

THE THEME OF INTIMACY
IN THREE WORKS BY BERNARD MALAMUD

by

NANCY JOHNSON

B. A. Kansas State University, 1973

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

Approved by:


Major Professor

LD
2668
R4
1975
J65
C.2

Document

Bernard Malamud's heritage has created a problem for the literary critic. "The hub of the problem," as Sidney Bellman points out, "is precisely his Jewishness. In reading some of Malamud's critics, one suspects that it is less his art than his subject which is the center of interest. Too often there is the uneasy sensation that the subject is not really a writer who happens to be a Jew but a Jew who happens also to be a writer."¹ Malamud's fictional world is frequented by Jewish protagonists involved in personal, social, and spiritual struggles, and certainly that dimension of his art should be examined by the critics. But to limit one's study of Malamud's work to defining and isolating his use of the social and religious implications of the Jewish heritage is an implicit denial of the author's broader concerns.

"Malamud, like all great writers before him," declares Leslie Field, "is concerned with man, the human animal evolving his world within a world he never made. And how man chooses his own world and what happens to man in the process of that choice constitute the significant world of Bernard Malamud's fiction."² Field rightly stresses Malamud's broad humanistic range. However, a study of Malamud's recurring themes offers a more refined assessment. Malamud is indeed concerned with man and his choices. But the one choice which Malamud consistently offers his heroes is whether or not to enter into intimate, significant communion with others.

In three novels, The Assistant (1957), A New Life (1961), and The Tenants (1971), Malamud demonstrates an ever-growing concern with

the necessity for human intimacy. This is a developmental interest; the intensity and breadth of this theme grow from one work to the next. The theme becomes increasingly important, more central to the plot and to the interaction of character, in the later novels. Malamud's emphasis on intimacy is realistic; he is not sentimental, nor idealistic. Personal encounters are often painful and seldom easy. But they are necessary, according to Malamud, for it is interaction which makes growth possible. In The Assistant, A New Life, and The Tenants, the major characters--Frank Alpine, Seymour Levin, and Harry Lesser--are at the outset loners, misfits, men outside the mainstream of human contact for one reason or another. Each is given the chance to venture forth from isolation. The role that meaningful contact can play in reconciling the isolated individual to some form of community is a major thematic consideration in the fiction of Bernard Malamud--and the chief concern of this paper.

In The Assistant, the opportunity for movement from isolation toward community is given to Frank Alpine. The theme of communion, however, is not the central concern of the novel, nor are the effects of Frank's relationship with Morris Bober and his family detailed or psychologically analyzed. Nevertheless, the groundwork for Malamud's later focal concern with the issue of isolation and intimacy is definitely laid in this early work.

Frank is young, hard, self-centered and inconsistent. He is also immature and, at the outset, unaware of the significance of intimacy and commitment. He is drawn to, but terrified of, stability; stability demands responsibility and Frank wants to remain outside

the entanglement of obligation. He rationalizes his thievery and deceit as the result of necessity to survive in a hostile world, but he is, at the same time, shaken with guilt about his dishonesty. Guilt is a prevalent motivation for Frank. That is what drives him to hang around the corner grocery after he has participated in a robbery there during which the grocer Morris Bober was injured. Morris, "who knew a poor man when he saw one, invited him in."³

Morris offers Frank the love of a father for a son. Frank is drawn into the family; he is given responsibility in the store; he is offered a place in the world, a place to belong. Frank, however, seems unable to shed former habits; he steals food and money behind Morris's back. Although he wants this safe haven, he destroys it for himself. He seems unable to follow through; "'I work like a mule for what I want, and just when it looks like I am going to get it I make some kind of a stupid move, and everything that is just about nailed down tight blows up in my face'" (p. 40). Frank tries to ride the fence between uninvolvedness and commitment; he reaches his hand out to take the friendship and trust given him, but he keeps his total self out of the complication. This is Frank's "stupid move." He realizes only after he has lost Morris's trust how important the old grocer's affection and high regard were to him. "'What I mean to say is that when I need it most something is missing in me, in me or on account of me'" (p. 42). Frank seems aware that he is a limited person, but he doesn't have what it takes to change. He can't utilize the potential offered him via friendship with Morris because he is basically weak. "'Something is missing.'"

Frank knows his relationship with Helen Bober, the grocer's daughter, is valuable, but he can never really give of himself deeply. She loves him; he wants that love and needs it. But again a "stupid move" shatters the possibility of a durable love relationship. After Morris confronts Frank with his thievery, Frank is upset, feels guilty, feels a sense of loss. In this state of mind, he rapes Helen after saving her from the abuses of Ward Minogue. Helen is appalled, full of hate, her love for him killed. "'Dog--uncircumcised dog!'" she cries (p. 203). Frank doesn't know why he raped her; again he bemoans an unruly self which smashes and destroys all good in his life.

He moaned; had got instead of a happy ending, a bad smell. If he could root out what he had done, smash and destroy it; but it was done, beyond him to undo. It was where he could never lay hands on it any more--in his stinking mind. His thoughts would forever suffocate him. He had failed once too often. He should somewhere have stopped and changed the way he was going, his luck, himself, stopped hating the world, got a decent education, a job, a nice girl. He had lived without will, betrayed every good intention. Had he ever confessed the holdup to Morris? Hadn't he stolen from the cash register till the minute he was canned? In a single terrible act in the park hadn't he murdered the last of his good hopes, the love he had so long waited for--his chance at a future? His goddamned life had pushed him wherever it went; he had led it nowhere. He was blown around in any breath that blew, owned nothing, not even experience to show for the years he had lived. If you had experience you knew at least when to start and where to quit; all he knew was how to mangle himself more. The self he had secretly considered valuable, for all he could make of it, a dead rat. He stank (pp. 211-212).

Malamud stresses here in broad terms Frank's ambiguous personality. His behavior to those he supposedly loves demonstrates all his basic inadequacies. He lacks courage, conviction; he is selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed. "He wanted to run. But while he was running, he wanted to be back. He wanted to be back with Helen, to be forgiven" (p. 210). Frank is weak, he is not a unified person. He can't handle intimacy constructively; he wounds it, gnaws at it with his indecision, loses it by his unpredictable behavior and his self-deceit.

In The Assistant, Malamud is overtly concerned with the question of identity. Frank seems to be a nobody; he has no heritage, no family, no present, no future. It is quite plausible to discuss the novel's direction as one which reconciles Frank to the "identity" of the Jew. But the attention the author devotes to Frank's two love relationships indicates that Malamud sees intimacy as an avenue to self-identity. Frank, of course, fails to utilize it as such, but that does not negate the obvious emphasis Malamud puts on it. Malamud incorporates the ability or inability to respond to intimacy in his characterizations; this trait is significant. Frank is drawn to love and commitment but is unable to respond adequately or in time. He realizes their constructive value too late and is then unable to change. Frank emerges from a state of alienation to one of awareness of the value of intimacy but he can't participate. This response to the "choice" of intimacy is contrasted to those of Morris and Helen Bober. Morris indicates in his acceptance of Frank initially that he is a man who values human bonds, who gives of himself. After his death Helen observes that he had "...his only true strength in his

sweet nature and his understanding" (p. 278). Morris takes a risk when he takes Frank in; he does so out of a basically loving nature. Helen offers love as well, taking a chance on a stranger, a gentile. It is Frank Alpine who can't take a risk, who can't take his place in a family, or give of himself to a friend or a lover.

Frank takes on the responsibility of the store and Helen and Ida's welfare after Morris dies. He seems a changed man; he is repentant; he is not the thief, nor the rapist nor the liar. He has "changed in his heart." Frank, again, seems driven by guilt; "...I owe something to Morris," he tells Helen (p. 289). He tries to purge himself of guilt, of his mistakes. He confesses to Helen his participation in the robbery and then explains: "...After, I came to work for him to square up what I did wrong. For Christ's sake, Helen, try to understand me" (p. 290). Is Frank a redeemed man? Has he committed himself in a meaningful way? Has intimacy changed him? No, Frank is being driven by his desperate need to escape his guilt, the shadow of his past mistakes. This is still a form of selfishness, not giving. He has given a clue to this behavior earlier in his musings after the rape. "Explaining was a way of getting close to somebody you had hurt; as if in hurting them you were giving them a reason to love you" (p. 210). Frank is trying to atone, to make up for; he is not changed, just burdened, obsessed and indulging in an exaggerated form of self-flagellation which, though impressive, is still after the fact. Earl H. Rovit in The Jewish Literary Tradition presents the view that Frank's conversion to Judaism implies that "...man need not remain buried in the isolation of himself. He must accept the fatality of his own identity--be it Jew or Gentile, success

or failure--and working within that identity, transcend himself and burst his prison."⁴ But Frank does not work within his own identity. He tries to become Morris, getting up before light to give the Polish lady her roll. His own identity has not been accepted--merely grappled with. Intimacy, which presented itself as an avenue for positive movement toward an identity, was misused, neglected and corrupted by Frank's weak character.

In A New Life the exploration of the direct cause-and-effect relationship between intimacy and personal growth is clearly Malamud's chief concern. Instead of a wide-lens effect as in The Assistant, which focuses not only on Frank Alpine but on the Bober family and their Jewish tradition as well, in A New Life Malamud primarily concerns himself with Seymour Levin and his search for identity. Like Frank, Levin is a loner; but he is consciously so. Malamud explores in this novel the problem presented when a man's sensitive and intellectual nature is not complemented by intimacy with persons or community. A New Life reveals how Levin strives to combat the potential sterility of his existence. Amid the conflicting personalities and ideologies which dominate the atmosphere of the Cascadia College English department, Levin struggles to free himself from a dismal past and from the confines of his reticent and introspective character. Levin's eventual success in escaping from these limitations is greatly affected by the intense relationship he has with Pauline Gilley. This relationship so deeply affects Levin that he is able to shed inhibiting insecurities and directly participate in the world around him. This is the essential thematic pulse of the novel: Levin's journey from the confines of his insecure

personality to a state of involvement. Levin learns that his intellect and sensitivity must be directed outward in order to be worthwhile. To clearly see how his relationship with Pauline has a catalytic effect, one must examine the gradual changes in Levin's character within the novel's unfolding action.

When Levin arrives in Marathon, Cascadia, as a refugee from New York City, he is a man who hopes to begin again. In the past his life "has been without much purpose to speak of."⁵ Hoping to redeem the wasted years and build for a secure future, Levin regards Cascadia College as the place for his rebirth. Having pulled himself out of an alcoholic nightmare, he is determined to make a place in the world for himself. Levin is attracted to teaching, a profession in which he can contribute to the education of others and also gain a sense of community by joining with others who wear the academic garb. The academic community offers a ready identity, teacher and scholar, as well as respectability. Moreover, to this insecure man, haunted persistently by doubts as to his goodness, his worth, the role of English teacher affords a sense of emotional security and chance to contribute to the betterment of others. It is indeed an opportunity to begin a new life.

On the evening of his arrival in Marathon, Levin confides to Pauline, the wife of the Director of Composition, that he has reclaimed "an old ideal or two" (p. 15). He goes on to say that ideals "give a man his value if he stands for them" (p. 15). Unfortunately Levin is initially unable to stand for his principles in his new life. Levin is basically a man who believes there is something sacred about knowledge, and the transmission of it from

one to another is a trust, a duty to which one must be committed. But the English department at Cascadia College seems to be more dedicated to the morning coffee break and bonehead grammar than to any ideals Levin holds. Gerald Gilley, the freshman director, tells Levin, "'You must keep in mind that education for an agrarian society, which is what we are--the majority of our state legislators come from rural areas, is basically a "how to work" education,... Also keep in mind that a lot of very fine upstanding people in this community don't give two hoots for the liberal arts'" (p. 29). Levin disagrees, silently, but deeply, with this sort of attitude, but he doesn't rock the boat because he doesn't want to jeopardize his position and the security which it affords him. "Levin's protective coloration was to pretend he thought like everyone else" (p. 213).

Malamud intensifies Levin's early inability to stand up for his values by concentrating the action of the novel on the inter-relationship of three people; Levin, Pauline Gilley and Gerald Gilley. Gerald Gilley is the prime example of the bread-and-butter attitude which clashes with Levin's sensibility and idealism. Gerald embodies the superficial and shallow interests of most of the department members, whose conversations are concerned with their lawns and the amount of rainfall. Gilley is an ambitious man, dedicated to his own advancement and to exalting his own reputation. The greater part of Gilley's energy is directed toward securing a following which will elect him to the position of Department Head, when the senile incumbent, Professor Fairchild, retires.

The crux of Gerald's and Levin's philosophical differences is illustrated early in the novel when Levin learns that Cascadia

College is not a liberal arts institution. He is deeply concerned about this lack of emphasis. "'How can we...teach what the human spirit is, or may achieve" he asks,"'if a college limits itself to vocational and professional education?'" (p. 24). Gilley replies with a characteristic statement: "'...Cascadia is a conservative state, and we usually take a long look around before we commit ourselves to any important changes in our way of life'" (p. 25). Gerald is not at all concerned with what the human spirit can achieve; his only commitment, intellectual and philosophical, is to the achievement of his own immediate, short-range goals.

Malamud sharply contrasts these two men whose confrontation continues throughout the novel. Gerald has no core of ideals but he does have the ability to act, to assert himself. Levin, of course, is just the opposite. He is a man of high ideals but without the ability to act on them. His own insecurity leads him to adopt a "protective coloration" which renders him ineffectual in combating Gerald's aggressive expediency.

Levin tries to find a colleague who shares his ideals and his distaste for the Gilley regime. The fact that Levin does this indicates a tentative effort on his part to extend himself to others. Levin's first encounter with Dr. Fabrikant, the liberal opposing Gerald for head of the department, results in his being issued a warning: "'...If you're a liberal you may be called on to prove it'" (p. 68). This frightens Levin since he does not want to cross Gilley or alienate anyone, and yet he silently acknowledges Fabrikant's integrity and superiority. Fabrikant correctly analyzes the situation at Cascadia. "'Their great fear is that tomorrow will be different

from today. I've never seen so many pygmies in my life'" (p. 101). Levin naturally does not want to be a pygmy; he wants change, but in a safe way. At this point he has not yet realized that real change, growth, requires commitment, risk and pain.

Paralleling Levin's intellectual struggle to be overtly a man of integrity are his efforts to find significant human contact. Levin needs companionship. He is "famished for love" (p. 70). His initial efforts at securing love are marred by his seemingly deliberate choice of unsuitable companions. His trysts with a bar waitress and an eighteen-year-old student are pathetically humorous, Levin with his dark-bearded face and gaunt body seeking some sustenance from empty encounters. These affairs are injurious to Levin's shaky self-confidence but the injury seems inevitable since the women involved are unable to provide understanding and acceptance. They are not sensitive and mature enough to handle Levin with tenderness and warmth. These relationships are mere sexual releases; Levin views them as such so that the necessity for personal responsibility and commitment could be avoided.

Malamud uses varied references to weather and physical surroundings to enhance his delineation of Levin's unsettled and unhappy inner self. This descriptive technique provides a tangible metaphor for Levin's unrest and loneliness. "During the long winter vacation it rained continuously, the sky a low thick motionless raincloud, the warmish wet cold season without dry corner" (p. 162). Levin has no "dry corner"; he is caught in a ceaseless downpour of isolation which has no relief. "Here was no sense of being between rains; it was a climate, a condition.... Levin had grown neither fins

nor duckfeathers; nor armorplate against loneliness" (p. 162).

Levin wearies of casual encounters, his loneliness intensifies. His frequent social encounters with the Gilleys bring Pauline into the foreground of his thoughts. She is a mature, gracious woman whose direct, candid demeanor often startles Levin yet draws him to her. A growing, intense physical and emotional awareness of one another culminates in spontaneous lovemaking when they meet unexpectedly in the woods. Malamud uses the symbolic effect of weather again here. When Levin meets Pauline, it is a sunny day, full of "early spring odors" (p. 194), with "sunlight dappling the ground" (p. 196). This change in season foreshadows the positive change in Levin which is a result of this experience.

"When their eyes met, although he obsessively expected a veil, there was none, and Levin beheld an expression of such hungry tenderness he could hardly believe it was addressed to him. Enduring many complicated doubts, he dropped his things in the grass. They moved toward each other, their bodies hitting as they embraced" (p. 184). Malamud is careful here to point out the intimate emotional thread running through the intensity of this experience. "He had not expected wanting so much in so much giving" (p. 184). For Levin this is a beautiful moment; afterwards he feels at peace. Pauline has received him, accepted him, and given to him, not only in a physical sense, but in response to the valuable person she perceives him to be.

Later, Levin's first thoughts, characteristically, are of the risk involved for his new life, his new identity. Yet, he wonders, "...could he, with Pauline, be more than he was?" (p. 189).

Neither expects the affair to continue, but each is so significantly affected by the other that their relationship persists. Levin tries to keep their relationship on a sexual level, an effort reflective of his dubious attitude toward commitment and his fear of some impending "end of future" (p. 190). He tries to repress his deep and growing love for Pauline. The destructiveness of this effort takes the form of a severe pain in his sexual organs during intercourse. After a visit to a doctor, who attributes the pain to tension, Levin realizes that his problem is psychosomatic. He asks himself what he is hiding from and discovers that "love ungiven had caused Levin's pain" (p. 200). He is suffering because he is withholding what he has to give; but through suffering he discovers the truth about himself. "'The truth is I love Pauline Gilley'" (p. 217).

This marks a major turning point for Levin. His admission of love has a redeeming effect on him. He recovers his true self. "As Levin walked the streets under a pale moon he felt he had recovered everything he had ever lost" (p. 201). Malamud makes a definite connection between Levin's new-found positive self-awareness and Pauline. She is responsible for his recovery and discovery of himself. With his declarative confession of love, he gives himself as a gift, a clear indication of his increasing self-confidence and faith in his future. "He had made too much of past experience, not enough of possibility's new forms forever. In heaven's eye he beheld a seeing rose" (p. 201).

When Levin declares his love to Pauline, however, she initially retreats, frightened. But, later, amid the worst snowfall in years, she comes to him and admits her love. "Considering what

I know about your life--what you've been through--I have no right to love you or expect your love, my poor darling...I love you..."

(p. 203). She then adds, "...We must do something with our lives."

Exactly "what" to do becomes an increasingly difficult problem as the secrecy which clouds their love becomes harder and harder to bear. A humiliating and fearful experience in a motel room propels Pauline into flight. The emotional strain is too great, the eventual price of release from her marriage is too high. Levin aches, grieves. "The bright flags of loneliness unfurled and flapped in the breeze"

(p. 237). "He wanted love like a fountain in the wind" (p. 239).

Again, Levin's emotional condition is reflected symbolically. "To get away from what he could not escape he drove his car on dusty country roads leading nowhere. Trees were lonely fences, so was the horizon" (p. 256). Levin feels somehow let down, betrayed; predictably, he once again believes that he is "the victim of a lying life" (p. 243).

Levin experiences a fresh onslaught of all the old doubts. He grapples with the question of whether he deserves happiness. "He saw in the strewn garbage of his life, errors, mishaps, ignorance, experience from which he had learned nothing" (p. 246). Again Levin turns in on himself, finding in his self-pity, self-doubts, and self-criticism another escape from action. During this oppressive time, he takes advantage of the unexpectedly opened door, marked A Way Out, and rationalizes that Pauline has rejected him as evidenced by her silence. He has reason to believe that love will not endure. Therefore, Levin tries to negate, or cancel, his emotional growth. He does not realize that he cannot go back to his previous state before love happened.

His relationship with Pauline has made him "more than he was."

Levin searches for a way to "break through the hardened cement of self-frustration, to live in the world and enjoy it" (p. 246). Levin's energies become directed away from his despair over Pauline and toward his students. The viewpoint Levin previously held toward his students was one overshadowed by his disquiet with their narrow-minded satisfaction with the easy answers, with the superficial values of a materialistic culture. Levin now begins to feel he has important lessons to teach. "It was the nature of the profession: respect those who seek learning and help them learn what they must know" (p. 255). Levin's present definition implies that he, himself, has the knowledge of what they should know and also that he is capable of conveying it. This is evidence that Levin possesses new confidence in himself, intellectually and personally, which he did not have previous to his relationship with Pauline. "He had visions of service to others, the truest form of freedom..." (p. 254). Such a marked openness and interest in giving of himself can only be accounted for by the richness which the experience of loving Pauline has added to his life.

Levin begins to counsel his students on the advisability of studying more liberal arts, even to advise them to transfer to Cascadia's rival school to do it. This active defense of an issue which he had earlier backed away from is a clear measure of how far Levin has grown above the stature of the "pygmies." His timidity about disturbing the status quo is gone, as is his fear about jeopardizing his position. Levin's integrity has been obviously strengthened by Pauline. "It takes only one good man to make the world a little better," he declares to himself and to his students

(p. 256). Clearly, Levin now sees himself as a "good man,"

Commitments are blending to propel him into significant interaction with a world in which he has been previously a silent observer.

In the last chapters of the novel, Levin's new integrity is challenged by his old self. He becomes interested in the internal affairs of the department. "'Holy smoke,'" Levin thought, "'suppose I were head of the department'" (p. 256). This is a notion Levin initially shelves, but circumstances draw him into the fray surrounding the impending appointment of the new department head. Levin, however, is confronted with a shadow of his old self. He discovers that C.D. Fabrikant is not the liberal intellectual he once thought, and Levin realizes that he can not wholeheartedly support C.D. or Gerald Gilley. He is stricken with the old paralysis. He feels he should do nothing. But the decision to do nothing is like "a lord imprisoned in his chest" (p. 259). Levin recovers himself and rejects both Gilley and C.D. He meets the challenge by an action which clearly indicates confidence; he puts himself into the race. Levin recognizes in himself his own ability to stand up for professional and intellectual ethics. He primarily wants to prevent Gilley's election and the continuation of his type of leadership. Levin hopes to obstruct Gilley's ambitions until he can secure a teaching job somewhere else; he wants to break up the "bread-and-butter" regime and extricate himself from the impossible working conditions which would exist for him at Cascadia if he were to fail. Malamud is definitely revealing the positive way in which Levin's character has grown. He has acquired not only the strength to stand up for his beliefs, but also the ability to perceive people and circumstances realistically, not just in terms of his own

security. Intellectually, Levin successfully maintains his strengthened integrity.

Emotionally, he now faces a similar challenge when Pauline returns to him. She is willing to make a break with Gerald and marry Levin. "'I want a better life, I want it with you,'"she says (p. 311). Levin responds by running toward his last bitter embrace with self-doubt. "Flight flew on him. He wasn't fleeing yet fled, unable to determine whom he was running from, himself or her" (p. 313). Levin is terrified by the responsibility involved in taking such a decisive, calm-shattering step. He draws back from participation which responsibility implies.

Levin searches desperately for reasons, for rationalizations which would allow him to deny Pauline. He finds none. Perhaps the silence and pain of their months apart could be overcome. "A man sentenced to death may regain freedom, so may love" (p. 317). Levin tells Pauline of his fears, of his doubts that he could be good for her or even himself. "'I'm worn out. It's a terrible emptiness'" (p. 319). Pauline cries, "'...Please protect me, please love me'" (p. 319). Levin responds to her need for him, to her vulnerability, and to her complete emotional willingness to give love. By responding to her love, Levin makes a conscious choice to reinstate himself in the relationship.

Gerald, as one might expect, is incensed by this development. Pauline symbolizes his ordered existence. When Pauline leaves he refuses to give her custody of their two adopted children. With petulant vindictiveness, Gerald informs Levin in their last confrontation that he will release the children to their custody only

if Levin will promise to give up college teaching. Levin, after some deliberation, agrees to his terms. In this way, Levin casts off the last shreds of the security-oriented identity he had made for himself upon his arrival in Cascadia. He no longer needs the teacher identity to cling to for he has become Seymour Levin, the person. Gerald asks him with regard to Pauline and the children, "'...Why take that load on yourself?'" (p. 337). Levin answers, "'Because I can, you son of a bitch'" (p. 337). He has freely chosen to venture into an unknown future with a woman whose love for him has given him faith in himself, the only real security.

The "new life" which Levin begins is really the one he embarks on as he and Pauline leave Marathon with the children. At this point, Levin has the intellectual and emotional perspective and confidence to enable him to determine the quality of his existence. As the new family ride away, "the trees in full leaf" symbolize the spring season beginning in Levin's life. Pauline embodies the positive aspects of human relationships. "Her body smelled like fresh baked bread, the bread of flowers" (p. 347). Levin's emotional relationship with her has resulted in his ability to make commitments directed toward others. He has emerged from his self concern, and his discomfort in the world has been eased by intimate experience. Levin is now a whole person. His identity has been freed from the limitations of a security-conscious intellect and from the inhibitions of injurious emotional repression.

"Home is where my book is," declares Harry Lesser, the main character in The Tenants, a thirty-six-year-old writer who lives for words.⁶ He, like Seymour Levin, is an intellectual who consciously

isolates himself from the world. "Lesser catching sight of himself in his lonely glass wakes to finish his book" (p. 1). In this novel, Malamud expands on his theme of intimacy. The Tenants is about love and hate but, more importantly, Malamud is writing about the inevitability of involvement.

Lesser lives on the fifth floor of an abandoned tenement. He has refused to move out although the building has been scheduled to be torn down. "The others had accepted the landlord's payoff but Lesser stayed on and would for a time so he could finish his book where it was born" (p. 4). Lesser, who has written two novels, one good and one poor, lives in daily struggle with a third novel, which refuses to be completed. He is desperate to prove he still has a masterpiece within him. So, he writes on, ignoring the rats and cockroaches, and "a mixed stench, dirt, the dirtiest urine, vomit, emptiness" (p. 7). Sexual frustration occasionally propels him out of his room into perfunctory sexual contact. This limited intimacy is all he allows himself. Ironically, his novel is about love. Lesser guards his solitude, almost reveling in his self-denial, feeling ennobled by this sacrifice for the sake of his art. But, despite his disciplined daily attack on the manuscript, Lesser is frightened--terrified by the nagging doubt that his talent has fled and that his book is of no significance.

Malamud again addresses himself to the two functions of intimacy: its relation to personal growth and integration, and its effect of bringing the solitary individual into community. Lesser, like Levin, is a man whose intellectual and emotional selves are not integrated; and like Frank Alpine, he seems unaware of the necessity

of such a blending. When his tenement sanctuary is invaded by a black writer who chooses the abandoned apartment across the hall as an office, Harry is forced resentfully from his exile. Willie Spearmint disturbs Lesser's concentration and isolation.

The black seemed at first a large man, but it turned out that his typewriter was large, and he, though broad-shouldered, heavy armed, and strongly built, was of medium height. ...The man, head bowed in concentration, oblivious of Lesser, typed energetically with two thick fingers. Harry, though impatient to be at his work, waited, experiencing at least two emotions: embarrassment for intruding; anger at the black intruder. What does he think he's doing in this house? Why has he come?--where from?--and how will I get rid of him? Who's got the time? (p. 25)

Lesser is also afraid. "Maybe it's me," Lesser thought, "smell of fear" (p. 26). As he tells Willie, "I had got used to being the only man on the island" (p. 29). This confrontation between the two writers has far-reaching consequences; the reverberations constitute the focus of the novel. Lesser is not being offered affectionate friendship, such as Morris Bober offered Frank Alpine in The Assistant. Here he must deal with an alien presence, a black man who is an intrusion, a weight, someone in the way. "The truth of it is," declares Lesser, "I could do without Willie Spearmint" (p. 30).

Yet Lesser comes to depend on the familiar sound of Willie's typing, on the sound of footsteps on the island. He is unnerved if Willie doesn't show up for a few days. Willie is distant, although he deposits his typewriter for safe keeping in Lesser's apartment. Between them there is the air of mutual respect, but not of tangible affection. It is simply a conscious acknowledgment that the other is there. As the weeks pass, Willie seems friendlier and Lesser

responds. Willie is the one to suggest a party which draws Lesser into the black man's social circle. Harry is grateful, but he is awkward in the company of Willie's friends. Willie has given him the chance to renew social contact.

Lesser, in fact, is very attracted to Willie's white mistress, Irene. But in a characteristic move, he suppresses his desire. He is also sexually attracted to a black woman, Mary, who comes to the party in his apartment. His immediate desire for both women reflects a starvation of body and heart, but Lesser has so denied and weaned himself from emotional contact that his need for intimacy is only expressed in sexual terms at this point. "Two women walk into my house and in a minute flat I'm standing on my hands. He greeted an old self" (p. 40). Casual sexual contact offers undemanding, short-term satisfaction for the lonely, for the reluctant of heart. Harry does not conceive of the possibility of being involved in love. He has always avoided love, supplanted it with his overriding compulsion to write. Lesser stands tentatively at the edge of Willie's social circle, envying Willie for his woman, envying Sam for Mary, envying their familiarity with each other, and damning his own discomfort. In a typically guarded fashion, he propositions Irene. When she refuses, he apologizes saying, "'When you came into the house tonight I felt this sense of something I'd lost in the past'" (p. 48). Clearly, Lesser is conscious of and dissatisfied with his emotional isolation.

Willie approaches Lesser more directly, their mutual interest in writing providing the groundwork for that approach. "'We groove on art, dad,'" Willie tells his fellow tenant, "'you and I are gonna be real tight'" (p. 49). At the end of the party in Lesser's apartment,

"They embraced like brothers" (p. 49). Malamud carefully traces the web of undeniable intimacy which develops slowly, but inextricably, between these two men. Lesser seems to care about Willie without really admitting it out loud. If he thinks Willie is upset with him, he is tense and disturbed not because he wishes to avoid a hassle but because he actually fears losing Willie's friendship. When Willie asks him to critique his manuscript, Lesser agrees, although reluctantly. As a writer, he understands Willie's predicament. "'Like I have a belly ache about my work,'" Willie explains (p. 51). "...I could save on lots of worry and trouble if you would put your eye on what went wrong'" (p. 52). Lesser accepts this further involvement, but he is uneasy. He has conflicting feelings. "He had promised Willie--but after this nothing more. No further involvements with his dissatisfactions, sentiments, labor" (p. 52). When he reads the manuscript, Lesser is powerfully affected; Willie's work seethes with the fury of blackness, outrage, injustice; it contains a raw energy which stirs and absorbs. Harry is also aware of a certain lack of craft. "I think he wants me to point this out to him" (p. 61). He must be truthful; he must help Willie to write. "...If Lesser suppresses truth Lesser is a fake. If he's that, how can he go on writing?" (p. 61).

Here Malamud establishes a professional comradery between Lesser and Willie. Lesser's commitment to his craft is one of high seriousness; writing is spiritual and sacred. Willie and Lesser are bound together by their dedication to their art. When Lesser involves himself in Willie's writing, he not only reinforces his own integrity as an artist but also enters into a new phase of his

relationship with this fellow artist.

With the decision to be truthful with Willie about his work, it is clear that a marked change has taken place in Lesser, who earlier saw Willie as an oppressive intrusion. His decision to offer thoughtful criticism as well as praise to Willie indicates that not only is he acting responsibly and with conscious commitment on behalf of another, but also, and even more importantly, he is willing to take a risk. He realizes that frank criticism could lead to a stormy confrontation. It is a risk that he deliberately chooses to take.

Lesser makes every effort to impress on Willie the importance of a carefully crafted writing style. Willie asks for the "cold-shit truth" and Lesser gives it.

"I was going to say if you aren't satisfied with the writing, Willie, then I guess you have reason not to be. I would say that the form of the whole is not sufficient. There's a flawed quality, what you call blurred, that gives the shifting effect that bothers you" (p. 66).

Willie is defensive, upset that his gut intuition that his book was in serious trouble has been verified. "'Don't put your whammy on me, Lesser, you. Don't give me that grief. Don't hit me or my self-confidence'" (p. 67). Bristling, Willie offers proof in this statement that Lesser can get to him; he also reveals that the opinion of his fellow writer is important to him. Willie, however, never allows Lesser to forget that he is white, that their kinship is not one of experience. "'No ofay motherfucker can put himself in my place,' he shouts. 'This is a black book we are talking about, ...Black ain't white and never can be. It is once and for only black.

It ain't unusual if that's what you are hintin up to" (p. 68). Willie defends his material, its uniqueness, and, in particular, the distinctiveness of the Black struggle and mind. Lesser replies, "'But if the experience is about being human and moves me then you've made it my experience. You created it in me. You can deny universality, Willie, but you can't abolish it'" (p. 68). Lesser, perhaps unconsciously, is recognizing the bond between himself and Willie Spearmint. Intimacy is undeniable; it can be decried or go unrecognized as in Willie's case--but its existence can't be disputed.

Willie seems not to have taken Lesser's literary advice seriously. He drops out of sight for awhile. When he reappears, he is full of plans for a new book. He changes his pen name from Willie to Bill Spearmint. He has read Lesser's two novels and is impressed by the first. His respect for Lesser seems to have increased. "'...I will admit it got me thinking. ...I understand a little different now some of those ideas you were preaching about form and that jazz, and which way it gives proportion to the writing'" (p. 75). Willie devotes more time than ever to his writing, and the daily intimacy between the two writers increases. In fact, Willie (Bill) is curious enough about his fellow tenant to comment scornfully on the narrowness of Lesser's life.

"What I like to know" Bill said, "is what do you get out of life besides your writing? Like what do you do with your nature, man? I am talking about life. What do you do for fun besides chess and push ups?" ...Less than he ought Lesser admitted (p. 81).

Lesser has become much more consciously aware of his human needs since the advent of Willie Spearmint. Willie doesn't provide

the deep affection to draw Lesser out of himself, but rather his presence, his demanding nature, his artistic fever, seem to jar Lesser into opening his eyes to see how dearly he has paid for his obsessive preoccupation with his book. Willie accuses Lesser of being a "priest," and one must admit that Lesser is altogether too serious. Malamud, however, is planning to use Lesser to stress again the importance of the integration of the emotional with the intellectual. Lesser is moving slowly toward achieving this balance.

In an effort to help Willie escape the wrath of the landlord, Lesser shelters him and his enterprise in his apartment during a week when Levenspiel is on a rampage. He sacrifices his solitude, his privacy, to help his friend, further evidence of Harry's commitment to Willie. His feelings, however, are ambiguous, and at times he resents Willie's presence.

Lesser's ambiguous emotions toward Willie and those of the black man toward him are not completely reconciled in this period of closer intimacy. The relationship between them has an undercurrent of tension and repressed resentment. This undercurrent combined with a feeling of mutual respect for one another presents a complicated kind of involvement with which Malamud has not dealt before. The ambiguity of this involvement is demonstrated in an incident at a second party where Levin is again thrown in with Willie and Irene, Sam and Mary and "about twenty souls" (p. 114). Lesser still feels strongly drawn to Irene but instead of acting on that, he makes a successful move on Mary. They slip across the hall and go to bed. When they return to the party Lesser discovers that he is "alone with a crowd of silent blacks" (p. 119). Willie (Bill) challenges him to

a "'game of nothin but naked words'" (p. 120). This "put down" substitutes for the physical abuse which many of the blacks seem anxious to inflict. Lesser is heavy with hatred and hostility. Willie says "'I'm gon call you a fartn, shiteater faggot whore kike apeshit thievin Jew'" (p. 129). Lesser is reluctant to participate, but he is frightened and Willie's verbal blows affect him. "'I could call you a filthy prick,' Lesser offered." Lesser leaves the party "humiliated to the soles of his shoes" (p. 124). This incident's vicious overtones reveal that there is never complete trust between Lesser and Willie. Willie explains his actions the next day by saying that he saved Lesser from physical violence at the hands of the "brothers" by shaming him verbally to their satisfaction (p. 125). There is probably some truth in this, but if so, why was there need for such a destructive extent of abuse? The episode is never really completely resolved. The division between hostility and friendship seems thin for these two men at times.

Although he gives aid and assistance to Willie on his new novel, Lesser's own work remains at a standstill. He is devoid of inspiration; beautiful ideas appear and then elude him. He finds himself staring at the typewriter.

Lesser's tolerance of his monk-like existence seems to have worn out. In his own mind there is a connection between this existence and the depression he feels about his writing. While taking a walk on a warm February morning, he examines his life, where he has been, what is ahead of him. "What have I done to myself?" he asks (p. 98). "He was tired of loneliness, had thoughts of marriage, a home. There was the rest of one's life to live,

uncertain but possible, if you got to it" (p. 100). Lesser consciously wants to get to it, to put his hand around whatever it is that is eluding him, that part of life which is absent from his own. As he leaves an art gallery where he has been contemplating a German friend's abstract and fragmented "Woman," Lesser runs into Irene. This coincidental meeting follows too closely on the heels of Lesser's soul searching not to be of special significance. Irene, one recalls, is the person whom Lesser earlier associated with "a sense of something I'd lost in the past."

"It seems to Lesser he had left his room that morning to hear her talk about herself" (p. 108). Lesser needs her and senses the potential of their relationship, but he backs off, giving in to the call to write. It is not coincidence that Irene is Willie Spearmint's girl; Lesser's attraction to her seems to include that fact. Malamud is pointing here to a mirror-image effect; the intimacy between the two men is intensified when Lesser becomes involved with Irene. When Lesser chooses to act on his feelings of emotion and sexual desire, not only does he expand as an emotional being but also his identity becomes more and more a reflection of Willie himself. "He dreamed she had come to his room and they sat without touching because she was married to Willie. When he woke in the dark, thinking of her, from the weight of his heart he knew he was in love" (p. 125). Willie is never completely out of Lesser's mind. Irene is Willie's woman, but Lesser, for once, is intent on satisfying his own emptiness. He hopes to do so without suffering from any problems his friendship with Willie might bring. "Not to be concerned with gratitude or ingratitude. To love Willie's girl in peace and with

Lesser has changed; he offers Irene love; he offers himself. Earlier he only offered "sexual encounter." Intimacy has taken on a fuller, more meaningful dimension in Lesser's life. "It's a simple thing," Lesser says. "I came to tell you I love you" (p. 128). His need for love, his feelings for Irene have made Lesser realize that his writing is not enough, that he must be more, experience more. "I've got to write but I've got to more than write," he explains (p. 129). He understands now that he has lived a vacant existence and, furthermore, that there is some complementary relationship between his artistic and emotional selves. Irene, feeling neglected by Willie, who is totally absorbed in his writing, is touched by Lesser's sincerity and responds to his offer of love. Their love affair is constructive for Lesser.

Though Lesser had worried being in love with Irene--Willie in the wings--might complicate his life and slow down his work, it did not. Finishing his book after ten years of labor had of course to be his first concern. But mostly what happened was that he was often high on reverie and felt renewed energy for work (p. 130).

Earlier, before his fated encounter with Irene on that February morning, before his artistic frustration sent him out into the world, he felt that "...the book had asked him to say more than he knew" (p. 98). Since falling in love with Irene and receiving her love in return, Harry seems to have discovered that which he didn't "know" before. "Because of Irene he lived now with a feeling of more variously possessible possibilities, an optimism that boiled up imagination" (p. 138). Lesser writes more freely for his world is one of more stimulus. Moreover, a distracting yearning has been

satisfied. Seymour Levin was similarly affected by his love for Pauline Gilley in A New Life. In The Tenants Malamud once again stresses the constructive change which a solitary person undergoes when he involves himself in a loving relationship.

Irene, however, is not totally responsible for Lesser's emergence from solitude. She is the second link in a chain which began with Willie. Because of him, through him, Lesser has come to Irene. Willie was the first significant encounter for Lesser; he remains so, although Irene is very important for a time. Initially, Irene says of Lesser and Willie, "'You are both alike'" (p. 129). In fact, Lesser's affair with Irene adds yet another mirror effect. The two men seem to switch identities: Lesser becomes the vibrant man with a good woman, the writer whose work is going well; Willie, on the other hand, becomes a spectre of the earlier Lesser, as he imprisons himself in his tenement office, slaving, struggling alone with his manuscript. Willie's earlier statement that experience cannot be shared, notwithstanding, experience has been shared.

Lesser's romance with Irene, as we have seen, is a positive involvement for him. But he is worried about a confrontation with Willie. He wants to tell Willie the truth about his relationship with Irene. Irene, however, wants to just let her "dead on both feet" romance with Willie die a natural death, thus sparing Willie's feelings (p. 140). Despite his happiness with Irene, Lesser never completely erases the thought of Willie from his mind. His ties to Willie have not been severed, but have become more complicated, even more absorbing. A dramatic confrontation is inevitable.

Willie Spearmint reacts with a vengeance when he is told about the affair. His pain is made more acute by his unsuccessful attempts to resurrect his manuscript. He feels Lesser has robbed him of his pure spirit and love for his work by his criticisms and influences. Lesser's affair with Irene intensifies Willie's feeling of betrayal. He strikes back in an act of rage; he breaks into the apartment and burns Lesser's book manuscript.

He dips his fingers into the cinders and
smears a charcoal message on the wall.

REVOLUTION IS THE REAL ART. NONE OF
THAT FORM SHIT. I AM THE RIGHT FORM.

He signs it NEVER YOUR FRIEND. And
pukes in the smoking ashes (p. 163).

Malamud points up here that intimacy and its consequences are often painful, destructive, violent. Lesser is crushed, shocked, numbed by a loss he can barely comprehend. Lesser tries to take revenge.

Lesser searched Willie's office for his manuscript. ...but the briefcase with the manuscript in it, or any part of the manuscript, was not there. Neither was the typewriter. The writer ran to a hardware store on third Avenue and bought a small axe. In rage and meaning he hacked up the table and chair he had bought for the black. With brutal force he chopped at his tasseled lamp as it bled sparks (p. 163).

Lesser's violence is an equivalent of Willie's act. Destroying the black writer's office is the closest Lesser can come to destroying Willie Spearmint, the "assassin" (p. 163). Now, both Willie and Lesser are wounded men--wounded by one another; their preoccupation with one another is never obliterated even in the months of wordless hate which follows their climactic acts of vengeance.

Lesser discovers, to his painful surprise, that he is not his book, that despite its destruction he is still a creative human

being. "The book is not the writer, the writer writes the book. It is only a book, it is not my life" (p. 164). This awareness that he can survive, indeed must survive, despite the loss of ten years of work is a result of his relationship with Willie. Although characterized now by hatred and fury, the relationship between the two men is still undeniable. Lesser grows and suffers as a result of his intimacy with Spearmint; each change in their relationship brings new awareness to Lesser. He discovers many things: his humanity, his strength as well as his frailty, his emotional capacities for love and hatred, his dependence on others.

Lesser begins to rewrite, spending most of his days and nights at his work. Irene, unable to cope with being, once again, second to a work-in-progress, moves to San Francisco. Meanwhile, Willie returns to the tenement; Lesser once again hears the recognizable sound of Willie's typing on the third floor. The two men live side by side, full of mutual hatred, but bound in painful awareness of one another and in vigilant empathy. The last scene of the novel epitomizes their inescapable duplicity.

They trailed each other in the halls.
Each knew where the other was although the
terrain had changed.

One night Willie and Lesser met in a
grassy clearing in the bush. The night
was moonless above the moss-dripping, rope-
entwined trees. Neither of them could see
the other but sensed where he stood. Each
heard himself scarcely breathing.

"Bloodsuckin Jew Niggerhater."

"Anti-Semitic Ape."

Their metal glinted in hidden light,
perhaps starlight filtering greenly through
dense trees. Willie's eyeglass frames
momentarily gleamed. They aimed at each
other accurate blows. Lesser felt his

jagged ax sink through bone and brain as the groaning black's razor-sharp saber, in a single boiling stabbing slash, cut the white's balls from the rest of him.

Each, thought the writer, feels the anguish of the other (pp. 210-211).

Although the intimacy between Lesser and Willie becomes one of unbearable and consuming hatred, the undeniability of their bond is consistent. There is no escape; they will always sense one another's shadows on the smelly staircase, and they will remain in a fierce emotional embrace which is unrelenting. They must acknowledge one another, even in hatred.

Involvement has risks, Malamud is saying, and demands a price; there are no safeguards and suffering is inevitable. Some men, too weak to really master themselves, like Frank Alpine in The Assistant, never utilize the full potential for growth and improvement that love and commitment can offer. Alpine only glimpses it, sees the fading shadow too late. He is dimly aware that there is some significance in being involved, but he is unable to translate that awareness into meaningful action. He makes a few gestures, but he has no real comprehension of himself or of his relationship to others. In A New Life Seymour Levin finally learns that he must sacrifice to truly begin again. At the end he gives up security, a safe job in a world clearly defined, to embark on a road which is uncertain and unfamiliar. By giving of himself completely to another, he discovers the strength to make this deliberate choice.

Harry Lesser of The Tenants remains a self-conscious intellectual. But as a result of his complex relationship with Willie Spearmint, Lesser discovers his responsibility to himself as well as

to others. Neither as an artist nor as a man can he live in isolation behind a locked door in a condemned building, shouting defiance to greedy landlords and an indifferent world. Involvement, whether through love or hate, is intrinsic in the human condition, and can not be ignored.

Malamud's "essential hero," declares Sidney Richman, "is the unintegrated mask-wearer seeking for a connection with the world"⁷ (p. 22). Malamud believes that this connection is vital to the fulfillment of the human spirit. To be isolated is not to be safe, as is evidenced by the lives of Frank Alpine, Seymour Levin, and Harry Lesser. To love and be loved, to be deeply involved with others, is no guarantee of happiness for the Malamud seeker, but clearly such a commitment offers the individual the best chance for self-understanding, growth, and a purposeful life. Intimacy is not always comfortable; it is often unexpected, undeserved, and tumultuous. However, for Malamud, it is always necessary.

FOOTNOTES

¹Sidney Richman, Bernard Malamud (New York, 1966), p. 19.

²Leslie A. Field, ed., Bernard Malamud and the Critics (New York & London, 1970), p. xxvi.

³Bernard Malamud, The Assistant (New York, 1971), p. 30. All further references to The Assistant are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴Leslie A. Field, op. cit., p. 9.

⁵Bernard Malamud, A New Life (New York, 1973), p. 15. All further references to A New Life are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

⁶Bernard Malamud, The Tenants (New York, 1972), p. 4. All further references to The Tenants are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

⁷Richman, op. cit., p. 22.

A Selected Bibliography

Field, Leslie A., and Joyce W. Field, eds. Bernard Malamud and the Critics. New York: New York University Press, 1970.

Malamud, Bernard. The Assistant. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1971.

_____. A New Life. New York: Pocket Books, Simon and Schuster, 1973.

_____. The Tenants. New York: Pocket Books, Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Richman, Sidney. Bernard Malamud. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1966.

THE THEME OF INTIMACY
IN THREE WORKS BY BERNARD MALAMUD

by

NANCY JOHNSON

B. A., Kansas State University, 1973

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

THE THEME OF INTIMACY
IN THREE WORKS BY BERNARD MALAMUD

In three novels, The Assistant (1957), A New Life (1961), and The Tenants (1971), Malamud demonstrates an ever-growing concern with the necessity for human intimacy. This is a developmental interest; the intensity and breadth of this theme grow from one work to the next. The theme becomes increasingly important, more central to the plot and to the interaction of character, in the later novels. Malamud's emphasis on intimacy is realistic; he is not sentimental, nor idealistic. Personal encounters are often painful and seldom easy. But they are necessary, according to Malamud, for it is interaction which makes growth possible. In The Assistant, A New Life, and The Tenants, the major characters--Frank Alpine, Seymour Levin, and Harry Lesser--are at the outset loners, misfits, men outside the mainstream of human contact for one reason or another. Each is given the chance to venture forth from isolation. The role that meaningful contact can play in reconciling the isolated individual to some form of community is a major thematic consideration in the fiction of Bernard Malamud--and the chief concern of this paper.

Involvement has risks, Malamud is saying, and demands a price; there are no safeguards and suffering is inevitable. Some men, too weak to really master themselves, like Frank Alpine in The Assistant, never utilize the full potential for growth and improvement that love and commitment can offer. Alpine only glimpses it, sees the fading shadow too late. He is dimly aware that there is some significance in being involved, but he is unable to translate that awareness into meaningful action. He makes a few gestures, but he

has no real comprehension of himself or of his relationship to others. In A New Life Seymour Levin finally learns that he must sacrifice to truly begin again. At the end he gives up security, a safe job in a world clearly defined, to embark on a road which is uncertain and unfamiliar. By giving of himself completely to another, he discovers the strength to make this deliberate choice.

Harry Lesser of The Tenants remains a self-conscious intellectual. But as a result of his complex relationship with Willie Spearmint, Lesser discovers his responsibility to himself as well as to others. Neither as an artist nor as a man can he live in isolation behind a locked door in a condemned building, shouting defiance to greedy landlords and an indifferent world. Involvement, whether through love or hate, is intrinsic in the human condition, and can not be ignored.

To be isolated is not to be safe, as is evidenced by the lives of Frank Alpine, Seymour Levin, and Harry Lesser. To love and be loved, to be deeply involved with others, is no guarantee of happiness for the Malamud seeker, but clearly such a commitment offers the individual the best chance for self-understanding, growth, and a purposeful life. Intimacy is not always comfortable; it is often unexpected, undeserved, and tumultuous. However, for Malamud, it is always necessary.