris he is choosing lust over a love that would sustain and nourish him. Roy must learn that there is no way to avoid suffering; we must affirm it. Roy could save himself future agony if he could only learn the lessons suggested by his own history – if he could learn to make the right choices. By the end of the novel he has been taught "to want the right things" (158).

In Hasidism longing for a father is equated with the longing for the self. Roy experiences the selfless love of a mother and the care and dedication of devoted father like Sam and Pop. Theme of fatherhood is of great importance in Hasidian as well as Malamud's writing. According to Abramson, "it is important for the process of salvation, which requires movement from selfishness to selflessness and acceptance of responsibility for others". He had wanted to "skull" his own father ^{ho} ~~how~~_λ, after the death of his grandmother had sent him to one orphanage after the other (32).

Sam Simson and Pop Fisher are the father figures in the novel. Sam is the surrogate father; his solicitous concern for Roy goes beyond that of a scout for a player. The caring father in Sam insists that Roy take the Pullman bed while he sleeps in

the coach. He presses his wallet on Roy when he knows he is dying. Sam sees in Roy the fulfilment of the dreams of success that he was unable to achieve himself. In the track side contest Roy hits Sam with a fast ball and injures him fatally. When Roy recovers from his bellyache in the maternity hospital Sam appears in a dream. Sam is lost in a storm and Roy is searching for him. Sam is found and he tells Roy, "Don't do it", an admonition to resist the temptation to throw the game. This longing for father is equated with the longing for the self. Roy initially resists Memo, listening to the longing for the self, that better part of himself which he identifies with the caring fathers, Sam Simpson and Pop Fisher.

Pop Fisher is the Fisher King trying to lead the knights to success in their quest for the pennant. He is selfless and ethical in support of the team but he requires a hero to revitalize it and sees in Roy the qualities the team so desperately needs. His first words in the novel are that he should have been a farmer. He is a solicitous father figure with the same care and concern of Sam Simpson. His affection for Roy grows to a point when he warns Roy to stay away from Memo, his own niece because though Pop loves her, he is afraid

that she will bring bad luck to Roy. Although Roy recognizes Pop's role as his father in a spiritual sense, he chooses Memo over him as he chooses Memo over Iris. His short-sightedness causes suffering which is followed by his disloyal and treacherous action in agreeing to throw the game. Roy is not ready to accept the responsibility of fatherhood himself, he acts against the advice of his spiritual father Pop Fisher.

Mike Barney is another father figure. He is the father of a dying boy; he appeals to Roy to hit a homer to save the boy's life. The picture of Mike Barney touches Roy's compassionate nature and enables him to give up Wonderboy, the magic bat and offer to return to the game. Roy's willingness to sacrifice prompts Pop to allow him to keep wonder boy – the game, the boy and Roy's sense of decency are saved.

Eventually Iris became a central part of Roy's subconscious. Roy chooses Iris over Memo; he is ready to take up the role and responsibility of the father of the unborn child, he learns that success can be gained at the price of failure. He realises that the hero can gain moral redemption at the price of psychic suffering. He willingly accepts the two lives, "the life we learn with and the life we live after that" (158). Suffering

teaches him to want the right things (158). His bitter experiences make him a better man, a zaddik, the righteous man, a mentsh, a decent, loving, merciful, understanding, compassionate human being. Leslie and Joyce Field define menschlichkeit as "humanity" - love, mercy, compassion, "rachmones" (6). According to Josephine Zadovsky Knopp, it is humanism, "the code of mentshlekhkayt (we might call it Jewish humanism) derives from the idea of the interdependence and interaction of the world, man and god" (11).

The judging mother figure teaches the hero to endure and choose wisely. His mother died when he was seven and he remembers her as a "whore" (185). The first woman Roy identifies with his mother is Harriet Bird. She represents the basically unyielding and destructive women in Malamud's fiction who have "sick" breasts. The other Malamud bird women are Memo Paris and Avis Floss. According to Jeffrey Helterman, "throughout the novel, birds symbolize the force of the destructive mother archetype" (292). According to Earl Wasserman Harriet Bird, Memo Paris and Iris Lemon may be seen as different aspects of the terrible-beneficent mother

figure, each an essential part of the maturity process of the hero.

Iris first appears in the novel, when Roy notices her in the stands, a "black haired woman wearing a red dress . . ." (145), the direct opposite of Memo, with her red hair and black dress. As Memo is the evil knight destroyer – the Morgan Le Fay figure – so Iris is depicted as the benevolent knight supporter – the Lady of the Lake figure. Joseph Campbell, James Frazer, Jessie Weston, Mircea Eliade, Robert Graves have pictured women as the males' archetypal projection of feminine dualism – life giver and death dealer, earth mother and terrible mother (Wasserman, 21). Iris stands twice when Roy is at bat and still in his slump, as though to give a public sign of her confidence and faith in him. Iris' final conversation with Roy when she tells him he "must win" means finally he must become himself. Iris is a life-giving figure because she desires to bring out the best in Roy and gives of herself to do this. She recognizes that heroes must do more than just break records; they must use the power that they possess, which ordinary human beings do not have, to set an example as excellent human beings for the rest of mankind.

In Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah means literary tradition. In *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, Martin Buber states that a highly personal form of knowledge is thought of as Kabbalah or traditional wisdom (223). The female as destroyer and preserver, as demon and godly presence, is an interesting aspect of Jewish mysticism. Gershom Sholem, in his book *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* states that in the Kabbalah the demonic is seen as the offspring of the feminine sphere and in Kabbalah symbolism women represent the quality of stern judgement (37). According to Gershom Sholem, this is not a negation of womanhood because of the paradoxical Kabbalistic conception of the "Shekhinah", the feminine element in god (38). The Shekhinah or the divine presence of God is thought of as the queen mother of the world of sanctity. Gershom Sholem, in *Encycopaedic Judaica* refers to Lilith, the "harlot, the wicked or the black" who is thought of as the queen or the mother of the realm of evil (38). Hasidism emphasizes the reality of evil and the need for man to accept evil as part of himself. Also Hasidism insists on the unity of all things.

In *Early Masters*, Martin Buber quotes the Rabbi of Zlotchov thus, "if there were no evil, there would be no good, for

good is the counterpart of evil" (144). Furthermore, "The fact that evil confronts good gives man the possibility of victory: of rejecting evil and choosing good, and only then does good exist truly and perfectly" (145). Harriet and Memo, the "Lilith" figures test Roy's final choice of Iris who suggests the "Shekhinah" or the Divine Presence of God.

Martin Buber, in *For the Sake of Heaven: A Chronicle* pictures "Shekhinah" as a long-suffering woman with bleeding feet and attended by two "winged beings" (228). She speaks of the primacy of love and man's responsibility for his fellowman. Warning a young Jew for his failure to love she says, "one cannot love me and abandon the created being". Her final message is: "Approach me and my redemption will approach" (230). Like Iris Lemon who says, "I don't think you can do anything for anyone without giving up something of your own" (155), the Shekhinah preaches a bitter sweet message of love, sacrifice and salvation. Roy must go beyond appearance and recognize the evil within himself; he must learn to trust in love and endurance. In Iris' words, that freedom comes "more as a reward of standing it so long as any sudden magic" (81).

According to humanism man must give himself to others and be useful to them; man should not be selfish and egoistic. Roy's total selfishness is seen in his inability to relate with any depth to any of his teammates. He cannot even see his affinity to Bump, the self-centered jokester whom he tries to replace in Memo's affections as well as in the ballfield. Yet Malamud's use of the double figure is seen nowhere more pointedly in this book than in Roy and Bump. Memo mistakes Roy for Bump in bed; after Bump's death Roy takes his place in the team and becomes one of the leading hitters in the league. The crowds do not separate Roy's identity from Bump's and call him by the same name. Even Roy mistakes his own mirror image for Bump's. The doubling of Roy with Bump may certainly be seen as the displacement of one fertility hero for another. Martin Buber, in *Early Masters* quotes Rabbi Shruelke thus: "all souls are one" (208). When we interpret Malamud's use of the double in the Hasidic sense, it is Roy's oneness with Bump rather than displacement of his that is significant.

At the end of the novel Roy realizes his mistake, he leaves aside his selfishness and self-aggrandizement and prepares himself to suffer again. When Roy decides to choose Iris, he is

actually choosing victory over that part of himself which puts him in bondage to Memo, lust or greed. From the beginning Roy has had difficulty in accepting his freedom. Iris's request – "win for us, you were meant to" (225) – makes Roy realise the necessity of doing a thing for others. He decides to win the game for the love of Iris breaking the illegal agreement with the judge. Roy's salvation is initiated when he feels "suddenly anguished at what he had promised the judge" – to lose the game for the bribe of thirty five thousand dollars. Roy takes hold of his freedom of choice. His choice of the way of responsibility, love and suffering completes his salvation. In *Later Masters* Martin Buber quotes Yehudi and the Rabbi of Kotsk thus: "The most effective penance is to become a wanderer and fugitive and he who is first a wanderer and fugitive becomes cheerful afterward" (199). Roy's fate resembles that of a "wanderer and fugitive", in the Hasidic sense.

Roy may have lost the world, but he has found his soul; he has gained possession of himself. As Elie Wiesel has quoted the teachings of Baal Shem Tov: "it is more important to possess oneself than to possess; more important to be than appear" (145). Roy achieves victory in his final defeat; he

becomes more committed to the human cause. Roy eventually accepts the responsibilities that bring true freedom; he learns to trust in love and endurance. Thus he gains possession of himself and becomes a better human being. If we read these things in the light of Hasidism, Roy has become a true ^s Schlemiel or holy fool, who is destined to suffer but whose suffering gains dignity and redemption.

This development in Roy's character is reminiscent of Sholem's view, cited earlier, that the quest for God or virtue begins and ends with a journey into the depths of one's self. As long as man lives, it is never too late to make the right choice, to know and accept responsibility for the self. At last Roy has opened his eyes to the fact that he has not learnt anything from his past life and therefore he has to suffer again. And therefore he starts his journey to the depths of the self. Thus Roy chooses the way of responsibility, love, and suffering and it completes his salvation.

Chapter III

The Conflicting Lives of Frank

For Malamud man lives not only in the naturalistic world where the strongest motivating force is survival but also in a different kind of world. Here human relationships and interpersonal obligations matter significantly. This is a world which the existentialist psychoanalyst Ludwig Binswangu calls "Mit - welt" literally "with world" (40). The motivating force here is the unique reality we call human relationship, and which is the central focus of discussion in Martin Buber's celebrated book *I and thou*. Malamud's subject is nothing less than the meaning of life and that meaning is built on Martin Buber's concept of I-and-thou relationship.

Malamud's second novel, *The Assistant* illustrates the influence of Hasidism "which Martin Buber invigorated in modern Jewish theology" (Abramson, 29). Like Roy Habbs of *The Natural*, Frank Alpine, the guilt ridden apprentice character of *The Assistant* is a man in search of his soul.

Each of Malamud's protagonists, not only in *The Assistant*, but in *A New Life* and *The Fixer* as well, experiences

an awakening to the possibility of a fuller existence than the one he has been living. That awakening begins a quest for a new life which comprises the dramatic struggle central to each novel. We have found that Malamud's first novel *The Natural* suggests the myth of salvation in Hasidic terms though in an obvious pagan-Christian context. His second one *The Assistant* clearly presents the myth in specifically Jewish terms with the hero converting to Judaism in the end. Malamud himself has told Joseph Wersheba.

The novel reflects the drama which he sees in the history of the Jews. First the Prophets' way of gentleness, the sins of the people, Punishment, Exile and Return. It is the principal problem of man seeking to escape the tragedy of the past (5).

The most significant point made in the novel is that one can be good in spite of being poor. D.R. Sharma calls *The Assistant* "an elaborate rendition of the theme of suffering which runs through the entire Malamudian corpus (XVIII). The novel has been praised for its depiction of moral forbearance. According to David. R. Meshe, "to accept one's Jewishness means to experience and understand the human condition"

(61). Many critics find Frank and Morris to be the example of the allegorical Every man, an individual whose experiences are representative of those encountered by all humanity. Malamud emphasises the persistence of uncorrupted traditional Jewish values and the relevance of the Jewish tradition of idealism to life. Another critic, Abramson also finds that throughout *The Assistant* Malamud uses "the image of the Jew and the ethics of Judaism as a standard of behaviour" (25). It would seem that in this case Malamud's moral imagination is shaped by the humanistic thought of the Hebraic culture.

Malamud's ultimate preoccupation is essential humanity. He has understood what it means to be human. As he has told Haskell Frankell, "My work, all of it is a dedication to the human . . . I'm in defence of the human" (39). We are reminded of Mendel, Malamud's desperate character in *Idiots First* who demands of Ginzberg, "you bastard, don't you understand what it means to be human?" (14). Malamud has explored some of the basic issues facing all human beings, these issues include human relationships, the importance of a correct understanding of human suffering, identifying the true nature

of human condition and the responsibility that one human being has for another.

Malamud's use of the Hasidic tradition has been noted by many critics. Sidney Richman quotes Martin Buber's "Love is responsibility of an I for a thou" as epigraph for his chapter on *The Assistant* (66). He twice cites Malcolm Diamond's book on Martin Buber in their presentation of the "hallowing of every day" and the notion of "holy insecurity" (70, 74). Baumbach notices the "greatest common bond" between the philosopher and the "grocer's creator" (122). Buber states that a man defines himself in his relation with others (112).

Friedman comments: "Entering into relation is an act of the whole being – it is in fact the act by which we contribute ourselves as human . . ." (83). Peter. L. Hays highlights the similarity of the beliefs of Martin Buber and those expressed in *The Assistant* (228). To Sanford Pinsker, "Hasidism is often an ironic comment in the works of Bernard Malamud, so that while Morris Bober suggests a Hasidic saint, he is also "undercut" by Malamud's irony (14).

W.H. Handy also points out the impact of Buber's I-and-thou relationship on Morris Bober and Frank Alpine. Sheldon J. Hershinov and Samuel Bellman think that Malamud seems to be the literary counterpart of Martin Baber. Edward. A. Abramson states that the ideas and the development of characters in the novel parallel the philosophy set forth in Buber's work *I and thou* (33). Yet, it is a fact that Malamud wrote to the critic Peter Hays stating that he had only a very general acquaintance with Buber's work when he wrote *The Assistant* and did not intend to identify Morris Bober with the renowned philosopher (233). Moreover, none of these critics suggests that Malamud has used Hasidism consciously. Nevertheless, Malamud's use of the Hasidic tradition in *The Assistant* is more extensive and more significant for an appreciation of his work than has so far been demonstrated.

The relation between Morris Bober and Frank Alpine reminds us of the relation between a Hasidic Zaddik and his pupil. It also reminds us of "rachmones" the yiddish term for compassion, a fundamental concern of Jewish ethics. Malamud's concern is with the applications of "rachmones" (compassion) for human rather than divine terms.

Helen Bober, in her complex role of female destroyer and preserver suggests the "Lilith – Shekhinah" figure of Hasidic tradition. Frank Alpine's experience with Morris and Helen leads him to an identification with evil, pain and death that eventually leads to salvation. The prime concern of the novel is freedom or the release of man from bondage to himself, to put it in Hasidic terms. Malamud's use of Yiddish words and phrases, his fusion of reality and fantasy and his use of the double figure – his language acquires both precision and density when seen within the frame work of Hasidism.

As D.R. Sharma comments:

Malamud's moral vision has a pertinent relationship with the universal human condition, and places its centre in the heart of man. It is not synagogical, but an assertion of the value of life, of the possibility of the schnook – schlemiel – schlimazel to be mensches (37).

Form and content combine in *The Assistant* to create an aesthetic whole.

The tutor-tyro relationship between Morris and Frank, the father figure as much in search of son as Frank is of a father is the main concern of the novel. What Frank wishes to realise, first through self-purgation and later through conversion, is the meaning of being human in a dogma - and - doctrine - dominated life. Frank, like Roy Habbs, is fleeing from his past and is desirous of a new life, but his dependency on Morris is more intense than Roy's dependency on the caring father figures of *The Natural*. Morris Bober has the traits of a Zaddik, the leader of the hasidic community. This holy man and teacher shows the pupil the righteous path not from book or scribe but from the power of his love and example. Morris is a "schlemiel-schlimazel," a luckless man and a blunderer; he is the holy fool of Hasidism. The values Morris Bober embodies - that is a feeling of brotherhood, a sense of responsibility for others, compassion, trust etc. - invariably refer back to the Jewish code of "mentshlekhyt" of the ostjude culture. Morris Bober could be called a "mentsh" in the true sense of the word.

Though Morris is loved by his family members he is also unappreciated; Helen reviews her father's weakness in a monologue:

I said papa was honest but what was the good of such honesty if he couldn't exist in the world.? Yes, he ran after this poor woman to give her back a nickel but he also trusted cheaters who took away what belonged to him. He gave away, in a sense more than he owned. He was no saint, he was in a way weak, his only true strength lay in his weak nature and his understanding . . . People liked him, but who can admire a man passing his life in such a store? He buried himself in it; he didn't have the imagination to know what he was missing. He made himself a victim. He could, with a little more courage, have been more than he was. (204).

For Ida life with him had been one long "worry". The rabbi who eulogizes Morris Bober does so for some of the wrong reasons, calling him a good provider and a man with many friends who admired him, neither of which is true. Malamud is showing us a type of hidden "Zaddik" or just man whose virtue is often concealed behind "a mask of boorishness, poverty and ignorance and who goes unappreciated by those who know him best. Morris, who genuinely believes in his unworthiness, is

unknown even to himself, and may be compared to that special type of "lamed – vov "or "just man," who, when he dies, is "so frozen that God must warm Him for one thousand years between His fingers before his soul can open itself to Paradise" (204).

"Morris's chief burden as Richman puts it, . . . is himself: his own obdurate saintliness" (68). His saintliness derives from the code of values he lives by – a code which has its basis in the Jewish Law. Morris Bober reveals: "Nobody will tell me that I am not Jewish because I put in my mouth once in a while, when my tongue is dry, a piece of ham. But they will tell me and I will believe them, if I forget the Law" (112).

The Law, Torah, which is the basis of Hebraic humanism is the "important thing" in his life. He explains to Frank Alpine what Torah means to him in his own simple way:

This means to do what is right, to be honest, to be good. This means to other people. Our life is sad enough. Why should we hurt somebodyelse? For everybody should be the best, not only for you and

me. We don't animals. This is why we need the Law. This is what a Jew believes (112-113).

It could be said of Morris Bober that he has understood Torah and its essence and has exemplified its spirit in his own life. What we see in Morris' words in the Hasidic insistence of the heart over the intellect, the spirit over the letter of the law, the concern for others which embraces the stranger. Such sentiments are expressed by the rabbi who eulogizes Morris at his funeral:

Yes, Morris Bober was to me a true Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish heart. May be not to one formal tradition – for this I don't excuse him – but he was true to the spirit of our life – to want for others that which he wants also for himself (203).

Poverty and suffering have neither hardened nor deprived Morris Bober, nor have they made him selfish. On the other hand they have made him compassionate. He would get up early – even in the coldest winter – for the sake of a "sour-faced"

customer. He feels that it is his responsibility to provide an early morning three-scent-roll to Polisheh. He would continue doing this even when she has given enough indication of antisemitic feelings towards him. His goodness towards her does not expect anything in return, not even thankfulness. Morris Bober is so good that after having been through with his singularly unfortunate store, he does not like to transfer his misfortune by selling it. He feels intensely uneasy when he is asked to refrain from telling a prospective buyer about the poor business his store makes. When the buyer does come he cannot refrain from blurting out the truth to him,

Overwhelmed by pity for the poor refugee (the prospective buyer) . . . Morris, unable to stand the planned dishonesty . . . told him earnestly that the store was run down (180).

He cannot simply cheat either in big deals or in small ones. He has the Jewish "good heart". When Morris and Frank discuss the meaning of Judaism, Morris says, "My father used to say to be a Jew all you need is a good heart".

The Jewish conduct, in every sphere of life is strictly governed by the Torah – the Law of Moses. The "good heart" is shaped and sustained by the Law. The Jew in order to be a Jew must believe in the Law. What we see in Morris' words in ¹⁹ the Hasidic insistence of the heart over the intellect, the spirit over the letter of the law, the concern for others which embraces the stranger.

Morris' concern for Frank – a stranger is in contrast to the narrow view of his wife, Ida or his neighbour, Karp, who thinks it is acceptable for a son to steal from his father, but for a stranger it is "slimy" (135). According to Maimonides the eighth and the most meritorious degree of charity is to anticipate charity by preventing poverty, namely to assist the reduced brother. Morris Bober insists on taking Frank in, to assist not only the reduced brother, but the "stranger" in such a way that he may earn an "honest livelihood", to quote Nathan Ausubel in *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore* (124-125).

The crux of Martin Buber's thought is his conception of two primary relationships : "I – thou" and "I-It". "I-Thou" is characterised by openness, reciprocity and a deep sense of personal involvement. The "I" confronts its "Thou" not as

something to be studied, measured or manipulated but as a unique presence that responds to the "I" in its individuality. "I-It" is characterized by the tendency to treat something as an impersonal object, governed by casual, social or economic forces. Buber rejects the idea that people are isolated, autonomous agents operating according to abstract rules. Instead reality arises between agents as they encounter and transform each other. In a word reality is dialogical. Buber describes God as the ultimate "Thou" the "Thou" who can never become an "It". Thus God is reached not by inference but by a willingness to respond to the concrete reality of the divine presence.

Malamud seems the literary counterpart of Martin Buber. *The Assistant* reads like the fictional equivalent of Buber's mystical I-and-thou philosophy. Buber contrasts the enormous possibilities of growth in the I-and-Thou situation, when the self enters into a truly personal relationship with the Other, with the static nature of I-and-It condition, when the self treats the other merely as an object of utility. In *The Assistant* Malamud shows Frank Alpine, a non-Jew finding himself on a poor Jew named Morris Bober and his family. Sometimes

harming them, Frank later becomes their mainstay and takes over the store after Buber's death, ultimately converting to Judaism. Samuel Bellman comments that the fictional world of Malamud in *The Assistant* represents the fictional translation of Buber's "I-and-thou" and "I-and-It" metaphysics (39).

Despite Malamud's statement that he did not intend to identify Morris Bober with Martin Buber, it is remarkable how closely the idea and development of the characters of the novel parallel the philosophy set forth in Buber's famous work. In the 1970 translation of Buber's book, Welter Kaufman stresses 'you' rather than 'thou' as a more accurate rendering of Buber's German "Du." In the context of *The Assistant* Frank must move from the I-It stance that he takes at the beginning of the novel to an I-You ^{one.} ^{Buber} ~~are~~. In *I and Thou* Martin Buber writes: "The basic word I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being. The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being" (54). When we first meet Frank, he sees Morris Bober as just a Jew and later sees Helen only in terms of lust. He is not that far removed from Ward Minogue, his partner in robbing Morris. However, there are signs that Frank may have the capacity to

move to I-You relationships, in that he helps Morris and idolizes St. Francis.

Bober is not an orthodox Jew, for he does not obey dietary laws, nor does he regularly attend religious services. Similarly, according to Mourice. S. Friedman

. . . Buber does not regard the Jewish law as essential to the Jewish tradition . . . He contrasts the false desire for security of the dogmatists of the law with the holy insecurity of the truly religious man who does not divorce his action from his intention (261).

Martin Buber himself has said in *Between Man and Man*:

I have given up the religious for the everyday . . . I know no fulness in each mortal hour's fulness of claim and responsibility. Though far from being equal to it, yet I know that in claim I am claimed and may respond in responsibility . . . (41).

And for the grocer too, the key to a moral existence is personal responsibility for others:

A Jew must believe in the Law . . . This means to do what is right, to be honest, to be good. This means to ether people. Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? (112-113).

That life is hard, that it is replete with suffering, is part of the view of life expressed by Martin Buber and by Bernard Malamud in the novel *The Assistant*. Morris says to Frank, "If you live, you suffer," and Frank asks, "What do you suffer for, Morris?". "I suffer for you," Morris said calmly. Infact, at one point Malamud says, in the beginning of the novel, "The world suffers" (10). Martin Buber thinks that suffering is an essential part of man's life and it redeems man and gives him stature. He defines a moral man, in *I-and-thou* as one.

With responsibility for the action of those who act, since he is wholly defined by the tension between "being" and "ought to be" and in grotesque and hopeless courage casts his heart piece by piece into the insatiable gulf that lies between them (108).

For Morris suffering is simply a measure of his endurance and humanity. For Frank suffering, because of what he has

done against Morris and then, through relation with him, taking over the grocer's very suffering is a path to personal redemption. Frank is defined throughout the course of the novel by the gap there is between what he is and what he ought to be, so he casts his energy, endurance, pride and heart into the gap between them. Frank does not become ^{what} ~~that~~ he thinks he ought to be-rich, powerful – but his efforts do allow him to become what Martin Buber and Morris Bober would say he ought to be – a man, moral and responsible.

According to Baumbach the greatest common bond between the philosopher and the grocer's creator, the novelist is their treatment of "relation" and "dialogue" (122). The critics Baumbach and Richman state that love redeems Frank Alpine. As pointed out earlier Richman, uses Buber's "Love is responsibility of an I for a thou" as epigraph for his chapter on *The Assistant* (66). He uses Buber primarily in discussing Malamud's writing that shows the influence of Hasidism.

According to Martin Buber, there are two forms of existence: the I-It, which is a subject and object, person and thing, organizing, arranging, advantage taking relationship; and the I-thou, which is an impersonal, mutually addressing,

mutual exchanging one. Baber states that a man defines himself in relation with others "man becomes an I through a you" (80); "persons appear by entering into relation to other persons" (112); "wholeness, integration of personality, depends on eschewing the I-It impersonal for I-thou.⁷ Maurice S. Friedman, in his book on *Martin Buber* states: "Entering into relation is an act of which the whole being – it is in fact the act by which we constitute ourselves as human" (83). The essential quality that Morris possesses is his ability to view and treat others, including those he does not particularly like, not in terms of abstractions or neutrals – "Its" – but as human beings – "You". Through Morris's influence Frank is able to defeat the negative aspects of his nature and bring the positive ones to the forefront, but until he is able to establish true relationships with others, he cannot be a good man. Once he can see others as "Yous," he not only achieves human goodness, but he also can approach an understanding of the eternal. In terms of Judaism, man must make the everyday sacred and see the Godhead in his everyday human relations. In *I and Thou* Buber states that "the relation to a human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God – as genuine

address is here accorded a genuine answer" (151). Morris not only relates to people but to God. Through his changed view of others, Frank too, achieves this relationship.

Helen's role in Frank's redemption leads to his becoming a moral individual through responsibility and selflessness. His achieving a sense of God is also important. Malamud's depiction of their relationship also can be seen in terms of Buber's philosophy. "When a man loves a woman so that her life is present in his own, the "You" of her eyes allows him to gaze into a ray of the eternal "you". But if a man lusts after the "ever repeated triumph - you want to dangle before his lust a phantom of the eternal" (154). From climbing of the airshaft to look at Helen naked in the bath room, Frank moves toward a feeling of love for her.

Unlike Frank Helen is depicted as a character who does not really grow in understanding. Frank wonders whether she has learned anything from the great literature she has read. She uses the books as a means of self-improvement but gains no real insight into her life. Finally she is attracted, despite misgivings, by Frank's moral growth, which elicits a response from the better side of her own nature, giving Frank someone

for whom to sacrifice. The rape makes a turning point for Frank after which all the previous events bring in a determination finally to take control of his life: "The wrong he had done her was never out of his mind. He hadn't intended wrong but he had done it now he intended right" (168). Love replaces lust, and seeing the "eternal you" becomes a possibility.

Frank develops morally in proportion as he sees Helen less as a sexual object and more as a person to love and he loved by; as he sees Morris less as a Jew, a type of victim for his or anyone's greed, and more as a ^e fellow man, eventually as a spiritual father. Everyone else in the novel except Bober - Julius Karp, Ward Minogue, Frank (at first), even Helen and Morris's wife Ida - seek to use others, to manipulate them for personal benefit. Only Morris tries constantly to establish "I-Thou" relationships, even with those who have stolen from him, like his former partner Charlie Sobeloff, or like Frank Alpine. This faith in humanity is what makes Morris the schlemiel that he is, but it is also that which makes him admirable.

Frank too achieves these qualities. Through dialogue - both his conversation, with Morris about the Law and with

Helen about life and literature, and his turning to the Bobers in his silent observation of the code by which they live – Frank achieves I – Thou instead of I-It. Because of that relation he becomes an assistant for the third time in the novel; first to Ward Monogue, than to Morris and finally to Helen and her mother. Bober defines every approach to another's "Thou as an approach to God, the eternal Thou, for him relation is essentially triadic, involving self, other and God (75). Thus Frank's entering into relation with the Bobers is by Bober's definition an approach to God, a religious act and prepares for Frank's conversion to Judaism.

Helen and Ida provide a focus for Frank's move to change, and it is that change that is at the heart of the novel. It is the ability to see as "you" those people who are not saintly that shows real moral growth. In this early part of the novel Frank fits Buber's definition of evil. Buber considers evil as absence of relation and lack of direction – "lack of direction toward God," according to Friedman (87). Buber insists that "man repeatedly experiences the dimension of evil as indecision . . . These moments merge into a course of indecision, as it were into a fixation in it (134). At the beginning of the novel, Frank is

aimless, without direction. His only desire is generalized materialistic success. But in ^{his} its plan Morris tells him of the Torah, the Law. By his own life, Morris provides Frank with the example of different better values; and hope of attaining Helen gives Frank a distinct purpose and a definite direction. Man inevitably suffers; to endure that suffering with as much dignity as possible is a virtue, to continue to strive to do right and to suffer for others is a mark of humanity. Where Frank Alpine leaves these lessons from Morris Bober, which would have been the same had Martin Buber been his teacher, he redeems himself and approaches a state of sainthood where he is worthy of identification with St. Francis of Assisi.

Throughout the novel Malamud has characterized Frank Alpine in relation to others by the extent to which he establishes dialogue. Ward Manogue and he curse at each other and use each other to gain private goals; Frank spies on Helen, possesses her and is cursed by her. Eventually he speaks not just of Helen and Morris, but with them. For more than two years he shares their lives, making their needs his responsibilities; by controlling his own impatient, undirected desires he lives to love others and finds direction and himself.

In David J. Zucker's opinion, "to endure, but with hope, to know that the Kelson of creation is love, to do what is right, to be honest and good, to protect the human, the good, the innocent - this was Malamud's messages- to live with the Jewish heart" (172).

Peter L. Hays has commented thus:

Bunard Malamud, with religious allusion, Mediterranean mythology, sacrificial rites and fertility imagery infusing a philosophy of existence very much like Martin Buber's has created a modern parable in the form of a naturalistic novel, a story of redemption which expresses perennial realities of psychological and philosophical truth (232).

Frank's insight into himself grows gradually. It is an inward journey that comes to an end and yet begins in the store which Malamud describes as "like a long, dark tunnel" (8). When Frank first appears and holds up the store, his face is covered and he stares at his reflection in the cracked mirror. Frank can neither see himself clearly nor understand himself. Frank tells Morris: "I don't understand myself. I don't really

know what I'm saying to you or why I'm saying it" and yet he recognizes, "I have it in my heart to do more than I can remember . . . something is missing in me or on account of me" (36).

Frank presents a dismal picture of poverty and without realizing that the disinherited can maintain an inner composure through understanding the erratic functioning of destiny, cannot appreciate the human bonds between him and Morris. When he overcomes his initial revulsion against the Jew, he starts sharing his experiences with Morris and acquaints him with his inevitable past. Frank Alpine, the young Italian wanderer has more in common with the ageing Jewish shopkeeper than he suspects. At first he is not a holy fool like Morris. But he has some of the schlemiel – schlimazel characteristics. His mother died and his father ^{deserted} ~~directed~~ him. He is an orphan who has no luck. He ^{runs} ~~raes~~ away from his home and becomes a wanderer. First he equates his bad luck with outside forces. Then he ironically conceives the powerful idea that he was meant for crime. He accompanies the degraded Ward Minogue when he robs Bober's grocery store. Guilt-ridden for his complicity in Ward Minogue's treatment of

the grocer, he haunts the area of Morris' store, looking for an opportunity to redeem himself. When he comes to Morris for direction and expiation, he insinuates himself as Morris' assistant without pay. Frank needs, as he tells himself when he takes charge of the store after Morris' collapse, "I need the experience" (52).

Morris, even on the verge of destruction, has failed in God's justice. He accepts the responsibility for his lot. He is replaced by Frank Alpine. Morris quickly senses his identification with Frank. When Frank tells him about his restlessness and bad luck Morris thinks, "I am sixty and he talks like me" (37).

Morris Bober, like Frank Alpine is ^afugitive from the law. He had listened to his father's advice and escaped from the Czar's army when he was young and he found refuge in America. Morris who has quit school regrets the loss of education as poignantly as does Frank. The most subtle similarity between Frank and Morris is their fundamental sense of decency, the value they place on honesty. When Frank continues to lie and steal while he is working for Morris in the store, it is always with some consciousness that he is denying

an important part of his nature. When he first lies to Helen, he realizes that lying has made their talk useless, for, "When he lied he was somebody else lying to somebody else. It wasn't the two of them as they were. He should have kept that in his mind" (77). When he stares at Helen in her nakedness, he realizes that he is "forcing her out of reach, making her into a thing only of his seeing," (70) in other words, perceiving her as an object rather than a person. When he is stealing from Morris, because he has never been taught to borrow, he is afraid to look into the mirror (102). Even when Frank is planning to kill himself in fear and disgust at his behaviour with Helen, he has "a terrifying insight: that all the while he was acting like he wasn't, he really a man of stern morality" (157).

Morris' honest actions make him a clear antithesis to his young assistant. On Morris' part there is a gradual tendency to lie and even steal as the relationship between the two men increases. He lies to his wife Ida about Frank in order to keep place (53) and he withholds money from the cash register to give Frank a raise without Ida's knowing it. Frank wears Morris' cut-down pants and sleeps in his pyjamas. Morris

demonstrates the basic Hasidic teaching according to Martin Buber:

We are, all of us the errant seers of a single talk, some doubtless a little more foolish than others, but all so full of failings that the differences among us are no great matter, nor the little more, nor the little less, sons and brothers are we (95).

Morris as a father-teacher figure exemplifies the basic Hasidic belief in the descent of the "zaddik." The observations made by Samuel H. Dresner in his book *The Zaddik* are relevant here.

The idea that "Ascent requires descent" contains the idea that the Zaddik, "must go down into the dark night of the soul, into the dreary, earthly life of his people (150). The Zaddik is compared to a broom: "it sweeps clean, but in doing so it cannot avoid coming in contact with dirt (178). Morris forgives Frank his transgressions because he has noted these transgressions in himself, has recognized his kinship to Frank and thus, in Hasidic terms, "there is no longer an endless distance between them" (192). That the distance between them

is short^{ned}~~esched~~ is verbalized by Ward Minogue who identifies Frank with Morris by calling Frank, "you stinking kike" (130).

The inter relationship between the two men becomes so intense that Morris unconsciously acts out Frank's suicide wish when he forgets to light the gas before going to sleep (158) and Frank consciously acts to put out the fire which Morris regrets having started (190). The most dramatic symbol of Frank's transformation into Morris occurs after Morris' burial. Helen tosses a rose into the grave and Frank falls in after it, landing feet first on the coffin. Ida has just finished shouting at her husband's coffin, "Morris, take care of Helen, you hear me, Morris?" (205). It is a kind of spiritual communion between son and father. In entering the grave Frank achieves final identification with Morris, which is the ultimate act of self-sacrifice.

Helen Bober, in her complex role of female destroyer and preserver suggests the Lilith-Shekhinah figure of Hasidic legend. Helen Bober, as her first name suggests, is both the incorporation of ideal love and beauty and the reductive bitch – goddess of classical legend. She is a combination of Harriet-Memo and Iris in *The Natural*. Malamud uses the bird and

flower imagery of *The Natural* to emphasize her awesomeness and loveliness. Helen appears to Frank early in the novel "a love bird" (75). Overcome by the sight of her naked body he sees "breasts like small birds in flight, her ass like a flower" (89). The white flower that Harriet and Iris wear, Helen throws to Frank in his dream, but it disappears in his hand as surely as the love she seductively offers him.

Helen displays the ambivalence of a person in fearful denial of her most powerful needs. She projects her hatred to herself onto the man who would fulfil these needs, a truth she realizes when she finally sees her hatred of Frank as a means "to divert hatred from herself" (211). As a complex symbol Helen suggests the demonic – godly Litith – Shekhinah figure, the way of destruction and the way of salvation. Helen Bober like her namesake Helen of Troy in Jewish folklore may be seen in some respects another manifestation of Lilith, the queen of the realm of evil, according to Gershom Scholem in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (37). A seductive goddess who tempts a man to evil and then destroys him, Lilith's evil is a necessary component of good as we remember the Hasidic insistence that, according to Buber "if there were no evil, there would be no

good, for good is the counterpart of evil" (144). Her seduction and rejection of Frank is the way in which he learns "discipline" a word which strongly moves Frank when he hears Helen use it (164). As the Shekhinah who promises love and salvation, Helen is the female counterpart of Morris, for she shows Frank the way of redemption through judgement and compassion. When Frank says to Helen, "Even when I am bad I am good" (126), he is accepting the evil within him which he hopes for its transformation. When Helen says that she understands, she is intuiting the Hasidic teaching that the evil urge in man "wants to become good by driving man to overcome it, and to make it good. And that is his secret request to the man he is trying to seduce . . ." to quote Baber, in *Early Masters* (145).

It is Franks' "staying power" (239) that impresses Helen, and the reader notices Malamud's values of love and compassion in his moral world. These are the qualities of a comprehensive moral vision, of a good heart that leads a sense of perspective to the Morris – Frank – Helen relationship. With Morris and Helen as example and ideal, Frank Alpine is freed from his compulsions in order to become himself. The man who is at first repulsed by Morris' suffering can later say to

Helen, "When I don't feel hurt I hope they bury me" (110). The lover who would turn the person of his beloved into an object of possession can eventually relate to her through the saving power of wanting to give her "something she couldn't give back" (210).

Frank's life with Morris and Helen leads him into an identification with evil, pain and death that ultimately promises salvation. As referred to earlier Malamud has compared Frank's deliverance to the history of the Jews: "First, the prophets' 'way of gentleness,' the Sins of the People, Punishment, Exile and Return" (5). When Frank decides to stay in the prison-like atmosphere of the store, it is not only for love of Morris and Helen, but for the idea of self-control, "with the idea of self control came the feeling of beauty of it – the beauty of a person being able to do things he wanted to, to do good if he wanted . . ." (141). The store is a prison or a kind of death. This is adumbrated by Malamud early in the book when he writes, "in a store you were entombed" (9). Morris tells Frank when he asks for a job, "A store is a prison. Look for something better" (29). And Al Marcus, the salesman warns Frank to leave Morris because "this kind of store is a death tomb . . ." (57).

Through Morris' example and Helen's judgement Frank learns he must undergo imprisonment to be free, must face death to live. He has known the tyranny of being imprisoned in the world of his actions, he learns how service to others frees from enslavement to self.

The Assistant is concerned with freedom, or to put it in Hasidic terms, the release of a man from bondage to himself. Many critics like Robert Alter, Ben Siegel etc. have commented on Malamud's use of prison imagery. Malamud himself has said about the prison-motif:

It is a metaphor for the dilemma of all men throughout history. Necessity is the primary prison, though the bars are not visible to all. Then there are the manmade prisons of social injustice, apathy, ignorance . . . therefore our most extraordinary invention is human freedom (8).

Malamud's prison imagery recalls Hasidism's myth of the way of redemption, where man must recognize the soul's imprisonment as a prime condition for freedom, as pointed out by Martin Buber, in *The Legends of the Baal-Shem* (35). The

dramatic symbols of Frank's deliverance from bondage to freedom are of course his circumcision and ultimate conversion to Judaism. If he does not completely understand Judaism, that is not important, either in the context of the novel or the Hasidic tradition. In the words of Morris' father, "to be a Jew all you need is a good heart" (12), and in the words of Martin Buber, "This is one of the primary Hasidic words: to love more. Its roots sink deep and stretch out far. He who has understood this can learn to understand Judaism anew. There is a great moving force therein" (47). Frank's conversion to Judaism may be seen as a symbol of his new-found freedom and as the seal of his identification with a loving and caring father-teacher.

Malamud's style in *The Assistant*, his use of yiddish syntax, his fusion of reality and fantasy, his use of the double figure – all take an added significance when seen within the framework of Hasidism. The use of yiddish words and phrases lends a peculiar flavour to the cultural scene of adjustment between East European immigrants and American citizens. The inverted syntax and the mispronunciation give the story a kind of homey realism that borders on the comic as well as the grim. Malamud's visionary blending of the real and the

fantastic, his timelessness and placelessness, even his use of the double all work together to compliment the Hasidic themes. The yiddish idiom reflects the language of the original Hasidim. When we perceive the characters of *The Assistant* through the eyes of the Hasidism we see each as a spark from the original soul of God, marvellously distinct and mystically fused through a recognition of oneness. The flavour of the folk tale with its folk idiom and the schlemiel – schlimazel folk figure – the yiddish folk tradition add to the hasidism and the humanism of the novel, *The Assistant*.

The complex moral message that Bober conveys is through simple, every day acts rather than through words. This fascinates Frank who is in search of a code of behaviour on which he can base his existence. Morris is the only character who conceives the relationship with the other as an I-thou relationship founded on mutual trust and for this reason he is the only character capable of showing the pattern of redemption to Frank. Frank and Morris illustrate the idea of commonality between a Jew and a gentile through suffering. Discipline, love, compassion and suffering lead Frank Alpine to enlightenment and ennoblement. To repeat the words of

Malamud: "All men are Jews." The Jew stands for every human being and Malamud's concern is with humanity. It is not with Jews alone, as Malamud is concerned with every man.

Chapter IV

Quest for a New Life

Bernard Malamud's third novel, *A New life* is concerned with the well being of the central character, S. Levin and his decision to discover a new life. Indeed the subject matter of the search itself is involved with the understanding of the self. The protagonist experiences an awakening to the possibility of a fuller existence than the one he has been living and this awakening begins a quest for existence. Redemption is Malamud's major concern in *A New Life*. The novelist traces a perplexed New York Jew's west coast search for personal worth, integrity and happiness. Malamud's willingness to experiment with new forms while adhering to old themes is exemplified in the novel. Levin grows through love, and it is his growing ability to love - his growth as a moral man rather than his having come to the West that provides the basis for his humanism and his new life. In his zeal to safeguard liberal, democratic values, Levin only affirms, according to Ruth. B. Mandel, "the possibility of human salvation and identity through a consciously constructed personal ethic" (261).

Levin's unhappy past supplied him with an early knowledge of the world and its evils, his self-discovery brings about the second fall from innocence. By virtue of skepticism, honesty, self-criticism and self-scrutiny Levin survives and he becomes more human.

The hero, S. Levin, "reformed drunkard" and New Yorker, unreformed romantic, comes West, to the land of innocence to remake his life and to teach freshman composition. At thirty, he had been a failure all his life and the trip West, the job at Cascadia, constitute a romantic attempt to reverse the pattern of his fate, to escape the stigma of his past, to become nothing less than a new man. The instructorship at Cascadia is a first and last chance for Levin to succeed at "the career of his choice". He fails in Malamud's gnomic universe. In the context of the novel, defeat becomes a triumph. Levin rediscovers in his future the best of himself; the lesson of his old life. In addition to the humanism represented by the protagonist, Hasidic themes like the importance of inner revivals, the need for accepting the seeming limitations of past and present, the dominance of the heart over the head etc. are present.



In his interview with Israel Shenker Malamud remarked that his typical protagonist is "someone who fears his fate, is caught up in it, yet manages to outrun it. He is the subject and object of laughter and pity" (23). In his confrontation with fate, the protagonist upholds those concerns that are embedded in the texture of Malamudian corpus. As mentioned earlier, in his interview he has told Haskal Frankel: "My work, all of it, is an idea of dedication to the human. That's basic to every book. It you don't respect man you cannot respect my work. I am in defense of the human" (40). Tonny Tanner suggests that through a "searching insistence on the necessity of growing up", Malamud's constant attempt is to project "the possibility of change in man" (151). In *A New Life* Sy Levin, introduced in the opening lines as "formerly a drunkard" is presented as having experienced the characteristic Malamud protagonist's awakening to the possibility of a new existence at some period before his arrival at his new teaching post. The decision to find a new life has already been made, and the decision to find a new existence has been deeply experienced. The awakening to the possibility of a new existence was experienced by Levin as a result of new formed relationships between Levin and Pauline

Gilley, his new chairman's wife and Levin has found his freedom by willingly taking on the load of family commitments. After his final tourney with Gerald, Levin is informed by Pauline that she is pregnant by him. He is the new father; a mature man. Once again the quest for a new life ends in what looks like an imprisoning set of commitments and undertakings. Levin realizes: "The prison was really himself, flawed edifice of failures, each locking up tight the one before", (201). The only true freedom is liberation from the prison of self. Thus the search for a new freedom ends in a tangle of relationships, commitments and responsibilities.

Levin remembers the past ignominy; the emotion of his youth was humiliation. Poverty and crime were his childhood companions; his father was a thief and his mother committed suicide. For two years he was almost an alcoholic till he realized that "Life in holy" Through a flash of recognition he grows conscious of his identity and his contact with the world. He wants to bridge his island with the swarming world of men and women. His struggle is epitomized in his explanation to Pauline:

I denied the self for having denied life. I managed to get and hold onto a little job but as a person I was nothing. People speak of emptiness but it was a terrifying fullness the soul has gas. It isn't exactly apathy, you have feeling but it is buried six feet. I couldn't respond to experience, the thought of love was unbearable. It was my largest and most hopeless loss of self before death (127).

After this psychological churning and resurrection of self, he believes that the primary "source of freedom is the human spirit". This awareness of the primacy of freedom motivates him to undertake the odyssey to the west. He realizes the significance of the self through his journey from nihilism to belief, and now his attitude towards Pauline changes from lust to love, indicating thereby his commitment to human responsibility or his humanism.

This phase of development is similar to Frank's and, as in the case of Frank Alpine, in *The Assistant*, there is in him an intervening period of withdrawal. He withdraws from Pauline and analyses his entire equation with the Gilleys. He gradually realises that "morality was a way of giving value to other lives

through assuring human rights" (222), and this awareness springs from the exercise of free choice: "To be good, then evil, then good was no moral way of life". He chooses to discard the 'past-drenched' present, and redesign his future in accordance with the principles of attachment and responsibility. It is such a feeling of conscious involvement that lends form to life, "the moving aesthetic the act created in you". Such an act of dedication purges the heart of selfishness, and makes it distinguish between the transient and the lasting nature of contentment. This speedy growth in his emotional relationship with Pauline determines his action in the novel.

He takes his decision to own Pauline with her ailments and encumbrances and promises to her husband that he would give up teaching. He is under no romantic illusions, he is fully conscious of his doubts which "were the bricks of a windowless prison". He knows he has "failed at his best plans" and is in extricably entangled in the mesh of self, "the flawed edifice of failures, each locking up tight the one before". But now he realizes that for his ideals of "order, value, accomplishment and love", he has to alternate his professional aspiration and understand the meaning of self-abnegation. Cascadia has

merely intensified his urge to begin anew, with a dynamic involvement and conscious withdrawal, he has nurtured the foreground of his final gesture of renunciation. It is this insight into the web of human relationship that prompts his curt answer to Gilley's question whether he would really like to support Pauline and her children. Thus Levin has refined his apprehension of self and its coordinates of contact with the outside world. At last Levin acts responsibly. Despite his failings he realizes that "life is holy" rather than happy and human facilities place nobody beyond redemption. And here lies the humanism of Levin. Ben Siegel, in his article "Through a Glass Darkly: Bernard Malamud's painful views of the self" pays a tribute to the humanism of Malamud.

Such recognition is important for teachers and humanists, it is even more so for writers, who are expected by Malamud to recognize and release what is human in man. To recreate man's humanity, to hold up the mirror to that inner mystery, where dwell poetry and possibility, though the individual has endlessly betrayed them, is for him vital to the writer's art . . . (132).

Levin's allegiance to human relationships is indicated through his renunciation of an academic career at the end of the narration. Levin's love for Pauline is chastened by compassion. His sense of interpersonal responsibility and moral obligation gives him the courage to shoulder the responsibility of Pauline with her children at the expense of a promising career and that is his humanism – the affirmation of the human spirit.

At the beginning of the novel we are in the presence of a familiar Malamud hero:

S. Levin, formerly a drunkard, after a long and tiring transcontinental journey, got off the train at Marathon Cascadia toward evening of the last Sunday in August, 1950. Bearded, fatigued, lonely, Levin set down a valise and suitcase and looked around in a strange land for welcome.

Levin travels from east to west, reversing the pattern of Roy Hobbs and Frank Alpine. But his journey, like theirs is finally an inward one. He is the lonely stranger seeking

redemption that is already in process and he has his own individuality and his own way to arrive home.

Levin brings with him from the East all of the myths that America has built into its ideas of the west. The west is Eden and paradise, a place for new beginnings. It is also the bastion of democracy and rugged individualism. As the continent was settled in the East the West served as a "safety value" for the more adventurous or land hungry, the border between civilization and savagery marking that not only between the settled and the newcomer but also between those who still looked to Europe for culture and recognition and those who turned their backs on the East in favour of creating a new more vibrant society. Many of these encomiums as shown to be unwarranted, as Malamud has Levin discover. According to Helterman, "he expects the frontier virtues of freedom, independence, courage and accord with nature. One by one these expectations are shattered" (53). All these experiences help Levin in his inward journey.

Levin can be seen as an Adam, one who enters Eden in innocent acceptance of the Western ideal and suffers a fall. He had already fallen in the East. He has gone West to raise

himself up, but must fall or fail again in order to be redeemed. Levin is unable to cope with the demands of either location; he has carried his disabilities with him to the West. The novel harps on his battle to overcome his past-his personality and character. In the end he cannot escape from his old life by simply fitting into a romantic myth of the west. Pauline, his colleague's wife and his future mistress provides the basis for his being able to accept the love and responsibility that lies within him, so substituting for acceptance of weaker society and its values – more valuable inner qualities. Although it is not what he wanted or expected, Levin does achieve a new life, Levin's compassion and love, his humanism prompts him to undertake the responsibility of Pauline and her adopted children. He discovers in his art "a way of giving value to other lives through assuring rights" (222).

Levin wears a beard and it is his attempt to hide a face he can't quite acknowledge, a face that reminds him of a too painful past. The son of thief who died in prison and a mother who went crazy and killed herself, Levin the orphan becomes a drunk and a wanderer. He wakes up in somebody's filthy cellar and has a vision of a new life. His vision is of the sun shining

on his rotting shoes and he does not fully understand its implications. Here is the Hasidic fusion of heaven and earth, the belief that man is no more than dust and yet he can touch the heavens. What Levin understands is that "life is holy" and that he has been wasting it; he decides to become a "man of principle" (187).

But Levin can more easily accept the life of the mind and the spirit than he can his own mortality. He is able to stop his drinking but he cannot respond to experience and the thought of love is unbearable to him. With his wisdom of books he gains the insight that the source of freedom is the human spirit (187). But Levin must learn that in order to be free, the spirit, like the sun, must embrace the body's "rotting shoes". Levin gives himself up to the life of the mind; he decides to become a teacher because he wants to "keep civilization from destroying itself" (109). He sees humanistic education as a guarantee of freedom. He says:

Still, I have the strongest urge to say they must understand what humanism means or they won't know when freedom no longer exists. And they must either be the best masters of ideas and of

themselves - or choose the best to lead them, in either case democracy wins (115).

Here we are again reminded of Malamud's words in an interview with Wershba. Malamud has expressed the same sentiment concerning the writer: "The purpose of the writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself". In the same interview Malamud says: "My premise is for humanism - and against nihilism. And that is what I try to put in my writings".

Actually Levin is hiding from his past, and he sees teaching as an escape from the demands of his heart as much as it is a sanctuary for the ideas of his head. He comes to Cascadia in the West as an instructor in the Department of English at the Eachester community college. In New York his life has been spent in total dissipation till his realization that it could be rendered meaningful through an analysis of the values of humanism and democracy. In search of these he comes to the West where he imagines democracy to be functioning in its pristine form. Dr. Gerald Galley, the Director of composition, and Levin's immediate superior, acquaints him with the traditions of the college, and the conventions of the conservative town. He also recounts to Levin the popularity of Fairchild's

book of grammar. Fairchild is the Chairman of the Department. Levin also discovers that the athletes and the footballers are the favorite students indulgently supervised by George Bullock. Contrary to the hopes of Levin, Cascadia is not a liberal arts college but mostly a science and technical college. The significance of the liberal arts in a curriculum determined by agriculture and forestry is symbolized right in the beginning when Levin fails to see the Humanities Hall on his arrival. He is instructed to be careful about the girl students and the wives of his colleagues because the community is highly intolerant of moral deviation. He commits both the crimes and in the end leaves the campus with his Director's wife, on a promise that he would never teach. Levin stands for a good cause of education, but nobody accepts it or approves it; everyone including Gilley feels persecuted. Levin's defeat appears quite natural in the corrupt Cascadia college. The "new life", the new relationship that he seeks with Pauline has compassion as its motivating force and it humanizes his response to life.

Levin, the college instructor, is certainly more intellectual than Roy Hobbs, the protagonist of the *The Natural* and Frank Alpine, that of *The Assistant*. But he shares with them the

dominant characteristics of the schlemiel - schlimazel, the blunderer and victim. He is the very type of schlemiel-schlimazel - "a luftmensch" or man of air, a term Levin uses to describe himself as a youth and by which he means a "sop of feeling, too easy to hurt because after treading on air he hit the pavement head first. (217) According to Nathan Ausubel, in his *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, the term was used by East European Jews to describe the man without a trade such as the "unemployed scholar" who "seemed to draw his livelihood, such as it was, from the very air" (344). Levin, by the end of the novel, is not a scholar, is unemployed, because of his aggressive dedication to good teaching as for his affair with the chairman's wife.

Seymour Levin is a typical Malamudian schlemiel who combines in himself the traits of a schlimazel. He is a victim of his own wrong choices. Levin considers his life a sad hash of beginnings" (265). He saw "in the strewn garbage of his life, errors, mishaps ignorance, experience from which he had learned nothing" (265). Like Roy Hobbs, he makes one mistake after another, but ultimately upholds his moral obligations. He bungles everything he teaches. He teaches his first class in

great confusion, with his fly open. He is a flop in his affairs with Laverne and Avis Fliss. His affair with Nadalee is full of travails. In the course of his ordeal, Levin learns that living of life is what matters. He is a schlemiel who has done almost nothing right in his life. Obviously, he has always managed to say and do the wrong thing at the wrong time. But Levin is "chosen" (361) to emerge through repeated failures with an understanding of the beauty of morality. Levin learns that morality is a way of giving value to other lives through assuring human rights. Levin is Melamud's schlimazel, who "creates his own peril" (58) for in his romantic spell with Nadalee, his student, with Pauline, his director's wife and even with the secretary in the department, besides his clashes with Fairchild and Gilley, and later with Fabrikant as well with some of his students, Levin is himself destroying his career. Thus Levin's bad luck and blundering are aspects of the schlemiel-schlimazel character of yiddish literature.

In order to examine Levin's set of affirmations, Malamud provides sharp focus on the place of liberal Arts in the courses of teaching. Levin strongly believes that liberal Arts nourish the soul of democracy, and deepen the awareness of life. His

attitude is validated by his growing realization that democracy is under attack, and to defend it he would like to include in the curriculum a few courses in philosophy and literature. The passionate involvement in the study of literature reflects Levin's ultimate commitment to humanism:

The way the world is now . . . I sometimes feel I'm engaged in a great irrelevancy, teaching people how to write who don't know what to write. I can give them subjects but not subject matter. I worry I'm not teaching how to keep civilization from destroying itself . . . still, I have the strongest urge to say they must understand what humanism means or they won't know when freedom no longer exists . . . I have the strongest compulsion to be involved with such thoughts in the classroom . . . (115).

The central emphasis in this assertion is on civilization which is under a constant threat of extinction, on democracy, the spirit of which is fossilized by the preponderance of form and on freedom that the individual is incapacitated to employ in his search for order and dignity. The Cascadians, in the immediate context, are morally blind, and highly suspicious of

the fruit of knowledge and here Malamud indicts the menace of McCarthyism, the cold war, the loyalty oaths, and the Korean war. They are no more than one-dimensional denizens of the "thing-ridden society". They embody those banal paradoxes that negate the humanistic temper of Malamud's vision. The motto of the college is a western analogue of the lines inserted on the statue of liberty welcoming the influx of immigrants and assuring them security and equality under the benign American democracy. The motto reads in Fairchild's room: "Strangers are welcome here because there is room for all of them, and therefore, the old inhabitants are not jealous of them". (88) This is a burlesque of liberalism, for Levin soon discovers the travesty of this pious declaration. In the course of his advocacy of literature, Levin alienates almost everyone in the department. Despite his bunglings with men and women around, and the amusing facts of his absent mindedness and confusion, one does appreciate the spirit of his desperate search for belief:

We must protect the human, the good, the innocent.
Those who had discovered their own moral courage,
or created it, must join others who are moral; these

must lead without fanaticism. Any act of good is a diminution of evil in the world (258).

Evil can be diminished only by an "act of good" and this is conceivable with a vertical contact with the self. Only liberal arts can furnish this insight and Levin strives for their inclusion in the academic structure. He articulates his conviction in the classroom, and exhorts his students to cultivate the art of thinking and resist the dehumanizing tendency of vocational studies. He asks them to examine their lives, to deepen their response to experience and quotes J.S. Mill in defence of his observations on the value of liberal arts. Repudiating Gilley's thesis on the wonders of grammar, Levin's allegiance is to literature. At Cascadia College, the Fairchilds and the Gilleys and the Bullocks epitomize for Levin the national crisis of intellect and the stagnation of ideas. Whatever shortcomings Levin may possess, he is primarily concerned with values that underlie civilization and with disseminating them to his students. In his attempt to "keep civilization from destroying itself", Levin is a humanist.

Malamud's attitude towards Levin's intellectual idealism is ambivalent. This is evident in Levin's philosophy of

education. He considers it to be a "revelation" that gives you "a better understanding" of who you are and what life might yield (89). Just as important is his assertion that he should be "teaching how to keep civilization from destroying itself" (115). These statements echo Malamud's words used in his interviews with Wershba and Maria Gealey. In his interview with Maria Gealey also Malamud has emphasised the relationship between education and freedom. . He said that education was important, because "you must know what you are". Malamud undercuts Levin's humanistic statements by having him utter them in front of a class with his fly open or in front of a urinal to an imaginary audience. This can be explained as yiddish humour and self-deprecation, Malamud insinuates that intellectual humanism is not enough. He admires Levin's ideas or the importance of liberal arts but he asserts that more must be educated in man than his intellect. In Hasidic terms, the heart is more important than the head and it is love more than knowledge that shows the way to salvation. Thus Malamud persuades us to admire Levin's dedication to the life of the mind, especially in the context of the shallow provincialism and fourth rate college where the liberal arts degree was lost after

world war I, where English is simply a "service " department, and where many of the teachers seem to care more about sports than they do about students. Malamud reminds us that Levin would use the classroom as much as an escape as a confrontation with reality. It is not only the past that Levin must flee from but also the present. The time of the novel is the early 1950's, the time of the cold and Korean wars, His and Chambers, and the infamous career of senator Joseph McCarthy. Levin is content to use "the warm four-walled classroom" as a "sanctuary" (96). Like all of Malamud's heroes^e Levin must come to terms with the "past-drenched present" (27).

Levin changes from a timid outsider who is afraid of doing anything that might cause him to lose his job to an aggressive instructor who runs against his own chairman. He has no caring father to emulate unlike Roy Hobbs and Frank Alpine. He runs into a series of false father figures at Cascadia College who are almost his undoing: Gerald Gilley's honest friendliness hides an equally strong opportunism. The job offer to Levin, the subsequent generosity indicated his need for allies and guaranteed, committed votes. Levin soon learns that Gilley's

friendliness is not friendship and the director is courting votes for a suspected upcoming election for department chairman. Levin realizes that Gilley is his enemy rather than his friend. The man he looks to as mentor is C.D. Fabricant, Ph.D from Harvard , a scholarly and introverted man of seeming integrity. While Levin admires the principles of Fabricant, he eventually sees through Fabricant's mask of frightened self-servingness and stops supporting him. Another father figure in the novel, Professor Orville Fairchild, is also a false mentor to Levin like Gilley and Fabricant. He tells Levin, as the aging head of the department who is preparing to reform: "I speak to you as a father to a son" (301). He identifies Levin's appearance with his own drunk father's and lectures him on the path to destruction. There are more suitable father figures to show Levin the way. Before the deepening of his relationship with Pauline Gilley he has only the pain of his own mistakes and the examples of his predecessor Leo Duffy and a young colleague, Joe Bucket. Levin sees his attraction toward Duffy as an instance of his inability to extricate himself from his past of failure; but Duffy is really the only possible father figure that Cascadia will permit him to emulate and still remain a moral man, both Gilley and

Fairchild being morally flawed. Levin's choosing to become a candidate for department chairman signals his choice of Duffy as spiritual father. When he learns to act up on his convictions with his efforts to improve the English Department at Cascadia college he agrees to marry Pauline and assume the duties of a father.

Both Levin and Duffy are idealists. They are radical in the context of the Cascadia College. Both of them have affairs with Pauline Gilley and both are fired for moral turpitude. Duffy failed miserably because his methods were flamboyant and antagonistic. He could not accept the defeat of the liberalism and he killed himself, leaving behind a note that read. "The time is out of joint. I'm leaving the joint" (130). Levin also fails in the department but his efforts result in the removal of the grammar text book *The Elements* after thirty years of domination. Levin learns more about himself than Duffy did. He learns the lesson that in the real world efforts at doctrinaire reform are futile. Levin's lasting relationship with Pauline Gilley reveals the tenets of humanism in him; his love assumes a new non-romantic appearance.

Pauline Gilley is responsible for Levin's job at Cascadia College. Out of the applications discarded by Gilley Pauline picks up Levin's and recommends it for the job. She with her husband receives Levin at the station and gives him her hospitality at home. When he falls sick she nurses him. He is attracted to her at the cocktail party of the Bullocks. Fear of the past, with its sufferings had prevented Levin from committing himself wholeheartedly to Pauline. He needs love but he is afraid of losing control of his emotions and so he tries to repress them. He knows that he can create his new life only through self - discipline. Levin gives in to his feelings and accepts his love for Pauline. This leads him toward a new life. He says "love is life" (248). It is entwined with a sense of responsibility. Levin decides, out of love, to give up Pauline because she is suffering badly from the difficulties of having both a family and Levin.

Recalling, how deeply, tenderly, fervently to the twisted core of his being - he had loved her, he could not understand how he had brought himself to give her up (. . .) he had fled love to dispel her anxiety

and misery. He had suffered to free her from her suffering . . . (270)

Abramson is of the opinion that Malamud uses Levin's sacrifice to show his growth, "relinquishing love paradoxically signifies a fuller understanding of love" (50). Pauline returns to Levin, saying that she will divorce Gilley and that she wants to renew their relationship. Levin now tries to regain the love that he drove out of himself to protect her. As Marcus Klein puts it:

(. . .) Levin will be a man who believes that ideals, as he says, give a man his value if he stands for them, just as he will be a man for whom love is finally neither a joy nor an enrichment nor an emotional fulfillment but a stern moral imperative. (258).

Abramson puts it thus, "Love becomes an intellectual exercise, one of fortitude and perseverance in the name of responsibility and morality" (50). Morality becomes the acceptance of responsibility; responsibility to Pauline helps Levin to develop his courage to stand up for his beliefs in the department. His trials in the department help him to decide to

sacrifice his future plans to the ideal of responsibility for an individual human being, this growth as a moral man reflects the tenets of humanism in Levin.

It is Pauline Gilley who encourages Levin to accept his self, his limitations and possibilities which eventually lead to his ultimate salvation. It is Pauline's love for Levin which shows him the way to love and to the knowledge of the self. She tells Levin "My one talent is that I know people. I know you Mr. Levin. Who you really are? And you know me, don't you?" (192). Pauline is suggestive of Shekinah, the feminine element in God, the mother of the world of sanctity who preaches the message of love, sacrifice and salvation.

Levin thinks about his sordid past "was the past, he asked himself, taking over in a new land?" (125). His knowledge of himself, before he meets Pauline is very intellectual. He takes responsibility for his past mistakes and says:

My life, if I may say, has been without much purpose to speak of. Some blame the times for that, I blame the times for that, I blame myself. The times

are bad but I have decided I will have no other (. . .)
In the past I cheated myself and killed my choices
. . . Now that I can-ah-move again I hope to make
better use of things (18).

Levin sat in his room often during the day writing in a thick hard covered notebook he had used years ago as a common place book, and had recently revived. One section of the note book was for "Insights" (58). Among Levin's "insights" were: "I am the one who creates his own peril" (58). Though Levin thinks he is accepting responsibility for himself, his fear and denial of the past shows the opposite. He has written that "the past hides but is present" (56) and "the new life hangs on an old soul" (58). He likes to hide his past. He likes to run away from his past because he thinks it will destroy his future and the possibilities of a new life. He has more insight into the faults of his society. He writes, "the danger of the times is the betrayal of man" (58).

In his talk with Pauline Levin makes it clear that he wants order, value, accomplishment and love from his life. She encourages Levin to talk about his past. Levin tells her the story of his life. He learns to accept the responsibility of love

through Pauline. Pauline identifies with Levin because she is conscious of the misuses of her life and she blames herself for her "lacks". She states:

I too am conscious of the misuses of my life, how quickly it goes and how little I do, I want more from myself than I get, probably than I have got, Are we misfits, Mr. Levin? (. . .) I blame myself for my compromise and I resist the homogenization of experience (190).

Levin's affair with Pauline Gilley is vital to him because it validates his move west as the beginning of a new life. Pauline prevents his return to his old life when she appears at his door just at the moment he is about to fall off the wagon. Her presence enables him to resist the desire to take a drink. Pauline carries with her the familiar Malamudian symbols of fruitfulness and fertility, lemons, oranges and the smell of flowers. Pauline shortens Levin's name to "Lev" which she says is closer to "love" "Lev" is the Hebrew word for heart (219-20) and Pauline who loves freely from the heart, must show Levin the way.

Levin is not free from his sense of guilt. The question of morality crops up for him when "a man interfered with another man's rights" (222). He decides to tell the truth to Gilley but Pauline asks him to wait till summer. Levin feels: "Now we have truly come to adultery" (252). Pauline's indecisive nature puzzles Levin. He becomes sad. "He was his own pathetic fallacy" (256). In a serious mood, Levin discussed his affair with Pauline as a moral issue.

Morality was a way of giving value to other lives through assuring human rights (. . .) we must protect the human, the good, the innocent. Those who had discovered their own moral courage, or created it must join others who are moral, these must lead, without fanaticism (222).

He decides to give up Pauline, at least now for the sake of morality. He sees in it the possibility of life.

Renunciation was what he was engaged in; it was a beginning that created a beginning (. . .) To be good, then evil, then good was no moral way of life, but to be good after being evil was a possibility of life (258).

But love repressed in Levin results in a severe pain in the built, a pain he recognizes as coming from withholding what he has to give, Levin receives a set-back in his affair with Pauline when Avis Fliss, the lady lecturer informs him that Pauline and Leo Duffy were once lovers. Levin is sorry that Pauline has kept the secret from him. He suspects that Pauline must have loved him only to repeat Duffy. When Levin tries to avoid Pauline, she decides to divorce Gilley and go with Levin. She speaks about her failure to live with her husband in spite of her best efforts. She seeks "better life" (332) with Levin. When asked about her affair with Duffy, she confesses her guilt. She informs him that Duffy committed suicide. Levin will take responsibility for her and her adopted children, wants their unborn child but somehow feels only a "terrible emptiness" (340) and can love her only "on principle". His response to Pauline is now of compassionate understanding, "He felt for her a blunted compassion, not enough to give relief but at least a response" (337).

Gilley gives the admonition that Levin's life would be miserable if he married Pauline because of her discontented nature. He proposes that he will forgive Levin if he leaves the

place. Levin rejects the proposal. His affair with Pauline disadvantages the election he contests for Departmental chairmanship. He loses the election to Gilley and also the hope of restoring liberal arts. He rejects Gilley's offer to let him stay on ^{the} ~~this~~ conditions that he would not meet Pauline again. He is fired out of his job like Leo Duffy, "in the public interest, for good and sufficient cause of a moral nature" (346).

Levin feels shattered, yet his compassion for Pauline prompts him to agree to his request and persuade Gilley to let the adopted children be with her although it means a good deal of burden to him. Gilley asks Levin to give up college teaching as a condition to let the children live with Pauline. For her sake Levin agrees to Gilley's inhuman terms. Gilley cannot understand why Levin invites so many troubles at the cost of his college teaching career.

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? (360).

Levin retorts furiously:

"Because I can you son of a bitch" (360),

Levin's agreement to give up college teaching in exchange of Pauline's adopted children shows that he is acting under the impulse of his heart over his head. Levin's heart has been educated in the ways of redemption. He chooses the pain and limitations of a life with Pauline. A teacher committed to the humanistic tradition, he is forced to agree to Gilley's unreasonable demand that he never again teach at the college level. Richard Astro in his article "In the Heart of the Valley: Bernard Malamud's *A New Life*" states:

Levin, the unfrocked idealist drives off into an unheroic and unreceding future, with all the hope Malamud seems to imply, that the modern man of principle can cherish in troubled times in which he lives (150).

Seymour Levin has gone the way of the "holy fool". He is jobless and painless and he sees himself as a failure and he is destined to become a wanderer again. Levin has finally come to

that knowledge and responsibility for self and others that paves the way to salvation.

The novel ends as Levin and Pauline, with the two children, leave Eachester in search of a still newer life. Levin has understood that Eachester has not been the land of his romantic dreams in spite of the marvellous beauty of its surroundings. The place has not been a garden of renewal. Malamud affirms the beauty of the place. Levin feels beauty is simply not enough. Richard Astro says, "this is the lesson which Levin has had to learn through his agonizing odyssey to Cascadia" (148). Though he fails as the adventuring Western hero, he triumphs in the larger picture. Redemption cannot be achieved by moving from New York to a rural western valley but salvation is possible when there is a change in the heart of man. Through his experiences in Eachester Levin discovers that man's spirit is the only source of human freedom. As Richard Astro says:

And like Frankie Alpine in *The Assistant* and Yakov Bok *The Fixer* he is another metaphorical Jew who gradually adopts that unique code of morality by

which, as Ihab Hassan puts it, a man becomes a mensch.

Though Levin seeks consolation in the beauty of the country side, it gives him nothing and he realizes that the only escape from his past is to accept it. Peace and salvation have to come from within.

Chapter V

The Fixer: The Acceptance of Oneself

From an academic setting, Malamud moves to a Jewish milieu that provides a solid base for a tale fraught with religious, moral and cultural complexities. The novel concerns the fate of Yakov Bok, a poor Jew in Tzarist Russia who undergoes great suffering during the two and a half years he spends in prison. Based on an incident of anti-semitism in Tzarist Russia, *The Fixer* forcefully articulates Malamud's commitment of humanism to a mela-Jewish secular ideal of life. That freedom must be interpreted as the release of bondage of the self is also emphasized in *The Fixer* where Malamud transforms his familiar metaphor of the prison into an historical setting. When we see *The Fixer* in the framework of Hasidism, we realize man's potential to free himself if he takes the journey within.

The Fixer is Malamud's most distinctive use of Jewish history. The novel is based on the Mendel Beiless case of the early twentieth century. It is a recreation of Hasidic themes. Yakov Bok is the schlemiel type hero. He denies his past

suffering and death. His long imprisonment in the Russian jail is a means of educating him in acceptance of himself. The novel is concerned with freedom or the release of man from bondage to himself. *The Fixer* probes into the Hasidic insistence on the reality of evil and the need for man to accept the dark side of life. The supremacy of the heart over the head, the importance of the father-teacher and, the woman as the stern judge and saving presence – these are the other Hasidic themes. Malamud's style capturing the flavour of yiddish speech, his fusion of reality and fantasy and his use of the double are also within the Hasidic tradition.

Malamud's response to human condition is born of a compassionate understanding. Yakov Bok realizes that the only way to achieve self-respect and a measure of freedom is through selflessness and acceptance of responsibility for the needs of others. Like the other Malamud protagonists, Roy Hobbs, Frank Alpine and Seymour Levin, Yakov Bok has to learn this lesson. Yakov grows in compassion and no longer thinks solely of himself. Malamud's concern has been to unfold the mind of Yakov Bok as he suffers and endures. Like Levin, Yakov Bok starts out having lost the meaning of his

Jewishness, and the novel is the process of its rediscovery. Bok's burden of suffering is borne for all the Russian Jews who suffer under the Tsar and for all the persecuted and dispossessed of the world.

The novel is a probing study of suffering of a Jew at the hands of anti-Semites. It also stands unique in the fictional world of Malamud for its imaginative treatment of history. It is based on an actual historical event of Jewish persecution – the trial of Mendel Beiliss in 1913 in Kiev for the false accusation of "ritual murder" of a Christian child. Maurice Samuel's *Blood Accusation the strange History of the Beiless case* appeared in the same year (1966) as *The Fixer*. Samuel's book is a scholarly account of the historical background of *The Fixer*. It provides a fascinating contrast to Malamud's treatment. The Russian Jew Mendel Beiliss was thirty nine years old at the time of the trial. He lived with his wife and children outside the Pale in Kiev, in a district originally prohibited to the Jews. He had been granted permission to live there because of his special job as a dispatcher at the Zaitsev brick works. His father had been a member of the Hasidic branch of Judaism but Mendel had adopted a secular way of life. He worked regularly on the

Sabbath and most of the holy days. He was of friendly disposition and got along well with his gentile neighbours. It was a shocking news when Mendel was charged by the Russian authorities in 1911 for ritual murder: specifically for killing a young Christian boy and draining his blood for use in the baking of matzos.

Malamud explores the fictional concerns of the history of Mendel Beiliss in *The Fixer* to depict human misery and injustice. He invents more circumstantial evidence to be used against Bok than the Russian prosecution had to use against Beiliss. Malamud departs most from fact in the character of Bok. Yakov Bok at thirty is presented as embittered and lonely unlike the friendly family man, Mendel Beiliss. Yakov's wife Raisl has deserted him. He does not have any children and he is working at the brick works under an assumed identity, having denied his Jewishness in order to get his job. In transforming fact into fiction, Malamud does not limit himself to mere "factual reportage". He seeks the "imaginative fact". In his interview with Haskel Frankel, he says:

The Fixer is not a factual reportage. As a writer I seek the imaginative fact. You can't make a thing

more real than it is but you can make it seem more real through the imaginative fact (17).

Rajagopalachari in his *Theme of compression in the novels of Bernard Malamud* states:

Malamud takes liberties with certain facts and turns history into myth, an endless story in order to disinvent history. Yakov Bok the fictional counterpart of Mendel Beiless becomes a potential Vanzatti for Malamud (97).

As the story begins, Bok is already a confirmed sufferer who has got a raw deal from life. He is an orphan like all previous Malamud heroes. His mother died ten minutes after his birth. His father had been shot to death by a Russian soldier out to kill the first three Jews who crossed his path. Practically a born orphan, he had to "dig with fingernails for a living" (10). He says "In my dreams I ate and I ate my dreams" (9). At the age of ten, he was apprenticed in the trade of a "fixer", a handyman. Despite hard labour, he suffers from abject poverty. He had experienced a Russian program as a young boy. The little education he has been able to acquire

has been through the painful process of teaching himself Russian, "some history and geography, a little science, arithmetic and a book or two of Spinoza's (6-7). He experiences the bitterness of anti-semitism that characterized a large segment of twentieth century Tzarist Russia through the words of the boatman across the river Dnieper. The boatman pleads for the annihilation of the entire race of Jews.

A Jew's a devil . . . it is a known fact . . . and the only way to save ourselves is to wipe them out . . . which we've sometimes tried but never done as it should be done. I say we ought to call our men folk together, armed with guns, knives, pitchforks, clubs . . . anything that will kill a Jew . . . and when the church bells begin to ring we move into the Zhidy quarter . . . bashing in their brains, stabbing their herring - filled guts, shooting off their snotty noses, no exception made for young or old, because if you spare any they breed like rats and then the job's to do all over again.

And when we have slaughtered the whole cursed tribe of them . . . we will pile up the corpses

and soak them with benzine and light fires that people will enjoy all over the world (28).

The novel is concerned with the reality of evil and the need for man to accept the dark side of life. The evil of the world is represented more dramatically in *The Fixer* than in any of Malamud's previous novels. Malamud emphasizes the need to accept this grim reality. We should not run away from it but we have to conquer it and turn it into good. The words of Rabbi Abraham in Martin Buber's *The Early Masters* are applicable to Yakov Bok, "what is needed is not to strike straight at Evil, but to withdraw to sources of divine power and from there to circle around Evil, bend it, and transform it into its opposite" (115).

The Hasidic attitude toward evil is within the framework of the Jewish mystical tradition. Hasidism continued to emphasize the reality of evil and the need for man to accept evil as part of himself. The necessity of identifying with evil is especially important to the Hasidic zaddik. His love and compassion for others endows him with a sense of responsibility; he accepts evil as part of himself. Surprisingly in Hasidism all men share in each others' guilt and are responsible one for the other.

Yakov Bok decides to leave the ^sshtetl and he comes to Kiev, "hoping for a better life". When he sets out from the poverty stricken shtetl he "didn't look back". He sees the shtetl as a "prison" (15), a place he associates with death. He tells his father-in-law Shmuel that he wants "to know what is going on in the world" (16). As far as he is concerned "the past was a wound in the head" (17). He is attempting to turn his back on his own history and that of his race. He resentfully dismisses the old Jewish God and adopts instead a sort of free-thinking pragmatism. Out of necessity he conceals his Jewish identity and works in a district forbidden to the Jews. S. Levin in *A New life* grows his beard to hide a face that would remind him of his past. Bok shaves off his beard to escape his past and to assume the semblance of a goy. He wants to run away from his community and God for the sake of his selfish benefits. Ya .kov fails to see that troubles haunt the Jew wherever he goes. His attitude towards his fellow Jews is one of anger. His journey to Kiev "the Jerusalem of Russia" is smooth and undisturbed as long as Shmuel, his father-in-law accompanies him. He had to sell his horse to the boatman towards the cost of the trip to row him across the river Dnieper. His rejection of his people is

suggested symbolically when he sells this horse that "looks like an old Jew" (28); his rejection of Judaism is symbolised when he silently drops his phylacteries into the river after listening to the boatman, the virulent anti-semite.

At Kiev Yakov lives in constant fear of being recognized as a Jew. He becomes one of a group of Christian pilgrims visiting the graves of saints but he cannot exchange his Jewish identity for a Christian one quickly and easily. He takes up residence in the Jewish quarter and begins a set of acts by which his Jewishness can be more gradually destroyed. He is given the opportunity to reject his Jewishness when he comes under the favour of Nikolai Maximovitch Lebedev and his daughter Zinaida. The over drunken old man whom Yakov rescues from the snow turns out to be a member of the anti-Semitic Black Hundreds. The old man is grateful to the fixer. Yakov conceals his identity and introduces himself as Yakov Ivanovitch Dologushev from provinces. Lebedev offers him a good job in a brickworks in an area which is forbidden to Jews. He continues the deception; he cannot escape from his anxiety. Everything reminds him that he is living falsely. He reads newspapers, Russian history and Spinoza and these make him

aware that he has withdrawn from life and history by hiding his Jewish identity. Newspaper stories are frightening, the history of Russia is not his own, and the god of the nontraditional Spinoza is only a thin abstraction. (70)

The job of the overseer which Bok takes in the brickworks is in a district prohibited to Jews and he lives in fear of being unmasked. Proshko, the foreman hates him as he has caught Proshko stealing. He knows he has heightened Proshko's suspicion by lying about his papers. He risks much in a simple act of charity. In a scene that closely ^a parallels the rescue of his anti-semitic boss, Yakov saves a Hasid from the torments of an angry mob and even offers him a piece of bread. When the Hasid takes out his maztoh Bok realizes that it is Passover, a religious holiday during which the eating of leavened bread is strictly prohibited. Yakov Bok is moved by so strong an emotion that he has to turn away (59). His Jewish past has a great claim on him than he would actually admit. His charity toward the old Hasid provides persecutors with the bloody rags and other circumstantial evidence that will be used against him. The maztohs are the basis of the ritual murder charge that has been brought against Yakov. The day after the old Jew leaves

his care, the mutilated body of twelve year old Zhenia Golov in found in a cave, stabbed to death and blood white "possibly for religious purposes" (61). A few days later Bok is accused and arrested. He immediately confesses he is a Jew; otherwise he says he is innocent. The state claims that Yakov killed the Russian boy and drained his blood to make the ritual cakes.

Yakov is in a state of "unrelieved distress" as he is carried on the road manacled and jeered by the crowd. Imprisoned in the underground cell in the District courthouse, he realizes and regrets his mistake in concealing his identity.

He had stupidly pretended to be somebody he wasn't hoping it would create opportunities, had learned otherwise - the wrong opportunities - and was paying for learning, if they let him go now he had suffered enough (68).

He blames his egotism and foolish ambition. His quest for success turns to be an opportunity to destroy himself. Yakov's quick declaration of his Jewishness and the fact that he assumes responsibility for the troubles he is in, blaming his egotism and foolish ambition, are important steps in his

eventual salvation. He has delivered himself into the hands of his enemies by pretending "to be somebody he wasn't" (64). Now he is not ashamed of the Jews. He tells Bibikov, the Investigating Magistrate for cases of Extraordinary Importance "if I am going to be ashamed of anyone it might as well be myself" (76). He pleads innocence about the murder of the child:

Never! Never! he cried hoarsely. Why would I kill an innocent child? How could I have done it? For years I wanted a child but my luck was bad and my wife couldn't have one. If in no other way at least in my heart I'm a father. And if that is so how could I kill an innocent child? I couldn't think of such a thing. I'd rather be dead (69).

Bok refuses to sign a statement implicating the Jews in the crime, telling Grubeshov, the Prosecuting Attorney that the Jews have left him alone (118). Eventually Bok reaches the insight and compassion that are the seals of transformation. Answering the various questions of Bibikov on his personal life and philosophical learning, Yakov sums up his philosophy as "life could be better than it is" (73).

In his office Yakov Bok sometimes writes essays and in one he jots down: "I am in history, yet not in it. In a way of speaking I am far out, if passes one by. Is this good or is something lacking in my character?" He is rudely drawn into history when he is arrested, identified as a Jew, victimized by the history of Russian anti-Semitism, and publicized in the newspapers. He becomes the unwilling epitome of history, an example for the Russians of Jewish religious fanaticism.

After this prelude, the plot begins and it has three parts. The first, including chapters three to five, present Bok's resistance to the charge and his belief that he will soon be vindicated. The second, including chapters six and seven, renders Bok as without hope in any human assistance or legal justice and as wrestling with religious answers to his plight. The third, chapters eight and nine, reveals his decision to be a man and a Jew in his situations. The prelude is integral to the plot in that it stands in relation to the real pilgrimage upon which Bok embarks once he enters prison, the pilgrimage to his identity as a 'Jew and as a man.

During the early part of his imprisonment Bok believes in the supremacy of reason, he thinks if he can explain his actions

he will be free. His experience with his answers convinces him to stop thinking of "relevancy, truth or even proof. There was no reason, there was only their plot against a Jew, any Jew; he was the accidental choice for the sacrifice . . ." (128). Man needs more than his intellect to come to terms with the dark, irrational forces in the world. The heart of Yakov Bok is the way to his salvation and his heart must be chastened through redemptive suffering. The supremacy of the heart over the head is one of the tenets of Hasidism.

Yakov Bok's hope in a speedy vindication during the first part of the plot is centered on B.A. Bibikov, the optimistic humanist and rationalist who puts his confidence in government and law. Bibikov underestimates evil, the range and profundity of anti-Semitism and he assures Bok that the charge and the penalty will be minor.

Bibikov trusts Yakov and recommends slight punishment to Yakov only for his illegal residence. Grubeshov, the Prosecuting Attorney, and Colonel Bodyansky, the head of the secret police in Kiev, do not like Bibikov's decision. They are determined to doom Yakov, Grubeshov gets the baked matzo and bloodstained rags found in Yakov Bok's house. He tries to

connect them with the ritual murder of the Christian child. The false testimony of Proshko, the foreman who nursed grievance against Yakov for preventing his corruption at the brickyard is useful to Grubeshov. Proshko blames Yakov of swindling money to help a synagogue in Podol. He states that he saw Yakov praying with a Hasid, baking maztohs and chasing Christian boys out of the brickyard for no reason. He creates the suspicion that Yakov Bok and the Hasid had done some black magic to burn the stable yard though actually it was he and Richter that burnt it. Marfa Golov, the mother of the murdered child identifies Yakov Bok as "the Jew Zhenia told me about who had chased him with a long knife" (107)

The authorities resort to every possible means to elicit from Yakov Bok the confession of a crime which he never committed. They humiliate him, abuse him, put him in chains and beat him mercilessly. They serve him everyday "a bowl of watery, insect-ridden soup, and a slice of stale black bread" (160). They subject him to systematic torture. The prison guards place Yakov in systematic confinement where

All day the fixer walked in his cell, sometimes he ran, five steps, three, five, three, breaking the circuit

to hurl himself against the wall, or smash his fist against the metal door with prolonged cries of grief (166).

He shouts, mutters, weeps, has nightmares, but nobody listens or talks to him. The prison guards try their best to break both his spirit and body.

Yakov Bok blames himself for his arrest. The irrationality of the charges levelled against him and the realization that prison life would go badly for him make him reflect on the absurdity of fate. As Alan Warren Friedman puts it the sufferings he undergoes in the next two and a half years remind us of the Biblical Job "that archetypal suffering Jew who suffers because he exists and because he is innocent" (296). Bok has neither the innocence nor faith of Job, but he shares with him the agony of an unjust and overwhelming punishment. Even though Bok rejects both Job and God he achieves salvation and the role of the holy fool. When we look at the novel through the framework of Hasidism we realize that the way of salvation can be love of man and that anger and rebellion at God are part of the tradition.

Yakov Bok's preoccupation with religion arises to replace his preoccupation with freedom – his impulse to leave the world of the Jewish ^Shtetl. His concern with religion shifts his interest from Spinoza's philosophical speculation about God's relation to history to Bok's own biblical understanding that God acts in history. He sometimes thinks God is punishing him for his unbelief; "he was, after all, the jealous God" (127). When he thinks of the God of history, he sees him without pity for men:

The way God appeared in history and used it for his purposes, but if that was so he had no pity for men. God cried mercy and smote his chest, but there was no mercy because there no pity. Pity in lightning? you could not pity anything if you weren't a man; pity was a surprise to God (171).

Turning primarily to the Psalms, he recalls bits of lyrics written by and for a people in darkness, a people undergoing deathlike experiences similar to his own. He identifies with the suffering servant of the Psalms and repeats aloud the words of travail, but when he looks or listens for God all he sees or hears is "his own imprisoned laughter" (172). His captors throw him a copy of the Old Testament. He reads it and sees human

experience as baffling God, who perhaps even wants to be human, Yakov thinks:

The purpose of the covenant, is to create human experience, although human experience baffles God. God is after all God; what he is what he is: God. What does he know about such things? Has he even worshipped God? Has he ever suffered? How much, after all, has he experienced? God envies the Jews, it is a rich life. May be He would like to be human, it's possible (240).

As his torments in prison grow, so does his anger at God whom he blames not only for his own suffering, but for the suffering of the Jews. His rebellion against God may be seen as a response to a concern for his people and it is this concern for his people which identifies him with the holy men of Hasidism. Elie Wiesel, in his *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters* remarks:

Jewish tradition allows man to say anything to God, provided it be on behalf of man. Man's inner liberation is God's justification. It all depends on

where the rebel chooses to stand. From inside his community he may say everything. Let him step outside it, and he will be denied this right (111).

Yakov Bok, in all his rebelliousness is standing within his community. He has identified with the Jews from the time of his arrest. He questions God's justice on behalf of man. He is led through an abyss of suffering and accepts his place in the community of man. He is transformed by that acceptance into a new person, he becomes a "mensch".

Yakov Bok's preoccupation with religion is amplified by the visit to Bok's cell of Shmuel, his father-in-law and their conversation about God. Shmuel tells Bok that the cause of his plight is Bok's separation from God. God is indispensable to a Jew's life. He insists that without the covenant Jews would have disappeared long ago. But Bok does not feel that he has forsaken God. Instead God has abandoned him. "I blame him for not existing. Or if he does it's on the moon or stars but not here" (256). Bok concludes, "He's (God is) a cold wind and try and keep warm. To tell the truth, I have written him off as a dead loss" (257-58). With his conclusion that God is gone and that Jewish covenant theology has no meaning when history is

so barren of God's presence, Bok ends his religious ruminations. For Bok the only reality is his own experience of pain and injustice.

Yakov Bok is helped by the father-teacher figure in his journey into self discovery. His father-in-law Shmuel is long suffering and compassionate. Bok learns to love and accept the world from Shmuel. Kind and compassionate, Shmuel is everything that Bok must in the course of the novel become. Yakov's moral development is directly related to his attitude towards Shmuel.

He represents the traditional Jewish attitude which is expressed in the old Yiddish proverb. "God will provide, but if only He would till he ^{dies} ~~does~~ "His attitude toward suffering and God ^{is} ~~in~~ what Friedman calls the "traditional Jewish attitude of resignation and complaint" (293). Shmuel is present to wish Yakov well as he departs with his few belongings to Kiev. "Don't forget your God", Shmuel warns, "Who forgets who?" Comes the bitter reply from Bok, Shmuel continues agitatedly, reminding Yakov that the Jews are surrounded by enemies and must stay under God's protection. "Remember, if he's not perfect, neither are we" (20). When Yakov decides to leave the

shtetl to see "What is going on in the world" (14) Shmuel tells him.

"What is in the world is in the shtetl - people, their trials, worries, circumstances. But here at least God is with us".

These are the words of the worldly wise, loving father "Yakov Bok fails to see that troubles haunt the Jew wherever he goes. Yakov takes a harsh view of Raisl's elopement and ignores his lack of responsibility. He fails to understand the spirit of charity and compassion that Shmuel talks about:

Charity you can give even when you haven't got. I don't mean money. I meant for my daughter. Your daughter deserves nothing (11).

Shmuel feels free to curse his daughter, for as he explains to Bok, "I ask God not to listen" (14). Bok refuses to show charity to a shnorrer he confronts in his journey to Kiev, scornfully retorting the shnorrer's "charity saves from death" with "Death is the last of my worries". Shmuel tries in vain to borrow a kopek from Yakov for the shnorrer. He admonishes his son-in-law for his lack of faith and lack of charity Shmuel

risks everything and bribes a guard in order to visit Bok in prison and give him what solace he can. Yakov writes off God who is cruel and indifferent to human fate. He persists in being a free-thinker despite the pleas made by Shmuel. Though Bok complains and curses God, as a loving father Shmuel implores him to keep his heart open and tries to give him a gift of food. Chained and manacled to the wall like an animal all day and allowed to sleep on the bed plank, with his legs locked in the stocks consequent on Shmuel's secret visit, Yakov Bok finds no meaning in life. Yakov thinks of suicide. He wants others to be involved in his death; so he would provoke the officials to kill him during the searches on his body. Realizing that Shmuel has risked his life to come and see him, Yakov dreams Shmuel dying. He wakes up and cries, "Live, Shmuel, live. Let me die for you" (222). Shmuel's vision prompts Yakov to live meaningfully for the sake of others. Suffering has chastened Yakov and he realizes in an epiphanic moment that he should live and die for others. It is here that Bok has the insight that he must not commit suicide; he must live to see his day in court for the sake of Shmuel and his fellow Jews. When Yakov Bok learns that Shmuel has died, he says, "he was a good man,

he tried to educate me" (247). Thus Shmuel is the suitable father-teacher figure to Bok. Shmuel reminds use of the Hasidic zaddik. As a mystic who dedicates himself as an intermediary between man and God, the zaddik must often descend to the level of the unrighteous man in order to help raise him. Shmuel is not only a father figure; he takes up the role of the Hasidic zaddik in enlightening, convincing and chastening him. Yakov Bok is thus aided in his journey to self-discovery by the zaddik-father-teacher Shmuel. Bok learns to love and accept the world. With love and compassion Smuel endows him with a sense of responsibility; the zaddik-father-teace^{her}_{er} convinces Yakov Bok that all men share in each other's guilt and are responsible one for the other.

Bibikov, the Investigating Magistrate is another father figure like Shmuel. He is an embodiment of compassion and human values and regards Yakov as his own self. He makes his lone venture to prove the truth and defend innocence and law. He identified Bok with his own son who has asthma and he chastizes Bok for lying about his Jewishness. In his investigation he discovers that Marfa Golov, the mother of the Christian boy and her lover had committed the murder. He

informs it to Yakov in prison. He says he would pool out evidence and try to rescue Yakov by all means. He is worried about Yakov out of compassion and gives him moral courage.

Keep in mind, Yakov Shepsovitch, that if your life is without value, so is mine. If the law does not protect you, it will not, in the end protect me. Therefore I dare not fail you . . . (145).

He is arrested and put to a solitary cell next to Yakov's. He is murdered or driven to suicide. The law in which he believed cannot save him. It is obvious that Bibikov was killed for his compassionate attitude to Yakov. Bibikov's death intensifies Yakov's agony and isolation. When Yakov sees him in fantasy on the eve of his trial day he has grown to concur with the gentleman's advice: "the purpose of the freedom is to create it for others" (259). Abramson is of the opinion that Bibikov provides the clearest example of an acceptable secular father, one not committed to any religious creed but concerned for the welfare of humanity (65).

Kogin the night guard ^{is} ~~in~~ another caring father figure. He is the father of a criminal son, to be jailed like Yakov Bok. He is

unhappy when his son commits suicide. He smuggles in a New Testament to Bok and takes comfort from hearing Bok repeat the saying of Jesus and gives his own life to save Bok's on the day of the trial. There are similarities between Shmuel, the Jewish father and the gentiles Bibikov and Kogin. As in *The Assistant*, Malamud asserts that saintliness is not exclusive to any religion. The way to salvation is knowledge and giving of self either to a Jew or to a Christian.

Nicholas II, the Tsar is a false father figure. On the way to his trial, Yakov has a hallucination in which he is talking to the Tsar whom he addresses at one point as "Little Father". In the armoured carriage, Yakov, in his imagination, discusses fatherhood with the Tsar, who appeals to his emotions with a description of his children particularly the hemophiliac Tsarevitch Alexis. He condemns the Jews for procreating and believes, as Edwin M. Eigner in his article "The Loathly Ladies" says, "they lust after the blood of his haemophiliac son" (106). To the Tsar's question "Are you a father?" Yakov answers "with all my heart". He rides to his trial in his final fantasy. He creates in his mind a scene in which his programme of Jewish hatred and resistance is projected on a grand scale. He

imagines an interview with the Tsar in which Bok accuses him of causing the bad conditions of Russia for both Jews and impoverished gentiles. In retaliation he shoots the Tsar, saying:

This is also for the prison, the poison, the six daily searches: It is for Bibikov and Kogin and for a lot more that I won't even mention (269).

Yakov Bok has moved from being a non-Jew, to being a passive suffering Jew, and finally to becoming a militant Jew, an agent in history active against evil on behalf of his own integrity and suffering people. The man who had earlier disassociated himself from politics has learned that "there is no such thing as unpolitical man, especially a Jew" (271). He has at last realized that his suffering is not merely personal but historical and represents all the Jews.

Yakov's moral development is directly related to his attitude toward fatherhood. He realizes that the prisoners are indistinguishable in their suffering. Injustice affects all, Jews or not, and his moral stance as an innocent man who is made to suffer is for the benefit of humanity. This is an important step in his moral development. Yakov never establishes a

relationship with God, but does come to view Shmuel - a Bober-like figure in his respect for the Jewish Law and one who has a strong sense of God as father - as someone worthy of love and respect because of his simple human decency and his relation to the Jewish people. Suffering has taught Yakov a great deal. His attachment to and feeling for people who suffer has grown from being virtually non-existent at the beginning of the novel to the point where he sees himself as responsible for alleviating as much suffering as he can. His suffering has caused him to direct his compassion toward the mass of humanity who suffer injustice, and to desire to destroy who cause it. Sandy Cohen's comment is relevant here:

He, like Frank Alpine before him, has learned what Morris Bober knew - that each man suffers for other men that everything relates underneath (85).

Yakov Bok achieves a spiritual freedom; he moves beyond victim status in his belief that tyranny must be fought: "you can't sit still and see yourself destroyed" (352).

The women characters in *The Fixer* suggest Lilith and Shekinah figures. Bok is defamed and victimized by the people

on every side. The three important women characters are deadly toward him. Zina Lebedev, the daughter of Bok's employer is a crippled woman who offers herself to Yakov and is rejected by him. She turns out to be anti-semitic and vengeful, accusing him of the sexual assault he withheld. Zina becomes a willing witness in the case against him. Marfa Galov is the most destructive woman character in the novel. She is identified with motherhood. She is herself responsible for the hideous death of her son whom Yakov is accused of having ritually murdered. she has blinded her lover for life with acid. As a mother who drains her own son's blood we can see her as the demonic Lilith, the slayer of young children.

Towards Raisl to whom Bok has been married for six years, he feels only anger and bitterness. He repeatedly calls her a whore for leaving him for another man. She is intelligent and dissatisfied and she reminds us of the heroines Pauline Gilley of *A New File* and Helen Bober of *The Assistant*. She remains barren and runs away with a musician only when Yakov stops sleeping with her. The first reference that is made to Raisl in the novel significantly describes her as the "faithless wife". Though Yakov Bok's heart is full of bitterness and

resentment against his wife, she is constantly on his mind and he thinks of her at every juncture in his life. As James M. Mellard points out in "Four Versions of Pastoral", Raisl is an anagram for Israel and is clearly identified with Judaism itself (70). This association of Raisl with the tribe is still further emphasized in the novel by the reference to the story of the prophet Hosea and the parallel that is drawn between his predicament and that of Yakov. Bok's rejection of his wife therefore amounts to his rejection of his long suffering nation and his acceptance of her, by the same law, means his acceptance of his responsibility to his tribe. It is in his prison dreams that Yakov Bok sees Raisl as a symbol of the Jews, not as an oppressor but as a fellow victim, persecuted by fate and by Russian history. In an interior monologue Yakov Bok remembers Raisl as he had first seen her. He also recalls and reviews the ups and downs in their relationship. Raisl was all the time urging Bok to leave Russia which he was reluctant to do and that was the first source of disagreement and unpleasantness between the husband and the wife. The real trouble started when after years of marriage they had no children. Bok devoted his time to reading. His love of Spinoza

had increased in proportion to his growing indifference to his wife. She becomes his "potential redeemer" as Edwin M. Eigner in his article "The Loathly Ladies" - a shekinah figure who offers salvation through suffering and insight. At the moment of his greatest fear, Bok cries out "Raisl . . . save me!" (183). She has been attempting his salvation from the very beginning, trying to force him to assume his responsibilities towards her. Her desertion of him was partially intended, as she explains, to make him move (286) and though she had meant movement towards responsibility rather than freedom, he did gain a positive interest in promoting the happiness and intellectual emancipation of his neighbours. Like the shekinah, Raisl visits Bok in jail "in the shape of a woman who weeps and laments over the husband of her youth" reminding us of a zaddik in the Holy Land in Martin Buber's *The Legend of the Baal-Shem* (22). Raisl informs Bok that she has given birth to a child. Bok's false assumption was that Raisl had the biological flaw. It turns out that it was actually Bok who was responsible for Raisl's barrenness. He accedes to Raisl's request that he adopt her bastard son as his own. In order that Raisl be accepted back in her community Bok writes a note to the old Rabbi

saying the child is his own and that Raisl be given every possible help. Bok's acceptance of Raisl's child Chaim is not only the acceptance of fatherhood, it also signals the birth of a new Yakov Bok. Raisl makes him experience the insight that frees him from bondage to the self. In accepting fatherhood Yakov shows that he has moved far beyond his earlier self-centredness. In accepting Raisl and her child, he also confirms his sense of oneness with his people, as her name is an anagram for Israel.

The Fixer is about the freedom of the self from itself. It is not historical or political freedom, but it is a freedom which a person achieves within. It is evident in man's capacity to see, to experience, to celebrate the objective world. Before man can secure freedom for others he should know it himself; he must experience the paradox of choosing chains as Bok does rather than accept the Tsar's pardon and deny his own and his people's integrity. His imprisonment teaches him that his suffering might win something for his people. Instead of confessing a crime he did not commit and implicating millions of other innocent people and instead of committing suicide Yakov decides to fight by enduring and protesting his

innocence. Yakov is free not to be what the Russian government would have him be. He accepts a very literal form of imprisonment in order to break free from the fears and concerns that would enslave him to himself. The novel ends with the beginning of Bok's trial at the court of justice; the entire novel is about the trial of Yakov Bok's knowledge of selfhood. Freedom of the self allows him to join the universe of humanity. His decision to protect the Jews signals the crucial transformation of Yakov. He realizes that the freedom to live and to discover a new life is not merely the freedom to experience but also the freedom to struggle and suffer. The living of life including its struggling and suffering is not the fate of man but the privilege of man.

Bok in Yiddish means goat, a scapegoat which is exactly Yakov's role in Jewish and Russian society, according to James M. Mellard. It also means "an unbendable piece of iron" Bok is certainly both stubborn and a scapegoat for the Tsar. Sanford Pinsker says that Bok suggests 'Bog' the Russian word for Christ. In "Four Versions of Pastoral" James M. Mallard remarks that there is a great deal of irony in the use of such a Christ figure by a Jewish novelist, but Malamud's point in

using it is to insist upon the universality of the pattern (92). Malamud presents Yakov as a christ figure in the sense of providing a vicarious redemption for the weak and oppressed. Iska Alter, in her book *The Good Man's Dilemma* notes many parallels in the Jesus story in that Yakov is

a fixer, a carpenter who abandons his traditional community in his thirtieth year in order to begin a new ministry among the godless; arrested in April during the Passover season; imprisoned with thieves and murderers figuratively lost to the world and even resurrected (165).

Yakov is also compared to Job. Malamud stresses the resistant aspects of Job, those parts of his personality that refuse to accept god's will. At the end of the Book of Job, Job accepts god's judgement that, he, a mere man cannot expect to understand God's ways. Through his suffering, Yakov becomes Jewish, like Job, in his taking on of the responsibility for the fate of the Jewish people. Suffering has given him an understanding of the plight of all those who suffer. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog in *Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl* state that the term fixer or a 'makhu' in

shtetl culture means not only a handyman, but also the "intermediary" who stands between the Jewish community and the hostile outside world. (234-235). Though Bok may suggest a shtetl Jew and he must accept himself as such for the final affirmation of the novel. He makes a new covenant with himself to be bound with people and to protect them.

Malamud's blending of the real and the dreamlike is a representation of the inner conflict of Yakov Bok. In his desire to live in a world other than the one to which he is confined Yakov Bok escapes into a world created by his fevered mind. This shift from one world to another becomes more pronounced as his isolation from society becomes more definite. The blend of fantasy and reality is obvious in Yakov Bok's hallucinations. The realism in *The Fixer* as manifested in the description of prison life; has prompted some critics to identify the novel with history. According to Haskel Frankel the dreamlike quality of the novel suggests that it is to be treated as a myth, an endless story (39). Malamud has told Haskel Frankel in his interview; "I thought that if I could make fantasy world real, then I could make Yakov's world real" (40). The longer Yakov remains imprisoned, the more blurred are his distinctions between

fantasy and reality. Other than Yakov Bok none of the characters is very convincing on real. The dream like quality is enhanced by our perceiving the action through Bok's consciousness. Yakov spends his time in solitary imprisonment and so we are with him in contemplative thought, tortured dream, fantasy and hallucination.

Thus dreams and hallucinations become Yakov's method of confronting figures like the Tsar whom we can approach in no other way. Yakov Bok is walled off from the real world and he creates his own reality. We see everything filtered through his mind; his reality affects our sense of what is true. We know that the bloody horse who calls him "murderer" does not visit his cell but we cannot be sure of the seductive Marfa Golov; the time is crossed between reality and fantasy. Though Yakov tries to note months and days in his cell, he loses track of time and place. We are back in the timeless, placeless world of *The Assistant*. The fixer can be identified with the Hasidim mainly in his inner vision rather than in his hallucinations. Yakov Bok transcends his time and place and takes a journey through the self that results in transformation.

Malamud employs the double figure in *The Fixer*, as he does in *The Assistant* to emphasize the inter relation of all men and the responsibility for one another. Shmuel, Bibikov, Kogin and finally Bok become one with the caring father image of God. Raisl, Zina and Marfa become one as the reflections of the Shekinah - Lilith image, the way of judgement and ultimate salvation.

The Fixer is thus concerned with freedom or the release of man from bondage to himself. Bok's long imprisonment with Russian jail is a means of educating him in the acceptance of himself. Bok realizes that the way of salvation is the love of his fellowman and not the anger and rebellion of God. The last line of the novel - "some shouted his name" is an acknowledgement that Yakov Bok has achieved a recognizable identity. Yakov Bok grows in compassion and finally no longer thinks solely of himself. Like all other Malamud protagonists, Yakov Bok eventually realizes that the only way to achieve self-respect and a measure of freedom is through selflessness and acceptance of responsibility for the needs of others. *The Fixer* thus depicts a heroic struggle against injustice and the marvel of human endurance.

The novel contains ^{u r}overtimes of folklore, particularly those that are seen in the works of such Yiddish writers as Sholem Alchem and J.L. Peretz, Malamud's style in *The Fixer* show that he has ability to catch the flavour of Yiddish speech. Yakov's speech is unsophisticated and often earthy, containing yiddish proverbs and idioms. Malamud's technique of presenting *The Fixer* through the sensibility of Yakov Bok, a shtetl Jew, gives the novel a Yiddish flavour reminiscent of *The Assistant*. Malamud gives his characters a number of different language styles in the novel. Yakov speaks to other Jews in Yiddish and thinks in it as well. He must use Russian in communicating with non-Jews. The main difference between Yakov's Yiddish and his Russian on the page is Malamud's use of yiddish proverbs and idioms and an occasional inverted word order for the Yiddish. Malamud depicts the victory of the human spirit over the forces of darkness by using an omniscient third-person point of view that focuses entirely on Yakov's inner life. Bok's voice echoes with earthiness and lyricism, the terseness and inquisitiveness that is associated with the voice of ^sshtetl Jewry. Malamud's admitted debt to Hemingway can be seen in Yakov's sparse sentences and the descriptions of his endurance in prison.

Chapter VI

An Uneasy Tenancy in Mere Distress

In his novel *The Tenants* (1971) Malamud confronts a contemporary, specific social and political problem – the racial dilemma, the intricate issue of racial antagonism . The novel is an elaboration of the human concerns that characterize his earlier fiction. Malamud's love of mankind embraces the ill treated blacks. D.R. Sharma in his review states that Malamud's "primary pact is with men and women and with their quest for a meaningful new life" (13). The novel employs many of the major themes and motives in Malamud's earlier work – the prison motif, the doppelganger, the relation between art and life and the insistence on man's humanity as man displays his inhumanity. It fuses two of the major themes of mature Malamud – the universal theme of man in ambiguous relation to creative activity and the tension and dangers of the explosive relationship between Jews and Blacks in the United States.

The novel explores the relationship between the white and black, between the Jew and the stranger. It is characterized by familiar Hasidic themes: the need for transformation, the

importance of the heart over the head, the necessity of confronting the dark forces in life and the urgency of accepting the stranger as oneself. Malamud's style, his fusion of reality and fantasy reflects Hasidic teachings.

Malamud has told his interviewer Renee Winegarten, "I want my book to contain a feeling for humanity and to be a work of art" (100). In his novel, *The Tenants* the protagonist, Harry Lesser is obsessed with creating perfection in art in the form of a novel. Lesser avoids humanity; he is short in human compassion, and has no understanding of love. The novel treats the issue of black antiJewish sentiment in the nineteen sixties despite the long and vigorous Jewish support given to black groups and causes. Art is the focus in this story of interracial sex and struggle. Lesser, a Jew and Spearmint, a Black, monomaniacs of different kinds, haunt a tenement to type their art and soul into the night. In the end each artist lives with his nausea alone.

The Tenants is the disturbing story of a Jew, Harry Lesser and a Black, Willie Spearmint who live in a decaying New York city tenement slated for destruction. Irving Levenspiel, the landlord succeeds in rejecting all of the occupants except Harry

Lesser, who being a statutory tenant, cannot be easily evicted. Harry insists staying in his old apartment to complete his third novels on love, entitled *The Promosed End*. He has not been able to accomplish the ending of the novel which was begun in this apartment before ten years. He wants to finish the novel in the same room where it was first conceived. He is determined to make the third novel his masterpiece. One day in the apartment opposite his own he finds a black man furiously typing the manuscript of his first autobiographical novel. After an initial hesitation, Willie leaves his typewriter with Harry. When he is through with his day's work, one day he asks him to read his manuscript.

Harry points out the virtues and flaws in Willie's rendition of the subject matter and draws his attention to the aesthetic of form in a work of art. Willie does not want to hear this, believing that form is white and he writes black. Willie feels further humiliation when Irene Bell, his Jewish girl, falls in love with Harry. In retribution Willie burns Lesser's ten years worth of manuscripts. The men's brutal mutual contempt gradually bubbles to the surface and ends when Lesser hacks up the furniture he had bought for Willie, his typewriter and then his

skull while Willie simultaneously castrates Lesser. The novel begins and ends in the decaying tenement in New York city.

This setting creatively reflects the author's nostalgia. In his interview with Danial Stern in 1975, Malamud has stated that he had lived on the edge of a black neighbourhood in Brooklyn when he was a boy. Malamud remembers:

I played with blacks in the Flatbush Boys Club. I had a friend - Buster, we used to go to his house every so often. I swiped dimes so we could go to the movies together on a couple of Saturday afternoons. After I was married I taught for a year in a black evening high school in Harlem (61).

His compassion for the ill-treated blacks is manifested in his following words:

. . . American blacks have been badly ill-treated. We as a society have to redress the balance. Those who want for others must expect to give up something. What we get in return ^{is} ~~is~~ the affirmation [^] of what we believe in (61).

Malamud has gone to the extent of spelling out circumstance and factors that caused the novel:

Jews and blacks, the period of the troubles in New York city, the teachers strike, the rise of black activism, the mix-up of cause and effect. I thought I would say a word. (61).

Interestingly enough Malamud defines the new relationship developing in United States between blacks and Jews in his own terms which has a special relevance to the novel:

It's impossible to predict it may go one way, it may go another. A good deal depends on the efficiency of American democracy. If it works as it ought - guaranteeing blacks as they deserve as human beings - a larger share of our national wealth, equal opportunity under the law, their rights as men, the relationships of blacks and Jews and other minorities are found to improve.

When before the novel's appearance Malamud had explored certain aspects of the problem and published two

short stories treating relationships between blacks and Jews: "Angle Levine" (1955) and "Black is my favorite color" (1963). Malamud's portrayal of black consciousness has won authenticity on account of his acquaintance with black people, black fiction and history.

Although the locale in Malamud's novels differs, the basic theme of compassionate commitment of human values continues. He talks to Stern about the thematic unity of his works. "In my books I go along the same path in different worlds" (62). What he seems to suggest is that although the locale and stuff of each novel is different, the components of his moral vision remain unchanged.

Malamud believes that human values like compassion, love and responsibility alone can outwit the tragedy that has been the lot of the blacks and Jews in particular and humanity in general. Writing at a time when racial riots were tearing apart the fabric of society, Malamud crafted a courageous personal statement about the plight of human kind in the late-twentieth century America. Malamud's focus is on the impact of the tense times on the humanity symbolically represented in the mutual hatred, suspicion and guilt of the black and the

Jewish writers. He is worried about the lack of compassion in a world of nihilistic tendencies.

The mutual hatred of the two writes takes away the redemptive values of their suffering, a fact significantly noticed by sensitive reviewers, Catinella, in her review of *The Tenants* states that, the novel, in its essential temper is "conceived with great, but almost despairing love for all men". D.R. Sharma in his essay on *The Tenants* states that Malamud's social and moral awareness seeks to explore the possibility of envisioning America as a home of co-equals, as a land which could be called the symphony of civilization. (22). Malamud's recurrent plea for mutual compassion and "rachmones" is voiced in the cry of Levenspiel at the end of the novel.

Malamud points the ugly face of racism between Blacks and Jews – the Black-Jewish love-hate relationship. Harry Lesser and Willie Spearmint reflect each other's prejudices. Lesser is a bonafide tenant. Willie is a squatter who is able to stay in the squalid tenement because Lesser hides and protects him from Levenspiel. They are both writers and it is Lesser's feeling of kinship with another writer that makes him protect Willie from the landlord. Their mutual respect as writers

temporarily humanizes each in the other's eyes. The novel suggests some of the complexities of the relationship between blacks and Jews in the mid twentieth century.

The novel is characterised by familiar Hasidic themes. It is within Jewish tradition with the Jewish protagonist and his Jewish landlord. Levenspiel, the landlord emerges as a symbolic reminder of life and its values which Harry Lesser disregards. His own sufferings teach Levenspiel the importance of the heart. Malamud has asked for a sympathetic understanding of the failure of our civilization. His style in *The Tenants*, The fusion of reality and fantasy and the use of the double reflect Hasidic teachings.

For Lesser redemption lies clearly in his intellect. He is the author of one successful book and one failure and he sees the book he is writing as a source of salvation. Harry Lesser's novel is about love, but he has so isolated himself from others that he knows little of love. He is a loner, locked in a prison of his own making. Lesser is having trouble finishing the book; it is as though the book is asking him to say more than he knows. The title of Lesser's book is *The Promosed End* and its epigraph reads, "Who it is who can tell me who I am". Both are

from *King Lear*. They are a fitting and ironic commentary on Lesser's own situation; he is convinced that if he can only work out an ending, he can discover what love is. The subject matter of the books is love. At one point Lesser thinks, "I write about love because I know so little about it" (144).

The novel ends with Levenspiel's continued plea for Harry Lesser to "Hab rachmones" or have mercy. The repetition of word mercy makes it a ritualistic chant. This suggests the compassionate love of God, the saving grace which is akin to the feeling of love that Harry Lesser yearns for, the means for redemption or salvation.

The central character of the novel is thirty-five year old writer who has the shock of realization that he has wasted more of his life than he was entitled to. He hopes that writing will teach him about love. He cannot complete it because it is about love and he must bring knowledge of the subject to the book rather than hoping that his protagonist can provide this understanding for him. His name in the first draft is Lazar Cohen, an old and now dead painter who could not finish his painting.

The writer in Lesser's book wakes in sweaty fright at himself, night after night, stricken by anxiety because he finds it hard to give love. "Love up to a point is no love at all. His life betrays his imagination" (176). Lesser's writer sets out to write a novel about someone he conceives to be himself yet different. He thinks he can teach himself to love by creating a character who will in a sense love for him. Since for Malamud, "love - the total union with another person - is the primary means toward redemption and salvation."² Harry's ability or inability to achieve a loving relationship is crucially important to both his life and writing.

Harry Lesser exalts his role as an artist, claiming that writing is his life, "He lives to write, he writes to live" (19). Lesser's writer is an obvious projection of himself and though he shows some awareness of this, Lesser does not realize why he cannot write his own ending. Lesser is afraid to finish his book because he cannot face death. Lesser remembers certain fleeting images of the disjunct past: the death of his mother in a street accident when he was a child, the death of his older brother in the war. Lesser is as afraid of death as he is of love.

Martin Buber quotes Rabbi Yitzhak in his *Tales of the Hasidim* "in order really to live a man must give himself to death" (291).

Harry Lesser's fears and insecurities make him a stranger to his own motivations. His actions show that he is basically well-meaning. He is compassionate to the black writer who seeks a sanctuary on the same floor of the abandoned tenement. Lesser keeps Willie's typewriter in his apartment at night to prevent it from being stolen. He shares his apartment with Willie for a few days when angry Levenspiel tries to find him and have him arrested for trespassing.

Lesser's feeling of kinship with another writer makes him protect Willie from the landlord. Their mutual respect as writers temporarily humanizes each in the other's eyes. Lesser buys furniture for Willie with the precious little money he has. When Lesser attacks Willie's writing, he does it on the basis of its form. Lesser cannot appreciate the violence of Willie's form because he is afraid of any kind of violence. Though Lesser pretends that he is Willie's friend, he secretly takes pleasure when the black man cannot cope with his criticism.

Harry Lesser finds it difficult to retrieve his lost creativity in an environment of chaos. He wants to make his third novel a great success. He tries his best to find a suitable ending for his book - an ending with love at its core. He does not know much about love in his isolation from the world. At present Lesser confronts a crucial phase in his life when his existence as a writer is at stake. Harry's problems originate from material, non-literary sources. He is constantly bothered by his Jewish landlord, Levenspiel, who keeps on asking Harry to vacate the tenement so that he could demolish the house "to set up a modern six story apartment building" (20). Harry assures ^{ev} Levenspiel that he would vacate the building as soon as his third book is ready.

Malamud suggests through this novel that life is more important than art. Both the writers in the novel fail to recognize this truth. The inadequacy of both the writers, Lesser and Willie, in their response to life and love is evident in their relation to Irene Bell. She remains Willie's lover for two years; then she realizes that Willie's ^S sole obsession is with the black people and his book. When Willie is engaged in writing, Lesser seizes the opportunity to become intimate with Irene. But his

passion for the book competes with his passion for Irene. His loyalties are divided between Irene and the book. He suppresses his thoughts of marriage for the sake of the book. He is a little tormented by the pricking thoughts of stealing Willie's girl, yet grows jealous to see Willie with Irene. Paradoxically he prefers writing a book about love to going through marriage with Irene. Irene taunts Lesser. "What do you know about love?" (45). Lesser thinks: "I write about love because I know so little about it" (97). Irene likes both the lovers, but neither of two writes comes out of the den of writing to enter life. She has already left Willie and now she bids goodbye to Lesser. She finally leaves a note for Lesser without her address, "No Book is an important as me" (170).

The promised end never comes both for Lesser and the writer he writes about. In the novel *The Promised End* Lesser depicts the psychological oppression of a writer who loves a girl and is "stricken by anxiety because he finds it hard to give love" (146). It is his own predicament. Lesser's writer writes a novel in which he creates love seeking vicarious satisfaction through the imagined character. The novel embodies Lesser's attempt to instruct his life through his art. He must only work out an

ending, he is convinced, to discover what love is. His prospects are not promising, at thirty six he is short of love. He does not know why. The problem of Lesser's book and his writer's book is thus invariably linked with Lesser's life. Lesser can neither complete his book nor marry Irene. He is an "occluded self". "Thus Lesser writes his book and his book writes Lesser. That's what is taking so long" (147). In his article "The Promised End: Bernard Malamud's *The Tenants*" John Alexander Allen states that "Lesser has been struggling for a decade with a novel about a novelist writing a novel about a novelist writing about the same things bothering him, that is a writer's deficiencies in compassion and love" (4).

Malamud's description of the writers finding out that their craft has taken over their lives and feeling is most effective. As writers in the brotherhood of writing Willie and Lesser, Black and Jew, need each other. Each needs what the other apparently possesses naturally. Willie needs Lesser's form, craftsmanship, technique, Lesser needs Willie's passion, David R. Muher, in his article, "Names and stereo types in Malamud's *The Tenants*" is of the opinion: "Whereas Willie tries to create art out of life, Lesser tries to discover life through his

art. Neither is successful" (162). The obsession with writing instead of real life eventually takes over Willie too, who finds himself more moving from a comparatively easygoing approach to writing to one where he resists to going to Harry's party because he wants to stay with his work. Willie ~~is~~^{is} so easily drawn to Harry as like Harry, Willie too is in the process of creating himself through his book, taking the tragedies of black powerlessness in America and transforming them. He hopes, he can, through fiction and later through imagined action, turn blacks into chosen people, history will be nullified and Willie will gain stature as a human being. Willie wants power for his people and himself, and he hopes to create action through his words.

Lesser becomes more and more obsessed with the need to control his world through art. He swears that no man or woman will even persuade him to give up his book. Anna Petrov, in her article on *The Tenants*, states that "Lesser's book becomes for him a woman he does not have. He gives all his feelings and energy to the book. . . ." (147). The fascination of Willie Spearmint is that while he is a fully realized character in his own right, he may also be seen as a double for Lesser. The

more we learn about Willie, the more we can identify him with Lesser. Like Lesser, he feels he needs isolation to work. Also, he has great expectations about his writing; "I sear to myself I will be the best soul writer" (58). But Willie's writing fails because he cannot distance himself sufficiently from feeling passionately about black struggle and oppression, he does not understand the uses of form. Harry's writing fails because he is bogged down in form and is for distant from real life. Abramson remarks that a subtle balance must exist for the creation of successful act (96).

Lesser's book is concerned with a man who cannot love; Willie's stories are about blacks who can only hate. The violence in Willie's stories shows the depth of his unspent rage; in five of his stores there are five deaths, four blacks and one white. In one of his stories a black kills a white man to taste a piece of his heart; he starts cutting him up but he can find the heart nowhere. Willie hates the white man but he hates himself more. He fears that if he looks into the mirror, it will show that he has turned white. Willie, like Lesser, cannot face himself; he takes refuge in his act as an escape from life. The critic Eileen H. Watts believes that to Willie art, that is technique, form,

structure is inherently white and Jewish, and therefore a threat to his manhood, his sexual power (43). Willie appears to be different from Lesser in his negation of form but he acts out Lesser's suppressed hostilities in his violent behaviour.

Lesser and Willie are trying to create their identities in their work. When Lesser tries to explain to Willie about form in art Willie shouts, "Art can kiss my juicy ass, you want to know what is really art: I am art. Whillie Spearmint, black man. My form is myself" (68). Lesser and Willie are both trying to write books in which they try to create or write themselves. Alvin Kernan, in "The Tenants, Battering the object" and Sanford Pinstler in *Jewish American Fiction 1917-1987* have noted that Lesser's book suffers from form without passion, Willie's from passion without form and neither book can get published. Later Willie destroys Lesser's manuscript and he writes on the wall with its ashes. "REVOLUTION IS THE REAL ART. NONE OF THAT FORM SHIT I AM THE RIGHT FORM" (163).

Willie's stories, filled with violence and hatred, reflect Lesser's hatred of himself as a human being. Lesser has isolated himself from his own feelings and from commitment to another; he fears and negates his personality and thus violates

his humanity. When Lesser meets Willie on the stairs, after the destruction of his manuscript he hides his hatred and says, "I forgive you, Willie for what you did to me", to which Willie retorts, "I forgive you for forgiven me. (206). When he is not able to write again, the terribly infuriated Lesser hacks up Willie's typewriter with full barbaric rage. Initially Lesser refuses to accept the fury within him as his own; he invites that venomous fury to overwhelm him and to lead him to destruction.

This reminds us that in *Later Masters* Martin Buber quotes Rabbic Moshe Leib "a man must accept violence and hatred as part of himself if he would turn them into the service of good" (89).

Willie changes his name to Bill Spear, an attempt to deny his identity. In spite of his protests, he is worried about form and cannot finish his stories. He wants to revise his ideas about writing and form after reading Lesser's novels, to enrich his black experience in form. In one of the stories Willie writes about blacks who kill a Jew slumlord, taste his flesh and go to a synagogue where they put on yamulkes and start praying. In a different ending to the story, the synagogue is taken over and

turned into a mosque; "the blacks dance hasidically" (186). In this story within the story we have the old tale of the victimizer and the victim becoming one.

Willie's murder and Lesser's castration are one end of the novel, one of the four endings. After THE END is a small circle denoting change of section followed by Levenspiel's cry for mercy, "Mercy, the both of you, for Christ's sake . . . Hab rachmones, I beg you. Mercy on me and then the word mercy 113 times in a solid block. No punctuation no period at the end, no THE END at the end, suggesting that rachmones, mercy by and for Jews and Blacks is the only way to salvage the future. Mercy towards our another is the only way for Blacks and Jews to avoid THE END.

Near the conclusion of the novel, each writer searches the trashcans toward the writings of the other. In the final confrontation Lesser is ready to face his anger and his mortality; he thinks "each feels the anguish of the other" (211). At the moment of his death Lesser sees the black man and himself as one, Harry Lesser and Willie spearmint are one and the same, and Lesser must feel this truth before he can meet his end.

Willie's unfinished writings that Lesser discovers in the garbage betray his fanatic attachment to blackness. One of the stories entitled "Golberg exits Harlem" is about the killing of a Jew by three old men and Jamaican woman who taste his flesh.. The woman says: "He tastes Jewtaste, that don't taste like nothing good" (154). The pages in the book under the title *Manifested Destiny* conveys how the word "black" grows into "BLACKNESS" engulfing the word "white" which diminishes through "white" "whi" "w" into nothingness. This is the "objective correlative" of the mind of Willie and his overwhelming black consciousness. Another story is followed by the word "program" twelve times. Willie also writes some poems on Irene expressing his frustration in love. Willie has written down while he has reduced his whole life experience to blackness. Everything that happens does not happen to him, all that he does or does not do, whom he sleeps with how people treat him, are all determined solely by his colour. In a sense, he has already killed his self and foreclosed any relationships with Jews, and by extension, whites. He proclaims, "No Jew can treat me like a man".

Levenspiel Lesser's landlord is the important father figure in the novel. He has an anger and weakness that mirrors Lesser's fury. His attempt is to evict Lesser so that he can sell the apartment building to meet his family expenses and need for money. Levenspiel calls the policeman and destroys Willie's furniture. We are a long way from Morris Bober or Shmuel who show the way to salvation by their kindness and love. Yet Levenspiel has the insight to evaluate Lesser's plight accurately when he shouts at him through a closed door: "Art my ass, in the world it is heart hat counts, wait, you will get yours one of thee days Lesser. Mark my words" (19).

Levenspiel's family problems increase and his heart softens towards Lesser and he speaks to him "as to a sick relative". When he finds Lesser bleeding after his struggle with Willie, he says with perception, "My God, Lesser , look what you have done to yourself. You are your worst enemy . . ." (158). Sandy Cohen, in his famous book *Bernard Malamud and the Trial by Love* (1974) states:

Lesser ignores Levenspiel's Job-like plight just as Fidelman ignored Susskind. And Lesser ignores

Levenspiel for the same reason: to make a significant statement about humanity.

The novel mixes fantasy and reality. The reader perceives "all actions filtered through Lesser's fanciful thoughts and nightmares." Willie's internalizings remain shrouded. The marvelous fusion of earthborn fact and visionary dream once again places Malamud firmly within the Hasidic tradition. Fantasy in *The Tenants* include Harry's turning the building into a jungle located in the middle of Maahattan an island on an island ". . . this sceptered isle on the silver sea, this thirty first street and third Avenue. This forsaken house" (5). Abramson's remark is relevant here, Willies' arrival adds an allusion to Daniel Defoe, with Harry as Robinson Crusoe and Willie as a frustrated Friday, full of rage" (98).

The use of fantasy takes us into the subconscious of Harry Lesser. We get an inkling of his fears and hopes through his reveries, visions and dreams. Herbert Mann sees Malamud's use of these states of mind as expressing "the inevitable inter relationships of characters . . . where they record the progressive and tragic interlocking of Harry and Willie's destinies" (7). The interlocking of destinies can be seen

in Harry's dream of Willie's poem concerning Willie's sex life with Irene, followed by Willie eating a large bone that may be Harry's leg. This nightmare happens when Harry is in bed with Irene, when Willie is not in the know of their relationship.

In his first fantasy Lesser imagines himself destroyed in a fire set by Levenspiel, "the mysterious stranger" (20). His fears project an apocalyptic ending to his reluctance to move.

The second ending of the novel is Lesser's fantasy of "double wedding" of himself and Mary and Willie and Irene. The risk taking priest performs the ritual of the unconventional wedding between blacks and Jews. Lesser confesses to Mary, in his dream, his inability to love, ". . . Mary, I am short of love in my nature, don't ask me why, but I will try to give you your due." (161).

The rabbi preaches the value of love and mutual trust to the black and white couple:

Willie and Irene, to enjoy the pleasures of the body you don't need a college education, but to live together in love is not so easy. Besides love which preserves marriage is not that which preserves life;

that is mutual trust, insight into each other, generosity and also character, so that you will do what is not easy to do when you must do it. What else can I tell you my children? Either you understand or you don't. The rabbi also longs for amity between the blacks and the Jews, "someday God will bring together Ishmael and Israel to live as one people. It won't be the first miracle" (163). The hope of the rabbi is very much the hope of Bernard Malamud. Comedy has become profundity: Ishmael and Israel, the stranger and the Jew, symbolically united in Lesser's fantasy; the ending of the book, if he dared. Lesser says to Irene, "it is something that I imagined like an act of love, the end of my book, if I dared" (164).

The Tenants ends in a marriage of violence and not in a marriage of love. The apartment house becomes a jungle. Willie and Less^e_^ meet in a grassy clearing in the bush. How much is dream and how much is fact becomes unimportant, for when Lesser thrusts his jagged ax through the bone and brain of Willie and when the black uses his razor-sharp saber to cut the

white's balls from the rest of him, each has become an effective symbol for his race's destructive forces. The ending is tragic, a relentless vision of what might be, the affirmation comes when Lesser perceives that each feels the other's anguish and thus knows that Willie and he are one. Levenspiel's continued plea for Lesser to "Hab rachmones" (have mercy) reaches the form of ritual chant by the end of the novel where the repetition of the words "mercy" becomes a chant.

Hab rachmones, I beg you, Mercy on me, mercy mercy mercy mercy mercy. (211).

The ritualistic chant suggests the compassionate love of God, the saving grace that enables a man to achieve freedom from himself.

Though Lesser fails to achieve salvation and his "prison" is not a way of accepting responsibility but a retreat from the world. *The Tenants* emphasizes important Hasidic themes in Malamud's work since his first novel. It shows the necessity of coming to terms with the dark or black man in all of us. Harry Lesser, as a well-meaning but self-denying Jewish intellectual, is different from most men only in degree, for he isolates

himself from his deepest feelings and fears human commitment. He violates his own humanity when he negates love and death. Willie Spearmint is the man he can treat no better than he does himself. Thus Malamud's story is a significant commentary on the relationship between the races. The Jew, Malamud's "everyman" must affirm life for himself if he is to affirm it for the stranger. Finally the Jew and the stranger are one. The novel affirms the Hasidic belief that all souls are one, and that "each being a part of the other, is in the deepest sense responsible for the other" as emphasized by Samuel. H. Dresner in his famous book *The Zaddik* (207).

The ultimate value of quest in Malamud lies in realizing one's humanity. His protagonists in their final responses, manifest their allegiance to man. This intensely transethnic concern characterizes Malamud's work, which is otherwise shaped in Jewish sociology and ethics. This is evident from one of his unequivocal statements on his stance as an artist in his interview with Haskel Frankel, as mentioned earlier:

My work, all of it, is an idea of dedication to the human.

That's basic to every book. If you don't respect man, you

cannot respect my work. I'm in defense of the human (40).

In Saul Bellow's novel, *The Victim* Schlossberg says that to stay human one should not be "less-than-human" or "more-than-human". Both deviations suggest a sort of departure from the aggregate humanity. D.R. Sharma says:

Subhuman and superhuman can as well as the categories for blacks and Jews, the black being only one fifth of a human being, and the Jew being the descendent of Abraham, the first recipient of the covenant . . . Malamud has blasted this superiority syndrome, and asserted that . . . he is not afraid to go from Jewish experience to non-Jewish experience and . . . he looks upon Jewish history as an archetype of human struggle (21).

Malamud's world is a republic of baseball players, shop assistants, college instructors, fixers, tenants and painters who lean to subordinate their egoistic passions and ethnic compulsions to a conscious endeavour of human togetherness. This secular ideal lies at the heart of *The Tenants*. The ending

embodies a bleak^a and gloomy vision, and it serves as an effective caveat against disaster and its morality is that of a warning.

The Tenants does not incorporate Hasidic teachings as extensively as do Malamud's previous novels. Lesser fails to achieve salvation and his "prison" is not a way of accepting responsibility but a retreat from the world. The novel emphasizes important Hasidic themes apparent in Malamud's work since his first novel. It shows us the need for transformation, the importance of the heart over the head, the necessity of confronting the dark forces of life, the reality of evil and the danger of denying the stranger as oneself. Malamud's style in *The Tenants*, his fusion of realism and fantasy, his use of the double and the ritualistic ending with the continual plea of "hah rachmones" (have mercy) reflect Hasidic teachings and complement the themes. The ritualistic chant is reminiscent of Dresner's words, mercy or love can free man from the destructiveness of self" (207).

This study leads to the thought that we can look at the novel *The Tenants* as a variation on the theme of brotherhood; on the values of love and compassion and as a protest against

the devaluation of man. Curiously enough we may appreciate Malamud's assertion during his interview with Israel Shanker that *The Tenants* "is a sort of prophetic warning against fanaticism" and that it "argues for the invention of choices to outwit tragedy" (22). The words of D.R. Sharma are relevant here:

Suspicious of the simplistic categories of the "invisible and the overvisible" Malamud's creative faith and intention in the novel seems to highlight the imperation of a dialogue between blacks and Jews encompassing their cultural diversities. His moral and social awareness seeks to explore this possibility of envisioning America as a home of coequals, as a land which could indeed be called "the symphony of civilization" (21).

The idea of human togetherness and the value of love and compassion, how a man can become a "mensch" a decent human being - these tenets of humanism lie at the heart of the novel. Men's acceptance of the stranger as oneself, the necessity of confronting the dark forces of life, the blending of realism and fantasy and the ritualistic chants for mercy and

compassion well-nigh illustrate the tenets of Hasidism in *The Tenants*. And the universability of the theme is that all of us also will have to leave our tenancy, one day or the other like Harry Lesser and Willie Speermint to join the majority.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

The exploration into the selected novels of Bernard Malamud has been a revelation that the tenets of humanism and hasidism permeate his novels under scrutiny. Commitment to the human is centred in Malamud's large and comprehensive moral vision, which he seems to say, arises out of the paradoxical struggle to win freedom for the self through a victory over the self. This fundamental commitment to the human refers to the idea of extending one's own freedom and thereby the freedom of others - as it arose in many different fictional contexts like sexuality and love, the metaphor of prison and the centrality of the notion of suffering. This study also highlights the hasidic themes of Malamud as reflected in the novels under scrutiny. His defence of the human and the impact of Hasidism are scrutinized and the conclusion is that both humanism and hasidism have shaped Malamud's large and comprehensive vision.

While analysing the humanistic concerns I have come across Malamud's reluctance to be branded as a Jewish

American writer. The effectiveness of the Jewish characters and their situations is directly related to his view of suffering. The redemptive nature of suffering and how man can become a 'mensch' are highlighted. While many groups have experienced unjust suffering the Jews have had more than their fair share of it in their long history and serve Malamud as a representative of the human condition, of the moral possibilities available to all human kind through accepting the inevitability of suffering and responding with increased love, mercy, compassion and charity. Those who fail to learn the positive lesson of suffering, that all humanity is one, can never, in Malamud's view, achieve the secular redemption that is possible. Suffering has aided moral growth of characters like Roy Hobbs, Frank Alpine, Seymour Levin and Yakov Bok. They have acquired the vision and calibre to share the pains and pangs of every man. The suffering Jew symbolizes the common man. Though Malamud has not identified himself with the teachings of Hasidism, this study concludes that Hasidism permeates Malamud's writing with varying intensity from *The Natural* to *The Tenants*.

The detailed analyses in the foregoing chapters of the five substantial, stimulating and influential novels of Bernard Malamud – *The Natural*, *The Assistant*, *A New Life*, *The Fixer* and *The Tenants* have sought to test the credibility of the author's statement "I am in defence of the human". The analyses of these five novels done in the previous chapters have attempted to demonstrate that writing for Malamud was not only an aesthetic and intellectual pursuit but also an attempt to delineate his allegiance to the human ideal transcending ethnicity. His comment on his creative position is relevant here.

The purpose of the writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself. But without preachment. Artists cannot be ministers. As soon as they attempt it, they destroy their activity (Letter to D.R. Sharma).

It becomes obvious that the stamp of Jewishness is invariably assigned to the creative genius of Malamud. This study leads to the conclusion that Malamud is emphatic in asserting that there is a broad humanistic concern in all his tales^a about Jews. His statement that "Everyman is a Jew" tends to suggest that Malamud looks upon a Jew as a paradigm of

human values and not a creature of a chosen tribe. Philip Roth's acceptance of Malamud's humanistic premise is relevant here, "What is to be human, to be humane, is his subject: connection, indebtedness, responsibility; these are his moral concerns" (151). Curiously enough Malamud himself explains his point of view when he says that he writes about Jews because he knows something about them, though he is not afraid to go from Jewish experience to non-Jewish experience.

As far Jewishness, it's there, of course, and I draw from its love of morality to strengthen by own, and from its history as symbol of man's struggle and use whatever other material excites my imagination.

The study of these five novels written during different periods of Malamud's life, with different plots and different sets of characters, highlights the important strands of his wide ranging thought. Dealing with themes like human relationships, love, death, life, compassion, academic life, race conflicts, prison and freedom he has created a host of characters. They range from craftsmen, small shop keepers, artists, writers, teachers, fixers and shop assistants.

The significance as well as contemporary relevance of Bernard Malamud was recognized universally when he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the Rosenthal award. The Malamud Society in his name speaks out the impact he has left on the minds of his readers. This study has helped the researcher to realize that Malamud's moral vision is shaped by the Jewish heritage which blends realism and lofty idealism.

In writing this thesis I have been benefited by the insights of several Malamudian scholars. Specifically, Edward A Abramson, Sidney Richman, Leslie A Field and Joyce W Field, Harold Bloom, Iska Alter, Joel Salzberg, in their books on Bernard Malamud have enlightened me through their dexterous investigations. In addition a host of critical writings by various authors in books and journals have also been highly helpful in analyzing his novels. Richard R O' Keefe has conveniently categorized Malamud criticism into five sections – cultural, religious, literary, linguistic and responses to the Holocaust. The surprising amount of Malamud criticism has been overviewed and organized in an outstanding way which has been of great help in this analysis. Laurence M. Lasher's *Conversations with Bernard Malamud* and Edward A.

Aabramson's *Malamud Revisited* have helped to evolve a clear and authentic picture about the writer's vision of his world and his work. The doctoral theses of Chithralekha and O' Brian with their assumptions and affirmations of the humanistic aspect of Bernard Malamud have been of great help to me in my analysis.

This study reveals that Malamud's chief concern is with humanism and hasidism. He is sensitively alive to the human suffering in the Jewish personae and suggests commitment to the human as the only solution in the present predicament. His compassionate attitude to life is in conformity with the Jewish traditional history. Although every religion teaches human values and compassion and love, the Jewish history has imparted special significance to it. Malamud does not want to limit himself as a Jewish writer; he acknowledges his debt to the authentic Jewish experience and sensibility. He acclaims that the advent of the second world war and the Holocaust first made him write and assured him that he had something to say as a writer. He values authentic human experience in the act of writing. The impact of Jewishness on Malamud's work has provided him with a compassionate and tragic vision of life. His

work reveals a profound reverence for human dignity because his attempt throughout is to picture man as a responsible, decent fellow human being.

In a Malamud conference held in Corvallis Benson has described Malamud's greatness as being based upon a devotion to Old Testament questions – why should we be good, when there is no reward for goodness? How can we have faith when there are signs to confirm our faith? How can we love if our love is met only with scorn or violence? His concern for these questions found fruitful expression in his depiction of Jewish characters and their humanism in the novels under scrutiny.

This study has helped me to formulate an idea of Malamud's theme of suffering and how it is related to the human condition and its betterment. The effectiveness of Jewish characters and their situations is directly related to Malamud's view of suffering. While many groups have experienced unjust suffering, Jews have had more than their fair share of it in their long history. They serve Malamud as representatives of the human condition, of the moral possibilities available to all human kind through accepting the inevitability of suffering and responding with increased love,

misery, compassion and charity. Those who fail to learn the positive lesson of suffering, that all humanity is one can never, in Malamud's view, achieve the secular redemption that is possible.

In each of these novels under scrutiny Malamud presents a protagonist who must eventually realize that the only way to achieve self respect and a measure of freedom is through selflessness and acceptance of responsibility for the needs of others. Iris Lemon tells Roy Hobbs in *The Natural*, "we have two lives Roy the life we learn with and the life we live after that. Suffering is what brings us to happiness" (149). Iris suggests that Roy could save himself from future agony if he could learn the lessons suggested by his own history. Suffering makes him take the right choice and he becomes more responsible and human. In *The Assistant* Morris Bober tells Frank Alpine, "I suffer for you" and Frank Alpine, the gentile suffers for the family of Morris Bober. Seymour Levin in *A New Life*, Yakov Bok in *The Fixer* and Harry Lesser in *The Tenants* respond to the human predicaments through their suffering and they take it for granted that suffering makes them better, responsible, other-centred individuals. Thus Roy Hobbs, Frank Alpine,

Seymour Levin and Yakov Bok learn the lesson about the universality of suffering and redemption. Though he learns it too late Roy does beat up the Judge Gus and reject the bribe. Frank refuses to accept his fate and uses the Bober store to discipline himself in selflessness. Levin becomes political in his attempt to change the English Department and takes the responsibility for Pauline and her children. Yakov Bok grows in compassion and finally no longer thinks solely of himself. Only Harry Lesser in *The Tenants* avoids humanity, is short on human compassion and has no understanding of love. In this study, it is evident that Malamud retains his belief in the usefulness of suffering in -changing people. In the novels discussed here, this change is for the better.

Malamud does not praise the existence of suffering or say that human beings should seek it out. Since it is there, it should be used as an aid to moral growth. His optimism can be seen in those characters for whom suffering leads to the realization of the best that is in them.

This study has revealed that Malamud has nowhere identified himself so directly with the teachings of Hasidism as Bober has and yet, I have tried to illustrate how Hasidism exists

in Malamud's writing with varying intensity in all the novels under scrutiny. It may be noted that an understanding of the Hasidic strains provides an enriched appreciation of Malamud's creative endeavour.

The main motif in Malamud's writing is the struggle to know the self; it is evocative of Hasidic teaching when set within a Jewish context. In Malamud's first novel, *The Natural* there are no Jewish characters. The hero, Roy Hobbs is a "schlemiel-schlimazel" character and his journey into self-discovery is dependent on caring father figures. The schlemiel-schlimazel belong to the Hasidic tradition - they are victims with a comic aspect to depict the human condition. The comic figure brings forth compassion rather than mockery and ridicule; pathos is the primary emotion elicited as the comic situation moves close to tragedy. When we see *The Natural* through the point of view of Hasidism, Roy's final defeat is turned into victory because of his concern and responsibility for others. Pairs, victim, victimizer are common in Malamud's writing, sometimes taking the form of a character's conscience, his doppelganger, like Morris Bober and Frank Alpine in *The Assistant*.

This study leads to the discovery that Malamud excels in the fusion of realism and fantasy, evoking an Hasidic dream-world of acknowledged limitation and unlimited possibility. *The Assistant* and *The Fixer* are Malamud's most successful novels for they explore the theme of self-discovery within an aesthetic mode that intensifies our experience of a visionary journey. While perusing the Hasidic elements in *The Assistant*, we realize that the relationship between Morris Bober and Frank Alpine takes on an added lusture of a "zaddik" and his disciple, and Frank's transformation is as dependent on his identification with Morris as it is on Morris' identification with Frank. That freedom must be interpreted as the release of bondage to the self is emphasized both in *The Assistant* and *The Fixer*, most notably in *The Fixer* where Malamud transforms the familiar metaphor of the prison into an historical setting. While *The Fixer* is Malamud's most distinctive use of Jewish history, when we see it in the framework of Hasidism, we realize man's potential to force himself from the determining bonds of past and present.

Malamud's attempt to present the theme of self-discovery in a realistic mode is shown in *A New Life* as a combination of

satire and romantic love story. Malamud's ambivalence into academic life falls into clear perspective where we view the work through the Hasidic emphasis of the heart over the head, for Seymour Levin uses his intellect as an escape from the demands of his heart and the university as a retreat from the involvement in the world. Like all of Malamud's heroes, Levin must learn to accept the sanctity of his past and the painful responsibilities of freedom.

The last novel under scrutiny, *The Tenants* differs from the previous novels since the protagonist, Harry Lesser, fails to achieve the significant self-knowledge which leads to salvation. It may be noted that there are implied Hasidic strains in *The Tenants*, the understanding of which enables us to read the work as a prophetic warning. Man must come to terms with the reality of evil and the dark forces in life and accept the stranger as himself. While he balances us between reality and a surrealistic dream world Malamud reminds us that man will never relate well to the stranger in his society until he learns to love the stranger in himself.

In his fusion of the sacred and the profane, his evocation of yiddish humour and irony, his sympathy for the oppressed

and his wry awareness of man's most painful limitations, Malamud reminds us of the great Jewish tellers of tales, in particular, I.L. Peretz who was himself, like Malamud, not a Hasid but influenced by the Hasidic tradition. Yet Malamud, in the best sense of the tradition, shows his own distinctive voice when he echoes the past. In the novels under scrutiny we find Malamud, a sophisticated American literary artist of the twentieth century reworking the tradition of Hasidic teaching to fit his individual talent.

Although Malamud has written eight novels - *The Natural* (1952), *The Assistant* (1957), *A New Life* (1961), *The Fixer* (1966), *Pictures of Fidelman* (1969), *The Tenants* (1971), *Dubin's Lives* (1979) and *God's Grace* (1982) and four collections of short stories. *The Magic Barrel* (1958); *Idiots First* (1963); *Rembrandt's Hat* (1973); and *Stories of Bernard Malamud* (1983) as well as the sixteen uncollected short stories that appear in *People and Uncollected Stories*. Except for Roy Hobbs, the protagonist of *The Natural* Malamud heroes or antiheroes are Jews striving to acquire a foothold in life. It is their persistent search for a qualitatively "new life" that projects Malamud's

moral vision and his reactions to the problem of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews.

Chapter one of this dissertation is Introduction. Fiction continues to explore largely human predicaments especially in the works of novelists like Bernard Malamud. The aim is to clarify the status of the still indispensably human relationship between writers, characters and readers as presented in the fictional art of Bernard Malamud. The possibility of change and growth through an experience with someone else's pain, redemptive suffering is seen here as the cornerstone of humanism in Bernard Malamud's fiction. The present study has led to the conclusion that Bernard Malamud was a conscientious, dedicated writer, remarkably disciplined in pursuit of his art while at the same time striving to live the fully humane and morally responsible life. The Hasidic influence on Malamud's fiction has also been brought to limelight.

The writer's desire to be "of assistance" has kept him making himself available to interviewers and doing his best to overcome his instinctive and principled resistance. Malamud sees humanity enduring and he believes that the human spirit is capable of overcoming the pressures in modern civilization

that would destroy it. He recognizes that man is a compound of good and evil and he has the potentiality to change for the better. Malamud affirms his firm faith in these novels that man can recreate his humanity through self-scrutiny, suffering and sympathy and that man can attain salvation through suffering. His humanism comprises his immense confidence in the power of man and he speaks in defence of man.

Chapter two of the dissertation is based on Malamud's first novel *The Natural*. The novel is about the hero's aspiration to become a baseball champion and his eventual failure. When Roy feels broken inwardly Iris Lemon explains to Roy the value of the experience of suffering; "we have two lives, Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness". She adds that the normative centre of suffering lies in teaching man "to want the right things". Roy's eventual outburst against the evil trio signifies that he has grown conscious of a different realm of values. Roy is conscious that he has "to suffer again". He becomes more responsible and human and that is the humanism exemplified here, the willingness to suffer and take up the responsibility of his actions and to correct himself, to want and do the right

things. Thus *The Natural* is a study of the growth of inwardness and the value of suffering. Roy Hobbs starts his journey to the depths of his self; he chooses the way of responsibility, love and suffering and that completes his salvation.

Chapter three of the dissertation is based on Bernard Malamud's most popular novel *The Assistant*. It contains strains of humanism and hasidism. The study reveals that Morris Bober is the fictional counterpart of Martin Buber. The novel is seen as the fictional equivalent of Martin Buber's I-and-thou philosophy. The emphasis on personal inner salvation, the doctrine of the "zaddik" or the "righteous man", the importance it attaches to the relationship between the teacher and the pupil- these Hasidic strains are brought to limelight. The idea of commonality between a Jew and a gentile through suffering makes Frank learn the fundamental value of Judaism. Morris Bober seems to convey his belief that man must trust man in a spirit of equality, to be truly human.

Chapter four is based on Bernard Malamud's academic novel *A New Life*. This study reveals that this novel is another attempt to extend and recreate those moral concerns that are

the centre of Malamud's previous works. As an academic novel, *A New Life* provides incisive commentary on the petty and infantile minds of educators. S. Levin believes that "the human, the good and innocent" must be protected against the menace of McCarthyism, the Cold War, Loyalty Oaths and Korean War. At Cascadia College, couples like the Fairchilds, the Gilleys and the Bullocks epitomize the national crisis of leadership and bankruptcy of ideas. Cascadia intensifies Levin's urge to begin anew, and his allegiance to human relationships is indicated through his renunciation of an academic career at the end of the narrative. Levin has finally come to that knowledge and responsibility for self and others that paves the way to salvation. The study reveals that the novel contains Hasidic themes like the dominance of the heart over the head, the importance of inner revival and the need for accepting the seeming limitations of the past. Both humanism and hasidism permeate the novel, *A New Life*.

Chapter five deals with the novel *The Fixer*, where Malamud returns to the Jewish milieu. Based on an incident of anti-Semitism in Czarist Russia, *The Fixer* forcefully articulates Malamud's commitment of humanism to a meta-Jewish secular

ideal of life. Yakov Bok's moral growth occurs through the influence of his suffering on his views of the human condition. He does his best when he fuses realism with fantasy, when he evokes the Hasidic dream world of acknowledged limitation and unlimited possibility. Malamud depicts the victory of the human spirit over the forces of darkness by using an omniscient third person point of view that focuses entirely on Yakov's inner life. Both humanism and hasidism permeate the novel, as exemplified in the detailed analysis in chapter five.

Chapter six analyses the novel *The Tenants*. Bernard Malamud deals with the relationship between the blacks and the Jews. Malamud directly confronts a specific, contemporary, social and political problem: the complex, inflammatory issue of racial antagonism. This study reveals that the novel employs many of the major themes and motives in Malamud's earlier work-the prison motif, the doppelganger, the relation between art and life and the insistence on man's humanity as man displays his inhumanity. It may be noted that the novel fuses two major themes of Malamud- the universal theme of man in ambiguous relation to creative activity and the tension and

dangers of the explosive relationship between Jews and Blacks in the United States.

Concluding this dissertation let me state that Humanism in the novels of Bernard Malamud is relevant in the present context which is haunted by anti-humanism and post-humanism. Man and his concerns will remain forever perennial so long as man has his sojourn upon the world. I have limited my study to the selected five novels only; the short-stories of Malamud are actually "in defence of the human", where I am afraid to step into. Concluding words of Abramson are relevant here:

In a writing career that extended forty five years he created a bitter sweet image of humanity and what it is capable of despite, and often in response to, the oppressiveness of life. His voice is distinctive, his characters memorable, and his compassion great, his works will last (145).

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