WORDSWORTHIAN ROMANTICISM
IN THE FICTION OF
BERNARD MALAMUD

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Barry M. Shipman, B.S., M.B.A., M.A.T.
Denton, Texas
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This dissertation is a study of the romantic elements in Bernard Malamud's fiction that can be seen as representing a romantic ideology closely related to the romanticism of William Wordsworth. The first chapter provides a critical background for the basis of my determination that Malamud's fiction is discernibly romantic and that his romantic ideology is closely related to Wordsworth's. To establish the parallels, six situations of particular romantic significance were examined, and the aesthetic decisions taken by both writers in these areas were evaluated in light of their relation to romantic thought. The six areas examined recur in both writers— the "commonness" in characters and language, the relationship between the mind and nature, the process of artistic creation in a hostile environment, the role of the artist in the political environment, the pursuit of artistic expression as an epistemological journey, and the perception of the supernatural in the creative process. I argue that both writers understand and utilize the capabilities of common characters and language for effective expression and social commentary. The common individual who functions
outside the mainstream of society is a recurring character in both Wordsworth's poetry and Malamud's fiction. Both writers are able to effect a redefinition of the perception of the social milieu through these characters, and these redefinitions are relevant to a shared romantic philosophy. The redefined perceptions of the creative mind's relationship to nature, the individual's relationship to society and humanity's relationship to a spiritual force in the two writers are compared in relation to their separate, yet similar romantic philosophies.
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CHAPTER I

MALAMUD AS HUMANIST:
THE RELEVANCE OF WORDSWORTH’S ROMANTIC PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of this dissertation is to define Malamud’s Romanticism as particularly Wordsworthian, and in so doing to provide additional relevant insight into Malamud’s works. Two discernible and seemingly dichotomous strains of critical observation run through much of the criticism of Bernard Malamud’s fiction. The more obvious of these two strains concerns itself with the mythological scope and content of Malamud’s work, and several scholars have addressed the Homeric, biblical, and political mythic structures in Malamud’s fiction.¹ These mythic structures are traditionally societal or cultural, representative of collective as opposed to personal ideology. Even critics who have discovered these mythic structures in Malamud’s fiction, however, have been hard-pressed to keep from calling attention to the forces of humanism and individualism that co-exist with and perhaps more clearly express the mythic components of the texts.

Malamud’s first novel, The Natural (1952),² has elicited mythology-based criticism from Norman Podhoretz ("Achilles in Left Field") and Earl R. Wasserman ("The
Natural: Malamud's World Ceres), that, as the titles suggest, develops enthusiastic mythological interpretations of this work. Wasserman's premise is that Malamud's rendition of the national pastime provides access to "the measure of man, as it once was inherent in Homeric battles, or chivalric tournaments or the Arthurian quest for the Grail" (438). For all of this grandiosity, in his concluding remarks regarding the novel, Wasserman refers to the ritual "measure of man" as "the human use of one's human spirit" (460). Iska Alter reveals a similar structure in her examination of social criticism in Malamud's fiction, The Good Man's Dilemma: Social Criticism in the Fiction of Bernard Malamud. The title of Alter's book goes to the crux of the dichotomy in the criticism of Malamud's works. The relative good or evil of the individual members of society is often addressed as a concern of societal structures--from the church to the penal system--and the concept of good or evil brought to bear on the individual is shaped by the overriding concerns of the society. It is the individual, however, who should, if thinking in a Wordsworthian manner, both determine and partake of actual goodness, determined and manifested in a humanistic manner. On the humanistic level, the individual develops mores and codes of behavior based solely on perceptions of his or her situation in relation to an innate sense of how that relationship should play out in conjunction with other individuals.
That which is truly good, then, is predicated on the development of a value system based on the inherent positive nature of humanistic as opposed to societal motivations. Alter's title validates the human spirit (the "goodness" of man being based on individual, not societal mores) while simultaneously placing the manifestation of that good in a social milieu. She champions Malamud as a "humanistic spokesman," ascribing to him an attribute that she openly denies Norman Mailer, Joseph Heller, Philip Roth and Saul Bellow (1).

Alter's choice of authors to whom she compares Malamud here is significant, because they, along with Malamud, form the core group of latter-twentieth century Jewish-American authors. The prose of these authors, as well as that of other Jewish-American authors (Isaac Bashevis Singer, Edward Lewis Wallant, J. D. Salinger, Chaim Potok, Herman Wouk et al), is by no means monolithic, yet delineating them according to the social structure of the Judaic religion indicates an effect of that particular social structure on the style and content of their work. Joseph Baumbach attacks this arbitrary delineation, holding that the similarities among modern Jewish-American writers is "less remarkable" than the differences, that a comparison between Wouk and Bellow, for example, based on their both being Jewish is as ludicrous as a comparison between Cervantes and Peter de Vries based on their both writing in the comic
tradition (101). Malamud himself finds the practice of relegateing himself and others to a particular literary position based on Judaic elements in the prose or in the heredity of the authors as "schematic and reductive" and in fact detrimental to effective scholarship since this action necessitates a limit in interpretation so that the label will fit (Field Malamud 12). The element of continuity that Baumbach does find relevant to the criticism of these authors is the "similarity of their moral preoccupations . . . the burden and ambivalence of assuming personal responsibility in a world which accommodates evil" (101).

Alter seems to be making a similar point when she describes Malamud as a "humanistic spokesman." Even though the vast majority of Malamud’s protagonists are Jewish, their situations and actions grow out of concerns relevant to humanistic as opposed to societal forces. At the end of The Assistant (1957), the lapsed Catholic, has himself circumcised and becomes a Jew, the affirmation is not in the ascendancy of one social structure over another (Judaism over Catholicism), but in the individual’s reaching an understanding about his place in the universe and manifesting that realization in a socially recognized, yet highly personal act. In The Fixer (1967), Yakov Bok’s perseverance does not represent a triumph of Judaism over anti-Semitism as much as a triumph of the human spirit over the forces of oppression. Alter’s
reference to Malamud as "humanistic spokesman" is applicable in these cases because Judaism does not serve as the motivational factor of the protagonists, but rather as a societal framework within which the humanistic impetuses relating to the characters are put forth. In this manner, Malamud maintains Judaism as a germane component in most of his novels and short stories without having it supplant humanistic motivational factors in the actions of his characters. Overarching mythological societal structures exist in Malamud's fiction, but they function primarily as vehicles for the expression of individualistic values.

Mythic and Humanistic Criticism
of Malamud's Fiction

Emile Durkheim's sociological position regarding myth is that myth projects social and cultural patterns beyond the influence of the individual, thereby sanctioning and codifying secular ideology (78). If this proposition is applied to Malamud's fiction (and its attendant criticism) as an apparatus for interpretation, the humanistic and mythological elements in the writing would be mutually exclusive. The critical works of Wasserman and Alter show that they are not. A third example of the relationship between mythological and humanistic elements in Malamud's prose provides additional insight into the situation. In their preface to Bernard Malamud and the Critics, Leslie and
Joyce Field openly address the mythic nature of Malamud's fiction, explaining their rationale for including four critical essays in a section entitled "Myth, Ritual, Folklore" and another three in a section on the Jewish tradition (xviii). Their discussion of the humanity in the prose, however, describes Malamud as an author concerned with "the human animal evolving his world within a world he never made" (xxvi).

This observation casts the relationship between myth (as the societal force Durkheim describes) and human nature (as the defining force of the individual) in an interesting light. This relationship goes beyond man's being a microcosm of society, or perhaps more appropriately, society's being a macrocosm of man. The idea of human beings developing their own world within the larger societal milieu indicates that the two existences are separate, yet not mutually exclusive. In his critical work on contemporary Jewish-American writers, Radical Sophistication, Max F. Schulz attempts to move beyond the realization and delineation of the coexistence of the separate forces in Malamud's fiction to explain the juxtaposition of these philosophies. Schulz's argument is that Malamud's "common" characters simultaneously display traits that are inescapably humanistic, yet the text functions to maintain them in a condition conducive to mythologization. The ideological basis for his premise is
predominantly Marxist; a central caveat in his theory is Malamud's continual focus on the elements of class struggle in society.

Schulz's literary evidence is predicated on observably viable critical comments by Marcus Klein and Philip Roth regarding Malamud's lack of "realistic specificity" (61). Both Klein and Roth address the nebulous nature of the temporal settings in Malamud's fiction, and Schulz argues that this lack of chronological specificity deprives the reader of a textual license to ascribe a "reality" to the work. Without this Jamesian mooring, the possibility exists for a wider range of interpretations apropos the characters, and this wider range could be wide enough to include the mythic. Schulz's theory is reasonable and well argued, but an equally workable and compatible examination of the relationship between the individual and society in Malamud's fiction can be predicated on literary, as opposed to political, impetuses.

Humanism and Romanticism:

The Wordsworthian Paradigm

The human capability to function apart from the societal realm and in so doing to yield insight into conditions existing within that realm is not without literary precedent. William Wordsworth's romantic philosophy regarding the interactive relationship of the
individual and society can be used as a paradigm to examine the role of individual humanity within societal and mythological constructs in Bernard Malamud's fiction. Even Schulz's political approach partakes of the existence of collateral literary pursuit of both Malamud and Wordsworth, citing the function of myth in Malamud's prose as a venue through which the mortality of the individual is linked to the permanent, and serves as a reminder of his or her alienation from the wholeness of being. This juxtaposition of the mortal and the permanent is the framework of the "ennobling interchange" Wordsworth describes in The Prelude. 

This dissertation argues that there is sufficient stylistic and thematic evidence to indicate that Malamud's fiction is a manifestation of an individual ideology similar to that of Wordsworth. Wordsworth's own stated venues for the expression of his romantic philosophy, the celebration of nature and the common man (with common language), are generic romantic themes. In order to develop a viable, defensible case that Wordsworthian romanticism exists in Bernard Malamud's fiction, it is necessary to begin with the overt doctrines of romanticism extant in Malamud's fiction and trace them back to their ideological foundations in order to substantiate correlations to those of Wordsworth.

Perhaps the most indicative component of Wordsworth's romantic philosophy is his attempt to reconcile the various
physical, spiritual and intellectual elements in the
universe under an epistemological structure that encompasses
humanity's position in--and perception of--the universe. In
his landmark critical work, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, M. H.
Abrams describes Wordsworth's *The Prelude* as an attempt to
present a philosophy that "cancels the division between
animate and inanimate, between subject and object--
ultimately between object and object" in order to attain an
understanding of the "climactic ALL IS ONE" (66). In a more
quotidian statement, Russell Noyes has referred to
Wordsworth's poetry as being predicated on a world with "no
division between Man and Nature, as there is no division
between Nature and God--all things adhering in a mighty
unity" (239).

Wordsworth's philosophy of unity among the human, the
natural and the spiritual along with evidence of
individuals' ability to perceive it is observable in "Ode:
Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early
Childhood," a poem that Abrams delineates as "[turning] on
the distinction between data and addenda in the sense
experience" (*Mirror* 66). This delineation is needed because
of the role that human institutions play in dulling the
capability of an individual's perceptive process.
Wordsworth addresses this point in stanza VI.

The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came. (VI.5-9)

Geoffrey Hartman proposes that Wordsworth's philosophy holds nature to be "Heaven's substitute"—that imagination "deprived of numinous data, seizes on nature's imagery to fill the vacuum" (215-16). In the "Intimations" ode, the child attempts to fill this vacuum by seeking out physical interaction with the world. Cleanth Brooks sees this action as paradoxical. The Earth serves as a poor replacement for the previous celestial existence, and the child's maturation within the "prison-house" ultimately results in a dulling of the perception of both the natural environment and prior existence. Still, the Earth, as the "homely nurse," acts out of kindness, wanting the child to be at home in these environs (138-39).

This course of interaction between the individual and the environment is crucial to both Wordsworth's romantic ideology and his poetic aesthetic. Abrams cites a passage from the "Home at Grasmere" segment of The Recluse as indicating the poet's goal of addressing the physical and spiritual elements of nature (Natural 290).

A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual Spot,
This small Abiding-place of many Men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A Centre come from wheresoe'er you will,
A Whole without dependence or defect,  
Made for itself, and happy in itself,  
Perfect Contentment, Unity entire. (144-50)

Abrams indicates that Wordsworth describes the possibility of addressing this "unity entire" through a poetic expression of nature in the Preface to The Excursion\(^8\) (Natural 27).

The external World is fitted to the Mind;  
And the creation (by no lower name 
Can it be called) which they with blended might 
Accomplish:—this is our high argument. (68-70)

Since Wordsworth's position seems to be that the human capacity for perception is an effective venue into the workings of the cosmology, his philosophy functions in diametric opposition to Durkheim's position regarding the separation of mythic forces. Most critics of Malamud's fiction lend a tacit credence to a Durkheimesque mythological structure by compartmentalizing these two elements of Malamud's prose. Ironically (perhaps intentionally so), even Schulz's Marxist interpretation partakes of Durkheim's theory. In his attempt to describe the "mythic proletariat," Schulz is forced into the intellectual position of describing a mythic-level societal force (Marxism) in terms of the humanistic and individualistic. The proposition of analyzing the works as being either mythological yet humanistic, or even
mythological and humanistic separates elements that can be successfully defended as inseparable in the Wordsworthian philosophy.

The continuity of existence crucial to Wordsworth’s philosophy precludes such delineations. Predominantly Hartleian in nature, this philosophy results in an epistemological structure of primary sensory perceptions that develop into the hopes, fears, and beliefs of intellectual life, with the human spirit shaping these more complex mental structures into appropriate individual values (Noyes 238). The individual, then, rather than being separate from nature (and by extension from God and from humankind itself) becomes a crucial part of the structure since the sensory capabilities provide the venues for comprehension and expression of existence. This philosophical position is borne out in Wordsworth’s subjects and themes. Nature is a central component of Wordsworth’s writing, since it is the part of the "mighty unity" that is the most readily observable and describable, and therefore the most effective subject for expression.

Wordsworth’s thematic decisions appear to have the same philosophical bases. The Romantics functioned in a post-neoclassical, de-mythologized sphere. Wordsworth’s themes, however, indicate a philosophy that functions apart from classical mythology, yet still works in relation with and in response to the mythic. Douglas Bush, in *Mythology and the*
Romantic Tradition in English Poetry, notes that Wordsworth, "the poet of nature and the humble man" served also as "the fountain-head of nineteenth-century poetry on mythological themes" (56). The mythic elements in Wordsworth's poetry are also noted by K. K. Ruthven, who seeks to refute a postulation of Lord Byron's, based on Don Juan, that classical references were too iconoclastic for "[Wordsworth's] vulgar brain" by presenting evidence that even without classical references, Wordsworth was aware of a sense of the mythic. Ruthven's examination of myth cites Wordsworth's stylistic considerations as evidence of his awareness that myth was an accessible and therefore expressible part of what he considered the mighty unity, that "verbal expression is no mere 'dress' for pre-existent 'thought' but the very incarnation of thought . . . [impossible] to dissociate [from] myth" (61). The clothing metaphor is Wordsworth's own, taken from the third "Essays upon Epitaphs." In this essay, Wordsworth ascribes to words a power far beyond that of mere representatives of thought, and portrays them as the quintessence of the power of thought (Ferguson 31). Wordsworth describes words as entities that were "too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: . . . [holding] above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts" (361).

Wordsworth's philosophy regarding verbal expression is essential to Stephen Maxfield Parrish's examination of
Wordsworth's style, The Art of the Lyrical Ballads. His reference to Wordsworth as a poet who considered language not an ornamental vehicle for human thought, but the physical manifestation of ideas themselves connects Wordsworth's ideological position concerning verbal expression to its ultimate manifestation in the form of his poetry.

In the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth sets forth the parameters that he believes poetry needs to function within to be representative of a sincere intellectual and philosophical phraseology as opposed to the "gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers" (Wordsworth 869). First, poetry should relate "incidents and situations from common life"; second, it should be written "as far as [is] possible in a selection of language really used by men," and third, it should "make these primary laws of our nature" (869). These parameters are each particularly humanistic in nature, in that each represents a sequential development in an individual's relationship with inherently humanistic stimuli—a humanistic response to existence, the humanistic response to interaction between individuals, and the establishment of humanism as the foundation of a belief structure.

These Wordsworthian guidelines will serve a crucial role in the development of this dissertation, since it is Wordsworth's particular philosophy of romanticism that
appears to be the most appropriate to Bernard Malamud's fiction. To delineate Malamud as a Romantic, or at least a writer in the romantic tradition breaks no significant scholarly ground. In fact, Malamud was heralded by Charles Hoyt as a harbinger of the "New Romanticism" as early as 1964. Given the content and style of Malamud's fiction, Hoyt's essay and similar, subsequent critical examinations establish the general romantic components in Malamud's novels and short stories.

Parallels in the Idea of Nature
in Wordsworth and Malamud

In the aforementioned generic sense, Malamud's fiction is discernibly romantic, both conceptually and textually. The sustaining and redemptive properties of nature are an integral part of his early novels. Iska Alter addresses this situation in her chapter "A New Life and the Failure of the West as Eden." Her point regarding A New Life (1961) is that Levin is incapable of escaping the corrupting influence of society even by fleeing across the continent to the ostensibly pre-lapserian environment of the Pacific Northwest. This situation in the novel is valid within the context of her argument regarding the limited ability of the West to serve as a redemptive environment. Levin's fate at the end of the novel is uncertain, and he is in the process of fleeing once again. It is not nature, however, that
fails him and necessitates his continued flight, but the corrupting societal influences within the faculty at Cascadia College. Even as "failed" Eden, the rural West appears more natural than the urban East, and as a result seems to hold a certain substantive capability. Two of Malamud’s early characters who physically distance themselves from the nurturing environment of the West suffer from their increasing proximity to and involvement with corrupting influences of the more "civilized" East. Roy Hobbs, in the opening section of The Natural is traveling from west to east when his arrival in Chicago occasions his contact with the seductive and destructive nature of sophistication in the person of Harriet Bird. In Malamud’s second novel, The Assistant, Frank Alpine transverses the continent from California to New York, and finds himself corrupted in the urban environment to the point that he participates in the robbery of Morris Bober’s store—an act that awakens in him the sense of the necessity of some form of redemption.

In later works, the communicative capabilities of nature receive a more enthusiastic representation. Malamud’s use of fantasy allows the voice of nature, which Wordsworth’s narrator at times "no more [could] hear" to become the language of humankind delivered through quintessentially natural, animate conduits—a horse in "Talking Horse," a blackbird in "The Jewbird," and
chimpanzees in *God's Grace* (1982). The fantastic and mystic elements make them far from traditional, but because they are creatures of nature and they are afforded the ability to speak to the human situation, they are able to address that situation with a uniquely insightful perspective.

Closely related in the sense of nature’s voice, and more traditionally Wordsworthian, is Malamud’s treatment of the common man. Malamud’s protagonists, by and large, represent Wordsworth’s perception of common individuals as characters within whom "the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity." Because Malamud’s characters often exist in an exclusionary environment, their economic, political, cultural and social differences result in characters who are precluded from accessing (and therefore being corrupted by) many of the "complexities" of life.

**Direction and Scope of the Dissertation**

In the subsequent chapter, I will cite characters and situations extant in the Malamud canon that connect most strongly to Wordsworth’s perception of what he determined to be the most effective material for a sincere literary examination of the individual’s role in the world—common life, common language, and the primary laws of human nature. I will make the case that the affirmation of individuals
within this philosophical structure is closely related to
the romantic precept of nature's superiority over
sophistication and artifice. I will then extend this
argument into four areas of concern in Malamud's fiction.

In the chapter on art and its creation, I will include
sections that examine parallels in Malamud of Wordsworth's
idea that "spousal verse," a quasi-conjugal relationship
between the creative mind and nature, is crucial to the
artistic process. I will follow that chapter with an
examination of the role that tension between perception and
conception plays in the philosophy of repression as it is
played out in Malamud's fiction, applying Wordsworthian
ideas regarding free expression to the repressive
environments that exist in selected examples of Malamud's
fiction. Since governmental structures often function as
repressive entities, I will use the next chapter for an
analysis of the political views that the two writers espouse
in their works. In the chapter on education, I will argue
that Malamud, in a manner similar to Wordsworth, portrays
society as attempting to elevate the practical elements of
education while denigrating the liberal arts. I will also
make the case that Malamud's fiction serves to celebrate the
humanistic elements in intellectual development. The
seventh chapter will deal with matters of spirituality. I
will examine Wordsworth's perceptions of the supernatural
and develop relevant connections to spiritual elements in
Malamud's fiction. This chapter will provide specific instances of parallel or complementary romantic ideologies based on matters of spirituality in Wordsworth and Malamud that will support my basic thesis that Malamud's romanticism has a foundation in the romantic philosophy of Wordsworth.
NOTES


5The lack of "realistic specificity" in Malamud's fiction is addressed by Marcus Klein in After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century, 1956, and by Philip Roth in his essay "Writing American Fiction" in volume 23 of Commentary, pages 223-39.


David Hartley, Observations on Man: His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations (London: S. Richardson, 1749).

Unless otherwise noted, the prose sections cited are from William Wordsworth, Selected Prose, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).


CHAPTER II
COMMON PEOPLE AND COMMON LANGUAGE
IN WORDSWORTH AND MALAMUD

Wordsworth's ideology, as it is borne out in his writing, indicates a particular concept of the natural sphere of existence—that of a "mighty unity" composed of God, mankind, and nature inextricably bound together and made manifest in myriad physical and spiritual stimuli that allow perceptive humans, through the epistemological process, to assess and come to terms with their situation vis-a-vis this omnipresent unified structure. The matters of human beings' perception and their access to the epistemological process are crucial to the style and substance of Wordsworth. In a 1794 letter to William Mathews,¹ he describes the effective writer as one who "[puts] into each man's hand a lantern to guide him" (Wordsworth 125). Six years later, in the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads,"² he brings the writer's ancillary role in the epistemological process into sharper focus. By setting forth the idea that literature based on common life, presented in common language, and developed in relation to the "primary laws of our nature" represented the poetic techniques that have a high degree of fidelity to the
natural epistemological process, Wordsworth was able (at least within the construct of his own ideology) to present to the perceptive human the reasons for his poetic practices. Wordsworth argues that his choices of subject and style—matters of common themes and language—represent choices most conducive to the writer’s role as an enabler in the natural epistemological process.

Malamud is noticeably more reticent in speaking or in writing openly about the creative and ideological forces that effect his work than is Wordsworth. In response to an interview question posed to him by Lesile and Joyce Field that invited him to expound on the concern extant in his fiction for humanity and humanism, Malamud replied that he believed that he ought not reply—that reading what he wrote (apparently concerning this issue) would be of more value to people than their reading what he said about it (Field Malamud 13). While it was probably frustrating to the interviewers, Malamud’s position here is reasonable, and the characters and themes in his prose give credibility to his statement. An examination of the Malamud canon does reveal particulars about the human condition, and the manner in which these particulars are presented and developed closely parallels Wordsworth’s guidelines for literary expression. James Mellard makes the observation that Malamud is in this sense somewhat like Faulkner in that he "forces us to study
his fictive worlds at the same time that we regard his epistological and ontological modes" (154).

While a few of the central characters in Malamud's short stories exhibit a reasonably comfortable monetary condition—Henry Levin, passing as Henry R. Freeman in "The Lady of the Lake," the law professor Orlando Krantz in "The Maid's Shoes," and Simon Morris, the retired physician in "In Retirement," for example—the majority of his protagonists lead an economically meager, subsistence-level existence. It is simplistic to use monetary wealth as a single determining factor of commonness, and the common nature of the majority of Malamud's characters is determined only in a tangential manner by their economic conditions. A more appropriate determining factor regarding the commonness of a character is the character's separation from elements of sophistication. Malamud revives the tradition of what Mellard calls "naive modernism," presenting performative and pastoral elements as both epistemological and ontological—"a way of knowing and a content to be known" (153).

Malamud's use of simple people as the characters in his fiction, therefore, facilitates these characters' ability to "talk about themselves, their world, and its values in the most uncritical vocabularies available to the popular mind" (153).

This literary technique has a particularly Wordsworthian precedent. In "Simon Lee," "Michael,"
"Resolution and Independence" and The Recluse, Wordsworth develops characters whose affirmation comes from their identity with their pastoral setting and by extension their lack of interaction with the sophisticated world. Noyes makes the argument that Wordsworth's repeated choice of "peasants, children or defectives" as poetic subjects indicates a desire to portray individuals who exist apart from sophistication (238). For the most part, these individuals are among the least susceptible to the corrupting influences of pretension and ostentation and are therefore the more receptive to the effects of sensory perception in the epistemological process.

The ghetto dwellers in Malamud's short stories are not peasants in the traditional sense, but their economic condition results in their being relegated to a lower social class by the mainstream of society. Children are rare as characters in Malamud's prose, but child-like characters, the "defectives" to which Noyes refers, are readily observable. The role of intellectually challenged characters is passively significant in "The Silver Crown" and a more active component of "Idiots First" and "The Letter." These characters, because their lack of intellectual wherewithal results in their functioning outside societal norms, present the opportunity of perception of the life experience based on the elemental intellectual condition of their child-like existence.
Because of their intellectual condition, these characters' thought processes are singularly elemental. The lack of pretension and artifice in their demeanor parallels the lack of sophistication of the young and argues strongly for their being placed in a position collateral to that of children.

A difference exists between Malamud's common characters and Wordsworth's in that Malamud's exist in physical proximity to the forces of sophistication and artifice, and this propinquity results in a conflict that Wordsworth's narrator in the first book of The Recluse describes as a logical development growing out of interaction between common and sophisticated forces:

I came not dreaming of unruffled life,
Untainted manners; born among the hills,
Bred also there, I wanted not a scale
To regulate my hopes; pleased with the good,
I shrink not from the evil with disgust,
Or with immoderate pain. I look for Man,
the common Creature of the brotherhood,
Differing but little from the Man elsewhere,
For selfishness and envy and revenge,
Ill neighborhood--pity that this should be,
Flattery and double-dealing, strife and wrong.
(347-57)

It is observable that some of Malamud's characters--Roy Hobbs is the most relevant example--make the sort of
geographic move that is described above as being involved in common characters coming into conflict with more sophisticated ones. A large number of his protagonists, however, are geographically static in an urban environment. These characters have a Wordsworthian element to them as well. Coleridge, in the _Biographia Literaria_, describes Wordsworth's goal in their plans regarding the _Lyrical Ballads_ as "[giving] the charm of novelty to things of everyday . . . awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us" (2:2). The urban environment of these Malamud characters is replete with everyday items and occurrences that exist under the "lethargy of custom," awaiting the sort of awakening that Coleridge refers to. The environment within which these characters function, therefore, is rife with the potential for an expression of Wordsworthian romanticism while it collaterally provides the characters with repeated opportunities to "shrink not from the evil" of negative societal influences and the attendant development of conflict.

The Common Nature of Malamud's Characters

The common nature of the economically deprived tradesmen, merchants and rabbis of the slums described in
"Idiots First," "Take Pity" and "The Mourners" does not arise directly from their lack of money and possessions, but rather from the simple and unsophisticated condition that lack of economic wherewithal foists upon them. A similar pattern of conflict between the common and the sophisticated is evident in Malamud's novels, and this conflict is evident in the situation of the protagonist. Ruth Wisse defines the function of the schlemiel in Jewish literature in her seminal work, *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero*, as a character who appears to be a victim of external forces, yet due to his ability to redefine the situation of his existence is able to win out in the end (x). As an unintentionally ironic character, the schlemiel is capable of functioning as the foil of more cosmopolitan, alazonic characters. This ability to redefine situations extant in Malamud's novels is predicated on the natural or common condition of the protagonists as the crux of that character's conflict with the societal environment.

The central characters in Malamud's *The Fixer* (1967) and *The Assistant* (1957) are isolated from the mainstream of society by cultural and economic situations. In the sense of social class, both are overtly common--Yakov Bok is a simple repairman and Morris Bober (subsequently replaced by Frank Alpine) is an impoverished grocer. As is the case with the short stories, it is simplistic to limit the examination of the commonness of the protagonists in these
novels to the monetary deprivations encountered by the central characters in these two novels. These characters' economic, political and cultural stations in life do not directly result in their being common, but rather establish a set of conditions that require the characters to function apart from the conceived societal norms. Both characters (Yakov Bok and Frank Alpine) demonstrate an elemental perception of their conditions, and their respective affirmations are predicated on the insight and understanding concerning their situations in life that develop out of their conflicts with oppressive political and socio-economic forces.

The relationship between common and sophisticated elements becomes more complex in Malamud's other novels, but the pattern of affirmation of characters to whom Mellard refers as "less worldly, more innocent, inexperienced, or naive than most human beings" through their conflict with more cosmopolitan forces can still be detected. The protagonists of The Natural (1952) and A New Life (1961) (Roy Hobbs and Sy Levin) are, in a way, similar to Yakov Bok and Frank Alpine in that while both Roy Hobbs and Levin are able to access a more physically comfortable manner of existence than Yakov Bok or Frank Alpine, they are still forced to bring the common nature of their beings into conflict with a powerful societal structure.
The titular validation of Roy Hobbs's being a "natural" would beg the question of the value of the natural existence if this form of existence were not brought into conflict with the forces extant in a more sophisticated environment. His talent is for baseball, and major league baseball—with its attendant cynicism and sophistication—is the forum through which his natural ability is measured against the more pragmatic aspects of the game. Even though Roy Hobbs eventually succumbs to the relentless environment of corruption, the fact that the conflict was joined validates nature as positive in its opposition to the negative societal forces. Sy Levin, however, manages to avoid a fate similar to that of Roy Hobbs. He is able to escape his conflict with the pseudo-enlightened environment of Cascadia College’s English department and its faculty members who have been co-opted by a societal force that seems intent on evoking attitudes of complacency, expediency and suspicion in order to protect itself from the disruptive influences of the liberal arts.

In a similar manner, adherence to an artistic ideal (and the refusal to repudiate it for monetary gain or personal comfort) gives rise to conflict between the artist and the forces of society in *The Tenants* (1971)\(^{10}\) and *Pictures of Fidelman* (1969).\(^{11}\) In "Portrait of the Artist as Schlemiel," Leslie Field solidifies the idea of artist as one who redefines his or her environment by connecting the
artist to the role of the schlemiel that Wisse puts forth (120). In *The Tenants*, Harry Lesser refuses to leave the dilapidated tenement building where he is writing his novel because he perceives his environment to be such an integral part of his creative process that he is willing to withstand the attempts of Levenspiel, the landlord, to force him out and to accept and withstand the disruptive—and subsequently destructive—presence of Willie Spearmint. Arthur Fidelman, the protagonist of the picaresque *Pictures of Fidelman* pursues artistic (and concurrently sexual) enlightenment throughout Italy, unwilling to trivialize his artistic expression or to return to the United States, since such actions would leave him intellectually unfulfilled. In both cases, the artist refuses to compromise his principles, and in so doing redefines the situation within which he functions.

The Romantic Elements in the Language of Malamud's Urban Dwellers

Wordsworth's second condition, that of the use of common language, is also evident throughout Malamud's prose. The common language of Malamud's characters differs in origin from that of Wordsworth, but the end result of the choice of language is similar. Wordsworth's attraction to common language was based on his repudiation of the artifice inherent in the "gaudy verse" of the poetic norm. His idea
regarding the luminary function of poetry required a rejection of ambiguity and an adherence to clarity in the poetic voice. In Wordsworth’s epistemological scenario, language would be of little use unless it clearly related the information necessary to enhance the individual’s perception of the mighty unity. In an 1800 note relating to "The Thorn," Wordsworth proposes that the human mind "attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as things active and efficient, which are themselves part of the passion" (de Sélincourt 513). Not surprisingly, Wordsworth seems to focus his attempts on capturing this clarity in language in those environments least tinged by the artifice of organized society, whether in the description of characters like Simon Lee and Michael, or in his own philosophical musings in poems like "Tintern Abbey" and "Intimations of Immortality." Again, as he does in the case of the subjects of his poetry mentioned earlier, Wordsworth effects a geographic distance between the locations where clarity of language is readily accessed—the sylvan settings of "Tintern Abbey," for example—and the stifling, artifice-ridden environment of civilization within which the majority of Malamud’s characters exist.

First and second generation Jews, the group of individuals upon whom Malamud based many of his characters, were urban because of the requirements of their skills and trades. Their immigrant nature, however, placed them in a
situation regarding their language skills that closely parallels Wordsworth's "common" language. While the dwellers of the English countryside spoke in a plain form out of what Wordsworth apparently held to be a desire to be straightforward and honest in matters of communication, the simplicity of the language extant in the Jewish immigrant community grows out of their lack of expertise with a new language. In this sense, the idea of the language, particularly the spoken language of the characters, relates strongly to Wordsworth's idea concerning the mythic nature of verbal expression. The effect is a mirror image of Wordsworth's problems with the artifice that he saw in most poetic expression. Instead of expressing banalities dressed in the "gaudy verse" of poetic diction, the situation of Malamud's characters forces them to forego linguistic embellishment for the sake of understanding, to express complex thought in simple, almost pidgin, vocabulary, form, and syntax. The recurring awkward nature of the dialogue of the immigrants in the short stories and The Assistant arises from an English vocabulary being placed in a syntactical structure more befitting German, Yiddish or Polish. This non-English syntax, however, indicates the awareness on the part of the speakers of the various components of the communicative structure and their perceived necessity to avail themselves of them. In "Take Pity," for example, Rosen relates to Davidov a passage of a conversation between
himself and Eva in which Eva, in a manner that strains English sentence construction, professes her doubts about ever remarrying:

"'No, Rosen, not me,' she said. 'With marriage I am finished. Nobody wants a widow with three children.'

"'This I don't believe it.'

"'I know,' she said.

"Never in my life I saw so bitter a woman's face.

(Magic 85)

The unusual syntax is not the inversion for poetic effect evinced in a passage from the "Intimations" ode: "things which I have seen I now can see no more" (I.9), but rather the speaker's making sure that the entirety of the message is included in the sentence, regardless of the lack of fluency. This awkward syntax is the result of a lack of familiarity with English, but this rudimentary knowledge of the conventional means of communication does not indicate a lack of native intelligence or understanding on the part of the characters. It is rather an indication of the immigrants' social position as individuals not yet assimilated into the mainstream of American society. Though the immigrants are not simple people, the lack of assimilation forces them into simple conditions and allows for the possibility of their functioning in a traditional pastoral role. William Empson describes this situation as
"the essential trick of the pastoral"—simple people expressing strong feelings (11). The language of Malamud's characters, therefore, indicates a commonness that is not based on ideological or intellectual simplicity, but on a geographic or economic distance from societal sophistication that precludes their treating the language in a cavalier manner.

Pastoral and Sophisticated Environments:
Romanticism Manifested in Conflict

Mellard's essay, "Malamud's Novels: Four Versions of the Pastoral" presents the argument that *The Natural*, *A New Life*, *The Fixer* and *The Assistant* contain demonstrable elements of the pastoral tradition based on William Empson's premise that the goal of the pastoral was to express "something fundamentally true about everybody" (Empson 11). Malamud's adherence to this tradition in these works serves to substantiate the common nature of Malamud's characters (particularly in their relation to "Michael," "Simon Lee" or *The Recluse*) in that even though Malamud's characters, for the most part, do not function in the sort of bucolic environs extant in much of Wordsworth's poetry, the commonness in their manner of life and language supports the attendant existence of Wordsworth's third requirement for meaningful literary expression, that the course of literary action be based on "the primary laws of our nature."

Empson's premise regarding the universal and fundamental
nature of the subject matter of the pastoral meshes well with this third Wordsworthian tenet. Wordsworth describes the elemental "laws of our nature" that he believes to be the basis for effective literary expression as "primary," and therefore closely tied to the fundamental style and structure of the pastoral.

In relating these ideas to Malamud's first four novels, Mellard refers to the problem that Philip Roth and Marcus Klein have with the lack of "realistic simplicity" in Malamud's fiction. Rather than attempting to refute this observable component of Malamud's work, Mellard presents it as substantiation for the novels' functioning within a pastoral framework, proposing that "the failure of the realism is the success of the pastoral" (5). The geographic exercise of placing pastorals in a position of diametric opposition to "realism" does not make pastorals "romantic." What this juxtaposition does, however, is to provide the caveat that the criteria of a pastoral's success need not (perhaps should not) be predicated on an arbitrary standard of realism. With this caveat in place, it is possible to examine the pastoral terms of romantic elements. As a form of literary expression, pastorals can be seen on a superficial level as being inherently romantic in their presentation of the positive elements of existence that arise from leading a natural life. The intrinsic value of the peace and serenity arising from the rural and simple
settings is generically romantic. On a more specific level, however, the elements of the pastoral that Empson describes have a particular relevance to Wordsworth's primary laws, and contain romantic components that are particularly Wordsworthian.

The effective delineation of a strain of romanticism that can be identified as particularly "Wordsworthian" is problematic. The natural setting for Wordsworth's "Michael," for example, is generically romantic, and the theme of the corrupting influences of society had been established in the Gothic, particularly in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline*, Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Jean-Paul Richter's *Der Titan* (Morse 23). Even so, David Morse has attributed the appellation of Wordsworthianism to the literary examination of "[society's repression] of the individual, who can discover his true potentiality only in solitude and through exposure to the sublimity of natural objects" (23). The fact that this position has come to be identified with Wordsworth could be based in part on the aesthetic validity extant in his representations of the "primary laws of our nature" referred to in the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" as they were made manifest in the conflict between the common and the sophisticated.

The interaction between the conditions of the pastoral and those extant in a more sophisticated environment requires that the individual confronting this conflict
"shrink not from the evil" that could possibly be encountered in pursuit of elemental human interaction. Michael provides Luke with a mechanism for the resolution of such conflict by ascribing a ceremonial significance to Luke's laying of the cornerstone of the sheep-fold:

When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear: . . .

(405-08)

The ceremonial act was designed to give Luke a connection back to a more positive environment, a protection against the evil that he would encounter. In Luke's case, however, it would not prove to be efficacious.

Similar understanding of and preparation for the conflict inherent in a pastoral character's interaction with the sophisticated conditions of society are evident in Malamud's fiction. The most obvious parallels to the situations in "Michael" occur in The Natural. In much the same way that Luke leaves the country for the city in an attempt to effect Michael's economic salvation, Roy Hobbs appears mysteriously in New York from the West, bringing with him the possibility of providing Pop Fisher's Knights with the American League pennant. In both cases, the younger man fails the father (father figure, in the case of Roy's relationship to Pop) because of an inability to
effectively deal with the corrupting influences of society. The plight of Roy Hobbs is more detailed than that of Luke, and it is evident that he, like Luke, reaches a point at which he is unable to evoke the sustaining forces of a more unsophisticated environment. Malamud gives Roy Hobbs' talent titular sanction as "natural," but it is far from unassailable. It cannot, for example, lift him out of the mid-season slump brought about by his infatuation with Memo Paris and his attempts to function within her lifestyle. His symbolic connection to the natural environment from which he came, his bat "Wonderboy," hand-turned from a lightning-blasted ash, shatters after he gives himself over to the corrupting forces of society, proving itself to be as ineffectual as Luke's symbolic placement of the cornerstone of the sheep-fold as a technique for resolving the character's conflict with civilization.

The fact that both Luke and Roy Hobbs are destroyed in the conflict between nature and sophistication does not preclude the existence of a romantic affirmation in the two works. Both men suffer similar fates--Luke flees to a "hiding-place beyond the seas" to escape his "ignominy and shame," and Roy Hobbs is left wandering the city, his corruption having severed his ties to both baseball and the human community. The situation attendant to the dissolution of the two men, however, is not without some sense of affirmation. The symbols of nature in the works, the sheep-
fold and the baseball bat, are destroyed as well, but their destruction is ultimate, indicative of an unyielding resistance to the forces of corruption. The sheep-fold could not be successfully completed by the profligate man that Luke becomes, and while the system could co-opt Roy Hobbs, the less malleable nature of the bat precluded its participation in that corruption. When, after the game, Roy attempts to press the broken pieces back together prior to burying the bat in the outfield, he finds the split irremediable, "as if the bat had willed its own brokenness" (233).

In the case of Roy Hobbs, there is even some indication of a fleeting sense of affirmation on the part of the character in the sense that he is finally able to ascertain the magnitude of his own corruption. In the final passage of the novel, in a scene drawn directly from the apocryphal confrontation between Shoeless Joe Jackson and a boy after his admission that he accepted money from gamblers to throw the 1919 World Series, a paper boy asks Roy about the truth of his corruption. Roy is reduced to tears in response to the accusation, a corrupt adult forced into the ultimate understanding of his debasement by a child whose only bases of insight are the natural perceptions of youth regarding an idealized, if elemental, universal order.

As a matter of literary expression, the conflicts between nature and sophistication can be seen as extensions
of the dynamic inherent in the antithetical relationship between art and nature. Wordsworth's intellectual position regarding the writer's art is somewhat paradoxical, at one point indicating that it would be impossible for the poetic language to adapt itself to each of the infinite eventualities of human existence and would therefore be an inappropriate medium for the expression of those conditions (Wordsworth 878). Parrish attempts to rectify this paradox by emphasizing the connotational differences between "art," and "artifice," the word that Wordsworth apparently more favored when referring to the adversary of nature (3). The idea that artifice is the diametric opposite of nature, and that there is potential for conflict between the two forces relates directly to the elemental nature of Wordsworthian philosophy and, by extension, his manifestation of that philosophy in his writing.

Malamud's last two novels, Dubin's Lives (1979) and God's Grace (1982), contain conflicts that arise out of the dynamic of nature in conflict with artifice. William Dubin, the protagonist of Dubin's Lives, is a biographer, and his profession allows for a multi-tiered interpretation of the title. The possessive form of the proper noun indicates that his literary works are his creations—that the "lives" of Lawrence, Thoreau, and others belonged at least as much to William Dubin as to the subjects. This stands to reason due to the creative nature of biography. While they are
considered practitioners of a non-fiction genre, the task of biographers is to take known data germane to the life of an individual and to construct the life story of that individual through interpretation, analysis, and probably no small amount of invention. This task requires a constant awareness on the part of the biographers of interactions between what is actual and what is artificial. The plurality in the title could also be interpreted as indicating that William Dubin has more than one life. In fact, Dubin does, and the two lives represent the conflict between artifice and nature. He leads a dissembling life of deception in his relationship with Kitty in order to facilitate his natural attraction to and affection for Fanny.

In Malamud's final novel, *God's Grace*, research scientist Calvin Cohn, the lone human survivor of an apocalyptic nuclear war, is able to reconstruct the seminal structures of a society within a community of intelligent and communicative primates. Cohn is able to define himself through his development of a societal structure. Through this apparent act of creating his own rendition of a "natural" society within which he will function, he becomes a god-like figure in the Hegelian sense--both creator and created. Malamud finds the realms of nature and artifice (creation) mutually exclusive, however, and the negative implications of social interaction between the members of
the primate community eventually supersede Cohn's conception of the ideal society and he is destroyed, along with his biological and philosophical ties to the community. Cohn's destruction occurs within the context of the apes' attempt to develop a social and religious order within which Cohn would have no place. The development of this order seems to have its basis in a requirement to fill a social void in an almost pre-determined manner. Cohn's attempts to structure the developing culture of the apes in a positive manner collapse under the force of natural determinism. Malamud's presentation of nature differs from Wordsworth's in this case. While Wordsworth addresses nature as a crucial component of understanding, Malamud develops a character whose misunderstanding takes the form of a defiance of the order, ultimately leading to his destruction. There is a marked difference in the two writers' presentations of the physical environment here. Wordsworth's Earth, the dull, cloying, yet ultimately well-intentioned "homely nurse" is far removed from Malamud's environment, which destroys those who find themselves at cross-purposes with its seemingly predestined order.

Even though obvious and substantive differences in ideology and aesthetic theory and practice exist between Wordsworth and Malamud, there are characters and situations throughout the Malamud canon that indicate parallels to Wordsworthian philosophy. As a man of letters and a teacher
of literature, Malamud would have been familiar with the basic tenets of romanticism and Wordsworth’s work. It would be simplistic and of marginal scholarly value to take the aforementioned commonalities and infer from them a direct pattern of influence.

The argument here is not that Wordsworth was a direct influence on Malamud, but rather that there appears within the texts of both authors significant similarities of expression of character and of theme. These similarities warrant an examination of the Malamud canon designed to trace elements present in the prose back to their ideological foundation in order to substantiate the theory that Malamud’s perception of the human condition—and its attendant expression in his fiction—closely parallels Wordworthian romanticism.
NOTES


The lack of "realistic specificity" in Malamud’s fiction is addressed by Marcus Klein in *After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century*, 1956 and by Philip Roth in his essay "Writing American Fiction" in volume 23 (1961) of *Commentary*, pages 223-39.


CHAPTER III

WORDSWORTH'S "SPOUSAL VERSE":
RELATIONSHIPS AND CREATIVITY IN MALAMUD

In his chapter "The Poet's Art" in The Art of the Lyrical Ballads, Parrish argues that Wordsworth presents his particular approach to the "old antithesis" of art and nature in the first of his "Essays Upon Epitaphs."\(^1\) Nature, as Wordsworth sees it, is the force that gives rise to "those primary sensations of the human heart, which are the vital springs of sublime and pathetic composition" (3). The passage Parrish refers to is especially appropriate because it denies an inherent separation of art and nature, opting instead to describe the force of nature as a primary motivator of artistic expression. This delineation is predicated on the sort of natural Platonism that James Notopoulos describes as being integral to Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry (17). Notopoulos cites Wordsworth as demonstrating, in The Excursion, the poetic quintessence of this philosophical position.\(^2\) His premise that the mind of the poet is "naturally platonic when it tries to find something eternal among the passing of the world in time and space" (17) is supported in Book IV of The Excursion when the Wanderer describes effective communion with nature's
physical, observable components (in this case a sea shell) as yielding a perception of the Platonic ideal:

Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-enduring power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. (1141-47)

By addressing in this manner nature’s effect on the perception necessary for artistic expression, Wordsworth is able to place the old antithesis within the Platonic spheres of the real and the ideal and collaterally within the parameters of his own "mighty unity" philosophy. Wordsworth is cognizant of both the physical manifestations and philosophical implications of nature. Art, then, in its most positive Wordsworthian sense, is a medium through which these implications of nature can be made manifest to human beings, affirming their perception of their own place in the mighty unity. Artifice, however, is based in the arbitrary concept of what the community determines to be acceptable as artistic expression.

Abrams argues that Wordsworth’s pursuit of the "unity entire" involved the merging of the Platonic concepts of the real and the ideal. Wordsworth uses the phrase "filial bonds" as a metaphorical presentation of the relationship
between the creative mind and nature in *The Prelude*. When he composes the "Preface" to the 1814 edition of *The Excursion*, however, he has effected a shift in metaphor from the parental to the matrimonial. Abrams cites Wordsworth as unmistakably announcing that he intended this movement to be his crowning poetic achievement: "a 'spousal verse'--a prodigious prothalamion celebrating the marriage of mind and nature, the consummation of the marriage, and the consequent creation (or procreation?) of a living perceptual world" (*Mirror* 66). The interaction between the two entities comes to be seen as more interactive and dynamic than the previously mentioned "filial" arrangement. The artistic product is not fashioned in response to a controlling, parental aesthetic force, but rather it develops out of the seminal interaction of the mind and nature.

If appropriate artistic expression is, as Wordsworthian philosophy insists, the result of a conjugal bond between mind and nature, the real and the ideal, then perhaps Wordsworth's most pertinent and extended expression of this dynamic as it relates to Malamud's fiction is the first book of *The Excursion*. In this section, the eponymous Wanderer relates a tale of a cottage fallen to ruin as a result of the dysfunction of its inhabitants. The man and woman who had lived in the once-comfortable house had fallen into financial ruin, and the husband had regressed to aimless and self-destructive behavior, eventually having deserted the
woman to pursue military adventurism. The physical integrity of the cottage deteriorated collaterally with the integrity of the marital arrangement, ultimately leaving only a roofless shell.

Given Abrams's assessment of the conjugal relationship between mind and nature as it relates to artistic expression in Wordsworth's aesthetic ideology, this passage from The Excursion can be read as indicating that the quality and durability of artistic expression are dependent on the quality of the bond that gives rise to it. The cottage that the Wanderer describes is a physical manifestation of the bond between Margaret and her husband. As the quality and integrity of their bond begins to disintegrate, so does the physical appearance and structure of the cottage. The conflict between society and nature is evident in this dilapidation—it is an economic crisis that initiates the dysfunction in the family, and the husband's ultimate subjugation by societal forces (his entry into a military unit—society's entity of enforcement) culminates in both the ruination of the cottage and the relationship.

"The Magic Barrel" and "The Girl of My Dreams":

Relationships as Creative Activity

Aesthetic ideology is presented within the context of a marital relationship in Malamud's prose as well, and it is developed into a cogent commentary on both art and the
artistic process. The plot of "The Magic Barrel" is predicated on a Jewish marriage broker's attempt to supply a young rabbinical student with a suitable bride. Salzman, the broker, informs the student, Leo Finkle, that his access to potential brides is expansive, telling Finkle that his files overflow to the point that he has resorted to keeping them in a barrel in his office. Finkle eventually discovers both the office and the barrel to be non-existent, and the number of Salzman's clients probably vastly overstated. Irrespective of (or perhaps because of) the suspiciousness of Salzman's claims, his pursuit of a bride for Finkle becomes a quasi-artistic enterprise, with the ultimate meeting of Leo and Stella functioning as a carefully developed artistic creation.

In Salzman's first attempts to connect the ambivalent Finkle with a prospective wife, he shows the cards of three women to Finkle. They are met with obvious disapproval, and Finkle rejects all three—one for being a widow, one for being too old, and one for having a limp. The focus here is not on Finkle's preferences or biases; this scene represents Salzman's preliminary artistic assessment of his medium, his determination of what will and what will not work with the student. Salzman returns the day after their meeting with the information that there was a mistake in the one client's age, that she was in actuality twenty-nine as opposed to thirty-two. Even though Finkle is suspicious of this new
information, he is eventually coerced by Salzman into meeting this potential candidate for marriage.

On the occasion of their meeting, Finkle begins to suspect more of Salzman's manipulations. As he walks with Lily Hirschorn, a woman obviously older than twenty-nine, he fantasizes about Salzman's sending her appropriate matters for conversation, or perhaps (even more fantastically) "as a cloven-hoofed Pan, piping nuptial ditties as he danced his invisible way before them" (202). Finkle is eventually devastated when he determines from Lily's conversation that she believes him to be a highly talented and dedicated religious scholar. Their conversation collapses, and their meeting is brought to a mercifully early ending when it begins to snow, an event that Finkle would not have "put past Salzman's machinations" (204). Finkle's musings express a latent, irrational suspicion that Salzman's ability to manipulate human nature extends even into weather control.

In the aftermath of his meeting with Lily, Finkle is forced into an extended period of despair that he speculates to be based on his admission of his true relationship with his religion that the conversation with Lily has brought forth. Perhaps equally devastating to Finkle is the realization that within the context of Salzman's matchmaking business, he was not only a man easily lied to, but a man easily lied about. It is while Finkle is in the depths of
this depression that Salzman supplies him with a new group of potential brides, a set of photographs in a brown envelope that Finkle delays opening for weeks. When he does eventually open the envelope, he finds six photographs, all of which fail to ignite a sense of desire in him. In his attempt to put them back into the envelope, he finds a seventh picture, one of a woman who strikes him with driving passion. When Salzman is presented with the picture, he tries to dissuade the student from meeting with the girl, admitting that the inclusion of the photograph was a mistake, that it was a picture of his daughter Stella, a girl "wild, without shame . . . not a bride for a Rabbi" (212). Initially, Salzman refuses to allow Finkle to contact her, but when Finkle is unable to rid himself of his infatuation with the picture of the girl and returns to Salzman with a desperate plea, Salzman acquiesces to arrange their meeting, leaving Finkle with a "tormenting suspicion that Salzman had planned it all to happen this way" (213).

Finkle's "tormenting suspicion" is indicative of the thought process that most people have toward art. Lacking artistic inspiration themselves, they are forced to suspect, surmise or assume matters regarding the artist's creations. Finkle perceives that he is being manipulated, but his rudimentary understanding of the creative process is too unsophisticated to assess how or why. The irony of his own egocentrism escapes him. He enters into his search for a
wife for selfish reasons—he has been informed that he might find it easier to win a congregation if he were married. He sets certain standards for his bride, and while he is supercilious about Salzman’s lying to him in an attempt to make Lily conform to this standard, he is shocked that Salzman had, in all probability out of necessity, lied about him to Lily.

Finkle’s assessments about the techniques involved in his manipulations are similarly inept. His perception of Salzman’s manipulations covers only the extremes. He is aware of Salzman’s overt salesmanship—most noticeably Salzman’s references to him as “Rabbi,” even though he is still just a student, and the broker’s denial of access to Stella in order to intensify her attractiveness. These crude techniques of salesmanship are juxtaposed in Finkle’s mind with his irrational speculations regarding the possibility of Salzman’s having supernatural manipulative capabilities. Finkle’s egocentrism is functioning here as well, and he may view himself as someone canny enough to be beyond manipulation by anyone who is not capable of controlling matters of the environment (causing it to snow) or random chance (causing Stella’s photograph to remain in the envelope). Finkle’s assessment of Salzman’s creation of the condition that leads to his meeting of Stella parallels society’s conventional wisdom regarding artistic expression. Art is either denigrated into a representation of a well-
learned set of skillful practices, or exalted into a representation of superhuman talent or genius that transcends basic human understanding.

Even though Finkle is equally willing to accept either Salzman’s machinations or random fortune as the causal factor in his meeting with Stella, if Salzman did indeed manipulate people and situations to result in the meeting between his wayward daughter and the rabbinical student, his aesthetic skill lies far beyond the rudimentary possibilities that Finkle has perceived. If Malamud develops the character of Salzman as an artist, and the meeting of Finkle and Stella as his creation, then Malamud’s aesthetic ideology parallels Wordsworth’s matrimonial metaphor regarding the relationship between mind and nature as it is made manifest in artistic expression.

Salzman’s telling Finkle about the barrel that holds the multitudinous cards of his clients may be seen as a huckster’s trick designed to convince Finkle that Salzman has a much more extensive client base than he actually does. This is almost certainly the way that Finkle comes to understand it after speaking with Salzman’s wife. When viewed as an aesthetic metaphor, however, it is possible that the barrel full of client cards is the data accessible to the true artist, the components of nature that are available to those having the proper imagination that can serve as the basis for artistic expression. Salzman can in
this manner be seen as having an aesthetic commonality with the poet that Wordsworth describes in the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads."\(^5\) Wordsworth holds that poems (and, by extension, other artistic enterprises as well) of any value are created only by individuals "possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, [who] had also thought long and deeply" (871). In Salzman's case, the barrel is a metaphor for access to the creative process. The physical image of a barrel stuffed with cards is easier for his clients to comprehend than is the intellectual and aesthetic interaction among the conditions Salzman perceives to exist and their ultimate alignment into his desired result.

Finkle suspects the possibility that he might have been manipulated by the marriage broker, but this suspicion is superficial because Finkle's assessment of Salzman's creative techniques are rooted in his own rudimentary conceptions of the manipulative process. Finkle is correct in his suspicion that he is being manipulated, but he can conceive only a crude framework of what are actually intricate machinations by Salzman. It is even possible that Finkle's conceptions make him more susceptible to manipulation than if he had no suspicions at all, because his broad-brush casting of Salzman as a huckster, a salesman, or even a shaman precludes him from understanding Salzman's actions. Finkle is indeed manipulated, and this manipulation is the function of the artistic force of
expression, not simply the desire of a disappointed father to marry his profligate daughter to a rabbi. Salzman’s despair at Finkle’s choice of Stella could well be sincere, the result of a realization that the force of expression that he is bound to make manifest as a result of his artistic integrity will have some possibly negative implications for the student, his daughter, or both. Malamud’s Salzman personifies Wordsworth’s “marriage” metaphor. His medium of expression is viable because he, as artist, is able access the elements of nature available to him and develop them based solely on his perception of artistic integrity.

While "The Magic Barrel" is a good example of Malamud’s paralleling of Wordsworthian aesthetic ideology, the metaphor of the barrel, and its relation to both artistic and interpersonal relationships is more commonly evident in negative examples. If there is a "magic" barrel to which Salzman has access, it is more than balanced in Malamud’s prose by the mundane barrels in "The Girl of My Dreams," The Assistant (1957), Pictures of Fidelman (1969) and The Tenants (1971). Each of these works contains a barrel that creates the environment for destruction of both artistic endeavor and interpersonal expression. In "The Girl of My Dreams," an alienated and unsuccessful author burns his manuscripts and notes in his landlady’s trash barrel and is shaken from his lethargy by a story about a young woman’s
manuscript that is inadvertently burned (in a barrel) by an overzealous housekeeper.

As is the case in the meeting between Finkle and Lily Hirschorn in "The Magic Barrel," the interpersonal relationship that Malamud develops between Mitka and Olga in "The Girl of My Dreams" is far from exemplary. Both meetings are awkward and abbreviated. The contact between the parties involved exposes the false expectations and assumptions upon which the meetings were predicated. Unlike Leo Finkle, however, who is devastated by his meeting with Lily, Mitka's interaction with Olga provides him with a perspective that gives rise to a positive artistic force.

Art and the artistic process are central to the action of "The Girl of My Dreams." The title of the story itself has a function here. The first-person possessive pronoun in the title contrasts with the limited omniscient persona of the text of the story, inviting inquiry regarding whose dreams are in question. This difficulty with consistency of persona is evident in the protagonist as well. Mitka's emergence from the creative lethargy that he experiences subsequent to his burning of his own manuscript in Mrs. Lutz's trash barrel begins when he reads a story similar to his own experience in The Open Globe. The story of the young author, (Madeline Thorn, who wrote the piece in the first person persona) involves a fledgling narrator whose manuscript is inadvertently burned during a house cleaning.
The motif of the burned manuscript elicits a strong response from Mitka, and he begins to see the fictional account of the destruction of the manuscript as an actual event. As a writer, Mitka should be aware of the separation between first-person narrator and author, between narrative fiction and anecdote. He is, however, unable to relegate the actual and the fictional into their proper intellectual positions. The actual situations and repercussions of the actual burning of his own manuscript and the fictional account of the destruction of a novice writer's manuscript merge the two events into a disturbing quasi-reality replete with actual factors attendant to the burning of his manuscript and the literary elements of symbol and metaphor germane to the fictional account:

He was convinced it was every bit true. He saw the crazy dame dumping the manuscript into the barrel and stirring it until every blessed page was a-flame. . . . So he lay on the bed and whether awake or asleep dreamed the recurrent dream of the burning barrel (in it their books commingled), suffering her agony as well as his own. The barrel, a symbol he had not conceived before, belched flame, shot word-sparks, poured smoke as thick as oil. It turned red-hot, a sickly
yellow, black—loaded high with the ashes of human bones—guess whose. (Magic 32)

Mitka’s perceived melding of the two events involves some rudimentary marital imagery (the commingling of works and the sharing of suffering), and Malamud develops these seminal elements into a full-fledged matrimonial metaphor at the end of the story. In the grips of his anguish, Mitka writes to the author of the story, urging her to persevere and write the novel again. This activity apparently serves as a catharsis, allowing Mitka to think less and less of the story in the following days. He eventually receives letters from the author on two consecutive days, the first expressing thanks for his sympathy, and the second informing him that the story was not true. The second letter also includes the admission that the author is lonely and desirous of further communication. Mitka, while ambivalent, continues the correspondence, hoping that it might in some way "return him to his abandoned book." He even casts the relationship in a conjugal/artistic manner in a cynical aside to the nature of the correspondence—"Sterile writer seeks end of sterility through epistolary intercourse with lady writer" (34).

Mitka eventually expresses his desire to meet Madeline, and he convinces her to meet with him, even though she relates to him her fear that he might terminate their relationship if he finds her to be something other than what
he expects. Mitka's expectations of Madeline are not high, he imagines her as "comely yet hefty," and he is willing to discount physical beauty as long as she is "womanly, intelligent, brave" (35).

Despite his protests to the contrary, when Mitka encounters her in the library, he is put off by his realization that she does not meet his expectations. She is older than he had imagined, and is "marvelously plain." Even though he is disappointed and enraged, he agrees to go with her to a nearby tavern to talk. She reveals that her name is Olga, and that Madeline is the name of the daughter about whom she writes all her stories. While Olga's appearance is less than striking, and her conversation mundane and depressing, during the course of their interaction, Mitka begins to shed the negative influences of his lethargy. He voraciously eats the food that she has brought, and he seems to accept her apparently pedestrian advice regarding his literary endeavors. After they leave the tavern, Olga expresses her wish that Mitka had known Madeline, her daughter, and Mitka is renewed by the possibility of meeting a younger and more alluring version of Olga. When he is subsequently informed that Madeline is dead, he "all but crumple[s]," in physical response to his disappointment. When he parts company with Olga, he informs her that the likelihood of their meeting again is slim, but leaves open the possibility that he will continue to write
to her. After the bus departs with her, and he begins his walk home, he is able to assess the implication of their relationship:

He thought of the old girl. He'd go home now and drape her from head to foot in flowing white. They would jounce together up the stairs, then (strictly a one-marriage man) he would swing her across the threshold, holding her where the fat overflowed her corset as they waltzed around his writing chamber. (Magic 41)

The overt matrimonial metaphor that Malamud provides to Mitka as a mental image of his relationship to Olga is closely connected to the artistic process. It is a celebratory image, contrasting and probably supplanting the cynicism, lethargy and despair that had dominated Mitka's thoughts. The culmination of matrimonial bliss, the wedding dance, occurring in Mitka's writing chamber indicates a positive change in both the physical and mental locations of artistic creation—the room and the cranium are both chambers within which the creative process takes place. More specifically, the marriage imagery in context with Mitka's apparently rejuvenated artistic drive indicates that Mitka's meeting with Olga has allowed him successfully to re-orient his intellectual position regarding reality and fictional expression.
The Assistant, Pictures of Fidelman and The Tenants: Variations on the "Spousal Verse" Metaphor

Helen Bober's absolute rejection of Frank Alpine's carved rose in The Assistant is also a comment on the correlation between expression and human interaction. During his tenure in the store, Frank endures an anxiety-ridden infatuation with Helen that results in his assuming roles ranging from voyeur to legitimate suitor and even to rapist. Frank rapes Helen after he rescues her from a similar fate at the hands of Ward Minogue. He assumes that her relief, gratitude, and expressions of love for him provide him with the license to force his will on her. Frank's subsequent attempts to reestablish a legitimate relationship with her are rebuffed, and in an attempt to appeal to her in a non-verbal manner, he carves a rose for her from an old piece of two-by-four that he finds in the cellar. Far from having the desired effect, this meager example of artistic expression serves only to remind Helen of her despondency, and intensifies her "hatred of herself for having loved the clerk against her better judgement" (192). The morning after she removes Frank's carved flower from her mailbox, Frank discovers it at the bottom of the trash can as he pours a pail of garbage into the receptacle. This barrel is far from magical; even though Frank's guilt and his need for forgiveness are sincere, and the flower may well reflect that sincerity, the gesture lacks the
expressive power to transcend the outrage that Frank's human desires have visited on Helen.

This occurrence is the mirror image of an earlier incident in the novel. In an attempt to win favor with Helen, Frank presents her with a book of Shakespeare's plays and a scarf. Helen returns the gifts to Frank; her ambivalence about their relationship makes her uneasy about accepting them. Frank responds by placing the two items in the trash, where Helen finds them the next morning. She is appalled at the waste, and retrieves them from the rubbish. When Frank will not return them, Helen places them in a bureau drawer in the basement. She will not accept them, but neither will she participate in their disposal.

Her decision to keep the items, therefore, has its basis in her appreciation of them as media of expression. Stashing the items away in a bureau drawer where they will not be accessed is not as much of a waste as disposing of them in the garbage, because it displays sufficient interest in the quality of their expression (as opposed to any utilitarian value) to warrant keeping them within the sphere of her existence. Malamud's choice to imbue Helen with this particular sensitivity to expression has a distinct parallel to Wordsworth's ideology. Crabb Robinson believes that "Wordsworth's enjoyment of works of art is very much in proportion to their subserviency to poetical illustration,"
and he doubts "whether [Wordsworth] feels the beauty of mere form" (Robinson 257).

The character Helen demonstrates her awareness of the dichotomy between the "illustration" and the "mere form" in the incident with the book and the scarf. When she throws Frank's carved rose in the trash, she is forcefully rejecting both the carving and the perverse actions that precipitated its creation.

Wordsworth's "spousal" metaphor is applicable here as well. Frank's rape of Helen is a gross perversion of the marital relationship. This perversion extends into Frank's attempt at reconciliation, corrupting any artistic value that the carved rose might have had. Helen's pain is such that she reacts to the flower not as a work of art, but as a reminder of the physical and emotional violation that she suffered at the hands of Frank. Frank's activity at the time of his discovery of the flower is also appropriate. He pours garbage into the receptacle that contains the discarded flower, the product of his expression intended as an attempt at redemption through the creation of an artistic product possibly designed to transcend the violation. In this action, he is participating in the further (and ultimate) denigration of the medium of his expression.

Helen disposes of the flower in the trash pail because she finds what it represents to be abominable, and Frank
reinforces the corrupt nature of the flower's existence by burying it under garbage.

Of Malamud's novels, the two that deal most directly with aesthetic ideology are *Pictures of Fidelman* and *The Tenants*. The negative image of the non-magic barrel is present in both novels—it exists as the inaccessible repository of ideas in *Pictures of Fidelman*, and again as the receptacle of destruction for artistic expression in *The Tenants*. In addition, these two novels also present a strong correlation between the creative process and the conjugal elements of interpersonal relationships. They can therefore be examined in light of the matrimonial elements in Wordsworth's aesthetics. Both novels contain instances of the destruction of a protagonist's attempt at literary expression. In "Last Mohican," the first chapter in *Pictures of Fidelman*, the indigent Jew Susskind steals and ultimately burns Fidelman's manuscript for the first chapter of his critical work on Giotto. Unable to effect a rewriting of the chapter (his notes are stored in a barrel in the attic of his sister's house), Fidelman engages in an obsessive search for Susskind, finding him only to learn that Susskind had done him "a favor" and burned the apparently uninspired chapter. *The Tenants* juxtaposes two potential literary artists, the Jewish Lesser, and the African-American Willie Spearmint, both attempting to complete their respective works in the wretched confines of
a dilapidated tenement. When Lesser violates Willie by stealing his Jewish "white bitch," Willie retaliates by razing Lesser's apartment and burning both the manuscript and its copy "in a barrel in the outhouse."

In his review of *Pictures of Fidelman* for the *Saturday Review*, Robert Scholes describes the novel as "an allegory of the artistic and moral life" (33). The novel is a picaresque—a compilation of six separate vignettes compiled in what Malamud calls in the novel's subtitle "an exhibition." Each of the six sections revolves around Arthur Fidelman's attempt to juxtapose his intellect with art, following his progression from his arrival in Rome as a self-confessed failed painter and self-deluded art critic in "Last Mohican" to the resolved craftsman who returns to the United States to work as a glass blower. Scholes appropriately contends that the allegory concerns both art and morality; Fidelman's development of understanding relating to art is paralleled by his ability to assess and respond honestly to interpersonal relationships.

In the sections "Still Life," "Naked Nude," and "A Pimp's Revenge," inappropriate or ineffectual interpersonal relationships (and their sexual manifestations) serve as physical representations of Fidelman's distorted concept of artistic endeavor. In the final section, "Glass Blower of Venice," Fidelman achieves artistic and moral redemption under the tutelage of the bisexual glass blower, Beppo,
through whom Fidelman is able to perceive the necessity of honesty (morality) in the effective understanding of both interpersonal relationships and art.

Even though the metaphor of a "spousal verse" is Wordsworth's own, there is a paucity of critical examination of sexuality in Wordsworth's work. Adela Pinch postulates that this is due to a majority of critics' unease in assessing gender matters to Wordsworth's "sufferers." Her position is that the suffering of women, noticeably in "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman" and "The Mad Mother" contains a Freudian sadomasochism that relates so directly to sexuality that critics are reticent in addressing it because of its lurid implications (837). The lack of critical interest in matters of sexuality in Wordsworth is somewhat puzzling, since the poet himself makes a particularly cogent statement on the relationship between sexuality and aesthetics in the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads":

Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must well be known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual
appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin: . . . (886)

The spousal metaphor is strengthened by the conjugal imagery in this passage. The male and female differ biologically, yet they function together in the unifying act of intercourse. In much the same way, the mind and nature, while different, function together in artistic creation. "Similitude in dissimilitude," therefore, is a crucial element in both dynamic and synergistic arrangements.

While the last five vignettes trace the growth and eventual redemption of the dysfunctional Fidelman, it is the first section, "Last Mohican" that provides the exposition of Fidelman as an individual in need of redemption. In "Last Mohican," Arthur Fidelman is "a self-confessed failure as a painter . . . [in] Italy to prepare a critical study of Giotto" (3). This statement is indicative of Fidelman's awkward relationship to the artistic process. While his failure as an artist is probably deserved, he seems to view "self confession" not as an honest assessment of his own abilities, but as an act of contrition that will allow him to remain on the periphery of artistic activity in the role of critic. The disingenuous nature of his criticism of his own artistic abilities precludes his being an effective voice in the examination of the artistic abilities of others. The respective roles of artist and critic are complex, and criticism, if it is to have any legitimacy,
cannot be viewed as a safety net, an activity upon which failed artists can fall back. Fidelman's decision to become a critic casts him as a particularly non-Wordsworthian character at this point in the novel. His decision cannot be seen as an effective one from a Wordsworthian perspective; it is not based on "emotion recollected in tranquility," but rather emotion derived from desperation.

When Fidelman's first chapter is stolen by Susskind, it becomes obvious that Fidelman's concern lies not with Giotto, or even with criticism, but with his creation, the chapter itself. His attempt to rewrite the chapter is futile; he goes blank on large and important sections of the material. Fidelman's notes are still in America, "in a barrel in his sister's attic in Levittown" (23). This barrel is not the "magic" barrel of Salzman--it does not yield up the component parts of desired ends. Instead, it is remote and inaccessible, holding its contents away from everyone, Fidelman included.

Fidelman attempts to find Susskind in the teeming streets and alleys of Rome. His search is difficult and time-consuming, but ultimately successful. Fidelman offers Susskind his second suit, an item that Susskind had indicated a desire for, asking nothing in return. The gesture is effective, resulting in Susskind's returning the briefcase that had held the manuscript. The briefcase is, however, empty, and the manuscript has been destroyed.
Ironically, Susskind’s plea is one of criticism—that he had done Fidelman a favor is destroying the manuscript because "while the words were there . . . the spirit was missing" (37). Fidelman begins to pursue Susskind in a fit of anger; but when he realizes that he will not be able to catch the fleeing peddler, his anger turns to anguish, and his desire for revenge is supplanted by the desire for honest assessment that is disappearing in the form of Susskind.

Susskind does not return in response to Fidelman’s entreaties, and Fidelman never sees him again. The American’s realization that Susskind’s critical opinions were correct (if vague) represents a turning point in Fidelman’s character, and provides for him the impetus to pursue a similarly elemental and correct relationship with the artistic process. As the "failed" artist in "Last Mohican," Arthur Fidelman attempts to redeem himself with art by assuming an almost ascetic demeanor. He intended to live a frugal and spartan existence, his titillation would come from his focus on the works of the masters. Instead, after his interaction with Susskind, Fidelman returns to his role of artist and seeks his actualization there, apparently repositioning himself intellectually in response to the idea that involvement in life as opposed to removal from it could provide the insight that he seeks. In the vignettes that follow "Last Mohican" Fidelman’s life is notably non-ascetic. His conjugal pursuits are enthusiastic and
preeminent in relation to the artistic perception that he desires to achieve.

In "Still Life," the artist Fidelman, out of desperation, rents shared studio space with a young pittrice, Annamaria Oliovino. His ostensible desire was for a location to paint, but the happenstance of being brought together with a woman overwhelms his artistic intentions, and he finds himself pursuing a relationship with Annamaria to the exclusion of his painting. Fidelman does achieve a sort of artistic accomplishment when he buys a priest's costume and dresses himself in it in an attempt to paint a Portrait of the Artist as Priest. Annamaria, strongly affected by the priestly garments, confesses to Fidelman her incidents of promiscuity, incest and infanticide in the process of seducing him.

There are elements of artistic union in this climatic scene. While Fidelman is not a priest, and Annamaria is aware of this fact, his attempt to present himself as one is legitimate enough to move Annamaria to her confession. The need for confession was Annamaria's, but the impetus and venue for it were Fidelman's. As lover/confessor, his creation is not the priestly disguise, or the Portrait of the Artist as Priest, but a medium of expression that evoked a marked and powerful response from Annamaria.

In both "Naked Nude" and "A Pimp's Revenge," Fidelman's artistic development is once again traced in
conjunction with sexual activity. In "Naked Nude," Fidelman is held hostage by two petty criminals in a Milan brothel. The two thieves develop a plan for stealing a Tizano from a nearby estate—a plan that requires Fidelman to paint a forgery that can be put in the original's place. In an attempt to win his freedom, Fidelman agrees, but he is unable to paint; he is blocked by his condition and circumstances. The marital relationship between nature and art is made a mockery in the confines of the brothel—the whorehouse is a place of cheap and superficial sex, a tawdry substitute for legitimate relationships. In a similar manner, Fidelman's assignment is to create a cheap and superficial forgery, and the lack of a legitimate relationship between mind and nature in the artistic process blocks his ability to produce. Fidelman is able to shake his block when he develops a plan to steal the painting himself. This activity, while hardly noble, is one in which he is the creative force, and this understanding allows him the ability to finish the forgery. Rather than stealing the Tizano, however, Fidelman escapes with his forgery, which he has come to value more than the original.

Fidelman's sexual relationship in "A Pimp's Revenge" is a quasi-monogamous arrangement with Esmeralda, a young Florentine prostitute. After availing himself of her services in an attempt to relax and get on with his work, he allows her to stay in the studio rather than going back to
her pimp. Her presence in his studio is a positive force, and his honest relationship with her is paralleled in his artistic pursuits. He is able to begin what seems to be a legitimate painting. The process is an arduous one, and he is reduced to having Esmeralda go back out on the streets for their subsistence. When the painting of the mother and child is finished, it is, in the words of Esmeralda, "a wonder." Still, Fidelman is not satisfied. That night, he returns to the canvas with the intention of making minute changes. Instead, he works for hours, and he ruins it. The distorted picture is laughed at by an art dealer, and Fidelman smears black paint over the canvass, finalizing the painting's destruction. Upon seeing the mess, Esmeralda attacks Fidelman with a bread knife, which he takes from her and thrusts into his stomach himself, describing the act as "[serving him] right" (147).

In the final vignette, Fidelman is able to reconcile effectively art, relationships, and his juxtaposition with each. At the beginning of "Glass Blower of Venice," Fidelman is in Venice, making a meager living through odd jobs and panhandling. He is once again "the ex-painter." The initial relationship that he involves himself in is with Margherita Fassoli, a married clerk in a trinket shop. Their sex is perfunctory, but her treatment of Fidelman is kind, and he begins to have some degree of social
interaction with her children, and with Beppo, her husband the glass blower.

Fidelman assumes the craftsman to be moderately sophisticated artistically, and offers to show him a portfolio of his works. The glass blower is less than impressed, suggests that Fidelman burn the entirety of his work, and in an almost Susskind-like fashion begins systematically wrecking the pieces within his grasp, extolling Fidelman to determine the master of his fate—himself or bad art.

During a subsequent assignation of Fidelman and Margherita, Beppo intrudes violently, puts Margherita to flight and rapes Fidelman. This act has the effect on Fidelman of instilling in him a resignation regarding both relationships and art. He becomes both Beppo’s lover and apprentice, learning of the intricacies of each simultaneously. He is eventually persuaded by Margherita to return to the United States. Fidelman returns without the trappings of anxiety and dishonesty that had accompanied him to Italy. The understanding that he achieves through his experiences allows him to live a satisfied life, "work[ing] as a craftsman in glass and lov[ing] both men and women."

Malamud’s starkest presentation of characters motivated by the artistic process occurs in The Tenants. In this novel, Malamud develops as protagonist the Jewish novelist Harry Lesser, a writer whose musings at the end of the
writing day often revolve around the poet Wordsworth. Lesser has had early success followed by work that was poorly received, both critically and financially. He is working on the novel that he hopes will reestablish his credibility as a writer in the literary community and in himself. Lesser writes on an upper level floor in a dilapidated tenement. He is the last of the tenants, the others having acquiesced to the combination of neglect and monetary incentive that the building’s owner, Levenspiel, (who hopes to have the building razed) has used to hasten their departure from the dwelling. Lesser refuses to leave until his book is finished; he perceives the necessity of his novel being a creation of dedication as opposed to convenience, and he realizes that compromise on this issue would also compromise his fidelity to the artistic process.

Lesser’s aesthetic ideology is placed in sharper focus through the intrusion into his solitary existence by Willie Spearmint, a squatter who takes up residence in one of the abandoned apartments in order to write his own novel of the black experience. The two writers relate to each other, tentatively at first, but eventually reach a workable arrangement. Spearmint reaches a level of professional comfort with Lesser that allows him to make an uneasy request of the novelist for a critical evaluation of his own work in progress. When Lesser attempts to explain to Spearmint what he thinks of the work in artistic terms, the
squatter becomes hostile, implying that art is a nicety that the white man can afford, but like many other of those niceties, does not offer itself to the black man.

Art can kiss my juicy ass. You want to know what's really art? I am art. Willie Spearmint, black man. My form is myself. (75)

The dichotomous positions of the two writers present alternative perspectives on the Wordsworthian metaphor of the marriage of mind and nature. In this scenario, Lesser's creation grows out of the intellect, and Spearmint's grows out of life experience. The inability of both to properly evaluate the legitimacy of the other results in a destructive artistic environment. The "marriage" is never realized, and neither is the possibility for constructive interaction.

In the course of the novel, each writer is creatively eviscerated by the other. Spearmint has a crucial element of his continuing experience—his relationship with Irene—undermined by Lesser, who supplants Spearmint as Irene’s lover. Spearmint reacts with violent revenge, destroying Lesser’s intellectual accomplishment, his manuscript:

Willie privately burns the vellum manuscript and its foolscap copy in a barrel in the outhouse, his eyes tearing from the thick smoke—some heartburn. The hot ashes stink of human flesh . . . 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. (178)

At the end of the novel, fantasy and reality begin to intertwine with the setting of the action drifting between the ravaged halls of the tenement and the idealized lushness of grassy glens in the African bush. As the two vituperative writers pass on the narrow, dank stairway, the setting changes to a clearing in the bush:

Their metal glinted in hidden light, perhaps starlight filtering greenly through the dense trees. Willie's eyeglass frames momentarily gleamed. They aimed at each other accurate blows. Lesser felt his jagged axe 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. (229-30)

Whether actual or fantastic, this final confrontation between Lesser and Spearmint is violent and destructive because each entity is separate and isolated. The location of the wounds is appropriate to the artistic focus of the two men--Lesser goes for the brain, Spearmint for the gonads. There is a validation of Wordsworth's aesthetics in this last violent, destructive scene. Willie and Lesser become so calcified in their defenses of their own aesthetics that they doom their works, and by extension,
their existences. The artistic and personal relationship of Lesser and Spearmint ultimately ends in destruction because they are unable to reach the positive, "spousal" bonding of the natural and the intellectual that Wordsworth describes as necessary for viable artistic expression. Without this bonding, each writer reinforces his single motivator through loathing for the other, and destructive violence is the subsequent result.
NOTES

1Unless otherwise noted, the prose sections cited are from William Wordsworth, Selected Prose, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).


All references to this novel in the text of this chapter come from this edition.
The philosophical and poetic ramifications of Wordsworth’s aesthetics, while genuinely Platonic, are not without contemporary philosophical precedent. In the first treatise of his Inquiry (1725), Frances Hutcheson cites a distinct dichotomy between the function of perception and conception in artistic expression.

Let every one here consider how different we must suppose the perception to be with which a Poet is transported upon the prospect of any of those objects of natural beauty which ravish us even in his description, from that cold lifeless Conception which we imagine in a dull Critick or one of the Virtuosi without what we call a fine Taste. (9-10)

The differences between the elemental nature of perception (which produces art) and the more sophisticated nature of conception (which produces artifice) are integral to the Wordsworthyian philosophical construct here, since these separate artistic and intellectual positions dictate the disposition (within or apart from the mighty unity) of
the product. Hutcheson’s mention of the "Critick" is appropriate to this delineation of the roles of perception and conception in the artistic process because regardless of the legitimacy of the forces functioning behind the creation of art, it is still disseminated within a societal structure that is often predisposed to a more positive reception of conceptually based art.

While his subjects and settings differ from those of Wordsworth, Malamud repeatedly presents an examination of the creative and societal forces requisite in the artistic process. The ideology that he brings to bear on the subject closely parallels that of Wordsworth in its attempt to present the positive epistemological function of artistic expression in contrast with the negative effects that society and artifice have on those expressive endeavors or disseminations that are predicated on conception.

The seminal ideological parallel between Malamud and Wordsworth exists in their perception of the existence of a "natural" artistic impetus, and in conjunction with it, a disruptive, societal force that can block, distort, or pervert this positive, elemental impetus. The patent irony here is that the techniques involved in artistic efforts that fulfill the societal conventions of artistic expression further the goals of society, not art, and in so doing occlude, restrict and repress the valuable function of art. In the third of his "Essays on Epitaphs," Wordsworth
describes expression based on conception rather than perception artistically illegitimate:

Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breath, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve. (361)

Such expressions are not merely ineffectual; they are detrimental. They subvert the positive role that Wordsworth purports valid artistic expression to have. These media opt for the pursuit of societal acceptance instead of staying true to the valid, if unpopular, function of natural expression. Because of the confrontational juxtaposition derived here, artistic expression, as it is understood by Wordsworth, demonstrates the conflict inherent in his philosophy regarding the interaction between the natural and the sophisticated.

Support for Wordsworth's argument in "The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," that the "primary sensations of the human heart" serve as the "vital springs" of artistic composition can be derived from Malamud's comments and writing. David R. Mesher describes Malamud as a writer who expresses the idea that "one who cannot act charitably and humanely in life cannot really appreciate, or has not sufficiently understood, great art, which has compassion at its root" (398). It is possible,
therefore, that this human failure to "act charitably and humanely" which arises from a separation from art, can therefore (given art's relation to life) manifest itself as a separation from life. Malamud seems cognizant of this motif and its implications in his fiction; incarceration, a forced separation from the life process, is a common metaphor in his prose. In an interview with Leslie and Joyce Field, Malamud discusses the human implications of the incarceration motif:

[It] is a metaphor for the dilemma of men throughout history. Necessity is the primary prison, though the bars are not visible to all. Then there are the man-made prisons of social injustice, apathy, ignorance. There are others, tight or loose, visible or invisible, according to one's own predilection or vulnerability. Therefore, our most extraordinary invention is human freedom. (Malamud 12)

Malamud's use of "invention" here elicits a strong connotational connection to art as it is perceived in the Wordsworthian romantic sense. The restrictions placed on art by the "rational" aspect of existence--the arbitrary, sometimes forced, choice of conception as opposed to perception--substantiates the correlation between artistic misunderstanding and incarceration in Malamud's work. Based on their own conception of the function of expression,
societal conventions attempt to relegate expressionistic endeavors into "acceptable" forms. In this way, even legitimate art can be removed from its basis of the perception of natural occurrence of and conceptualized by the collective consciousness of society into conveying a more comfortable message. In this condition, "art" made more palatable to society becomes the victim of forces that partake strongly of the "prisons" of apathy, ignorance and necessity that Malamud expresses in his interview with Leslie and Joyce Fields.

Malamud's metaphor of incarceration can be viewed also as a phenomenological expression of the constraining effect that Wordsworth believed ostentatious erudition and esoterica had on the "gaudy verse" of inappropriate artistic expression. In the Wordsworthian scenario, effective artistic representation is predicated on the "primary sensations" in the artist that are a result of a convergence with the impetus of nature. The existence of this phenomenon in Wordsworth's writings has not gone without critical notice. Matthew Arnold's assertion that "Nature seems to take the pen out of [Wordsworth's] hand and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power" (xxiv) depicts Wordsworth (or at least his artistic capabilities) to be as much a creation of nature as his poems are creations of him. This situation fits well within the "mighty unity" philosophy in that it lends credence to
Brooks's premise that the child in the "Intimations" ode creates the radiance that it perceives in nature, substantiating the relationship between the source for art, its medium for expression, and its ultimate form. Leslie Field pursues a particular indication of this relationship in Malamud's prose in his essay "Portrait of the Artist as Schlemiel" by taking Ruth Wisse's definition of political schlemiel--one who is "apart from or 'out of step with the actual march of events,'"--and extrapolating from that a more affirmative character--the "comic figure who seems to be a victim, but who, because he redefines his world, wins out in the end" (Malamud 120). While Malamud is on record as saying that he does not "much care for the schlemiel treatment of fictional characters" (Malamud 10), Field cites not only Wisse but also Sanford Pinsker and Lois Lamed as scholars who have delineated Malamud characters as schlemiels. Field's basic point--that the schlemiel (the artist Fidelman is his example) is able to achieve affirmation through his redefinition of his world--places the artist in the Wordsworthian role of creator and created. In much the same way that Wordsworth sees nature as the impetus behind the artistic expression arising from the "primary sensations of the human heart," the "naturalness" of Malamud's characters allows them to effect the redefinition of their existence, and in so doing, create the conditions for their own affirmations. The romantic element
in the character of the schlemiel, his separation from society, precludes his being perverted by its conforming forces and allows him the opportunity and protects his ability to effect this "redefinition."

In Malamud's depictions of various social prisons--those of necessity, social injustice, apathy and ignorance--a central pattern develops: artistic repression becomes both analogous to and representative of the repression of life through incarceration and isolation. Particular incidents in three short stories ("The Letter," "Man in the Drawer," "The German Refugee") and in the novels A New Life (1961) and The Tenants (1971) present isolation in life as a physical manifestation of artistic repression and a situation through which the artist (perhaps Field's "Artist as Schlemiel") serves as an individual who is both a creator of art and a creation of the natural influences in his artistic life.

Existing in conjunction with the affirmation of the artist in these works is the negative force of societal repression. Textual support for Malamud's comment regarding the types of "prisons" visible in society's treatment of artistic expression is evident in these works. Necessity (what Malamud calls the "primary prison"), is evident on several levels in these works, and it is indeed "primary" in that it develops the parameters for artistic repression. Society has determined a need to protect itself from
disruptive influences; therefore, it places economic, cultural, and perhaps even legal sanctions on art in order to curtail and modify those who would create disruptive influences. With this situation in place, the other prisons Malamud mentions (social injustice, apathy, ignorance) can similarly be seen as elements of the overriding repressive environment.


Malamud's "The Letter" and "Man in the Drawer" examine the dynamic force in the conflict between expression and repression and the ironic force it has on those who become active agents of repression in opting for the safety of societal necessity and attempting to deal rationally with artistic expression.

In Malamud's "The Letter," this agent of repression is Newman, who visits a mental institution each Sunday to see his father. It is Newman's desire to exhibit the rationality that he possesses by refusing to mail an unaddressed letter that has nothing written on it that serves to highlight the overall irrationality of artistic repression. After each of these weekly meetings, Newman is met by Teddy, another inmate in the institution, at the gate through which he exits. Teddy carries with him a blank,
smudged blue envelope that contains three or four similarly blank sheets of paper. Each week, Teddy hands this envelope to Newman, and requests that he mail it once he is outside the walls of the institution. Each week, Newman refuses, remarks on the futility of such an enterprise, and returns the envelope to Teddy.

Through the presentation of Newman’s responses to this innocuous, yet absurd, situation, Malamud examines the conflict between artistic expression and societal repression, along with the effect that this dynamic has on the people under its influence. Newman is evidently a practical man: he could avoid the confrontations with Teddy entirely by opting for another exit from the grounds, but the exit Teddy stands by is closer to the railway station. He could also ignore Teddy, but he finds it "easier to take [the envelope], then hand back, than to refuse to take it" (101). Societal necessity requires that it be easier to refute art than to ignore it; the challenge of conflict is too strong to pass up. The irony is that the influence that rationality holds over Newman is as devastating (or at least as revelatory of existing devastation) to him as it is to Teddy, who is actually repressed. At the end of "The Letter," Teddy’s father, Ralph, also an inmate in the institution, calls out to a departing Newman, accusing him of being "crazy" and questioning Newman’s failure to "come back and hang around with the rest of [the inmates]" (106).
While Newman is probably not certifiable, Ralph's question points out the insane nature of the act of artistic repression and the psychological implications for those who repress art.

Newman believes himself to be perfectly justified (at least within his intellectual construct) in his reaction to Teddy's request; it does, after all, appear remarkably vulnerable to a full frontal attack of rationality. Teddy's letter is obviously blank; there is no address on the envelope to which it could be mailed, and even though he is adamant about the doctors not seeing it, there is nothing in it that could prove harmful to him; it is, after all, blank.

It is, therefore, the absurdity of Teddy's request that elicits from Newman the desire to react to it in a rational manner. As the armor of society, rationality would appear to be more than equal to the task at hand, and Newman, as its proponent, would appear to have little difficulty reasoning away Teddy's painfully meager attempt at expression. What Newman fails to realize, however, is that the concept of rationality is an abstraction that works only when all parties involved agree upon its value as an intellectual criterion. Since in his interaction with Teddy, Newman is the only one wielding it as a weapon, rationality fails Newman as both sword and shield, and proves ineffectual against Teddy's childlike request.
Repression is itself an irrational action, and yet often, paradoxically, as in Newman’s case, it is perpetuated through impulses that the denizens of a societal structure have become accustomed to as representing rational behavior. This paradox could give the ameliorator an opportunity to attempt to differentiate between a society’s overt attempt to quash artistic expression and the incidental repression brought forth by well-meaning but inept rationalists.

The setting Malamud chooses for the story is important here. The mental institution is a laboratory-like setting—in it, he can posit the absence of rationality in the environment (Teddy and the other inmates) and include it in his subject (Newman). The guard at the gate is present at each encounter between Newman and Teddy, and yet his comments, as few and terse as they may be, never address the issue of the letter. As a representative of the established order, he would have been well within the sphere of his responsibilities to take Teddy’s letter away, destroy it, or show it to the doctors. The fact that he does nothing to censure Teddy’s expression could be indicative of society’s role in artistic repression. Even though the artist’s fear of censorship most often arises from the actions of government and society, they seem to be minor players here, standing quietly by and watching the misguided rationality of some individuals perform the majority of repressive
actions. Their incidental repression seems no less insidious than official censorship.

The fact that Teddy’s letter has nothing written on it is far from being a legitimate reason for its repression. Newman finds it necessary to extend a degree of rationality to the letter by telling Teddy that if he would write something on the pages, and address the envelope, or even give oral instructions regarding content and destination so that Newman himself could transcribe something of consequence in the letter, then he would mail it. This imposition of a prerequisite condition is merely an attempt to make Teddy express a rationality that makes Newman comfortable. In actuality, the blank nature of the pages is at best an incidental concern. The crucial factor is Teddy’s desire to have them sent.

Newman also takes lightly Teddy’s desire not to have his letter read by the doctors, and again his rationality reveals his repressive nature. Newman’s condescendingly repressive attitude towards Teddy and his request is distinctly non-Wordsworthian. Wordsworth’s treatment of the mentally defective is markedly free of condescension, and it has been suggested that some of Wordsworth’s poetry, particularly parts of "The Idiot Boy," can be seen as "a polemic against . . . unsympathetic representations of idiots" (Bewell 321). Newman’s inclination to assess Teddy’s claim as irrational, and therefore invalid,
indicates his lack of sensitivity to the legitimacy of Teddy's request. From the Wordsworthian perspective, the simplicity of Teddy's request makes it quintessentially cogent to the matter of repression. Newman is unwilling or unable to appreciate the elemental nature of Teddy's attempt to circumvent repressive forces. Newman rationally assumes that the doctor's seeing the letter would probably be of little consequence. Teddy is already committed; the letter is blank and incapable of containing any damaging information. In addition, the guard knows about the letter, so it is entirely possible that the doctors know about it as well. What Newman fails to realize is that right of free expression is not quantifiable. The fact that Newman could not understand Teddy's desire not to have his letter seen by the doctors does not lessen the validity of his desire for free expression. In addition, Newman's rationality is lacking in its ability to assess the true threat of repression--Teddy's elemental understanding that he does not want the letter in the hands of the doctors benefits from greater insight than does Newman's reason.

Perhaps the most interesting reason for Newman's refusal to mail Teddy's letter is that it reveals how the insane nature of repression manifests itself in those who engage in it. When Newman indicates to Ralph that his father is crazy, Ralph responds: "So are you." This simple statement goes a long way in providing insight into Newman's
character and, by extension, his actions. Since Newman's father is insane, Newman may have an acute sense of the existence of insanity. This awareness might make Newman extraordinarily sensitive to sanity-related issues, if not to afflicted individuals. His refusal to mail Teddy's letter, therefore, might be an exercise in this sensitivity. By refusing to mail the letter, he is using his rationality to assert his sanity. He is exhibiting the repressive force of conceived necessity—the necessity to have Teddy's letter assume a form that he finds rational and acceptable—as a motivation for refusing to mail Teddy's letter. To mail Teddy's letter would be an admission that it merits mailing, and an irrational act such as that would be lending credence to insanity. His rationality-bolstered sanity might not withstand such an admission, so the avoidance of the admission necessitates his repression of the letter. The irony is that Teddy's wish to have his letter mailed is the quintessence of what is truly rational; Newman's desire to force that wish into a form that he finds acceptable reveals him to be a purveyor of that which is truly insane. It makes no sense not to mail the letter, or at least to let Teddy believe that it has been mailed. In this regard, Ralph is not mistaken when he calls Newman crazy.

In the case of the repression in "The Letter," its agent seeks justification for his actions by couching them in terms of rational behavior. He is, therefore, trapped in
what Malamud refers to as the "prison" of necessity. He considers himself a "right-thinking" individual, and when confronted by an absurd situation, he conceives the necessity to react to it accordingly, that is, in a rational manner. The value of this arbitrary intellectual position, however, quickly erodes when he is confronted with the true insanity inherent in his actions. Teddy fulfills the requirements of a schlemiel in the sense that he does effect a sort of redefinition of existence. While his physical environment and demeanor remain relatively unchanged, his perception of and request for the basic human right of unrestricted expression results in his being transformed into a vehicle through which the dynamics of expression and repression are made manifest to the reader.

A similar pattern of events develops in "Man in the Drawer." As in the case of "The Letter," a character is attempting to enlist the aid of another individual in an attempt to disseminate his medium of expression, and the individual capable of assisting that dissemination finds himself racked by the political conflict inherent in the situation. While traveling in the Soviet Union, Howard Harvitz, a free-lance writer, comes into contact with Feliks Levitansky, a Moscow taxi driver and short story writer who desires to have his works submitted for publication outside the borders of the Soviet state. Even though Levitansky is a loyal Soviet citizen and Communist Party member, he
apparently places his artistic fidelity above devotion to the nation and the Party. His stories recount the oppression of Soviet Jewry, but he is apparently not goring an ideological ox. Even though his father was Jewish, Levitansky is an avowed atheist; artistic expression seems to be his only motivation. He is quick to assure Harvitz that even if publication in the West resulted in some sort of monetary gain, that profit was "not the idea." Caught in the paradox of a true believer in a system being reduced to subterfuge in order to circumvent that system's restrictions of his desires as an individual, Levitansky counters Harvitz's observation that there was more personal freedom in the United States in a naive attempt to rationalize his allegiance to the government by taking the position that the communist system was "not in its present state fully realized." Levitansky does not perceive (probably because of necessity) that artistic repression on the part of government demonstrates its belief that artistic expression is both a threat to its present form and the very reason it can never reach its full realization as a state that has no need to repress.

Repression is an irrational action, and yet, paradoxically, it is perpetuated through rational impulses. The social injustice in place in Levitansky's milieu results in the existence of repressive laws complete with criminal consequence. Harvitz's original response of not wanting to
take the manuscripts out with him for fear of being caught at the border is an example of an irrational end (repression) developing from a rational desire (staying out of jail). Loss of freedom is society's punitive stroke against those individuals involved in anti-social activity, and some societies exercise this practice to the point that they incarcerate not only those who are dangerous to society, but also those who are merely disquieting to society. This misuse of authority is the vehicle through which Levitansky's society reinforces conception while stifling perception. In an ideal, natural situation, Harvitz could perceive Levitansky's stories in much the same way that Wordsworth's Wanderer suggests the perception of the natural ideal in the sea shell. In such a situation, Harvitz could address the stories solely as artistic expressions and allow himself the opportunity to predicate the basis of his response on the relationship between the object and its viewer. The possibility of social retribution, however, forces him to conceive of them as a potential cause for incarceration. He is, therefore incapable of the pure perception of the art. The "rational" impetus of staying out of jail is a manifestation of the intrusion of social and political forces into the relationship. The purity of perception between the viewer and the art form is corrupted into conception through the forceful and arbitrary inclusion of an external factor--the
political and societal conception of both the object and the viewer. His eventual appreciation of the stories emerges only after he is able to reconcile the conflict between the art and the society, weighing artistic merit against the possibility of social retribution.

Because rationality can cloud the issue of repression, Malamud addresses the relation between the two more directly in "The Letter," where he can posit the absence of an imposed rationality, than in "Man in the Drawer," where rationality is a ubiquitous element of survival. On a superficial level, the conditions of the two stories differ most obviously in the medium of expression. Teddy's letter is blank; there is no address on the envelope to which it could be mailed, and even though he is adamant about the doctors not seeing it, it is not an incriminating document. Levitansky's manuscripts differ in that they exist and may have some attendant literary value. He is clear as to where he wants them to go. The very existence of Levitansky's manuscripts makes them a potential threat to the freedom and safety of both Levitansky and Harvitz, but it would be a mistake to discount the severity of the threat Teddy's letter poses to Newman simply because he is not at risk of physical societal retribution. The danger posed to Levitansky and Harvitz is overt. Newman, however, could see himself in danger of falling victim to a latent, but no less serious threat. Mailing Teddy's letter would provide a
devastating blow to his conception of himself as a rational being. In a sense, this threat could be more serious to a member of society than incarceration, because while incarceration validates the principles of society’s conceptions, irrational behavior violates them. If Newman’s intellectual construct of his self-identity has its foundation on socially-sanctioned rational behavior, to repudiate that arbitrary rationality could be tantamount to the destruction of his being.

In much the same way that the ludicrous nature of Newman’s attempt to repress Teddy’s letter is highlighted by Ralph’s assertion that Newman is insane, Harvitz, in his role of a facilitator of repression, begins to show signs of insane behavior. He becomes increasingly paranoid about such things as knocks on his door and the possible ramifications of a document that he signed at the Kiev airport concerning a poetry anthology that was confiscated from him upon his arrival. The thought of Levitansky booby-trapping the manuscripts or using them as a device through which to set him up for the police goes through Harvitz’s mind. He even flirts with delusions of grandeur, imagining himself being sapped and stuffed into the back seat of a KGB staff car, and while in the Levitanskys’ apartment, he indulges in the "comical" thought of considering himself as "Agent Howard Harvitz, CIA" in response to Levitansky’s wife’s assertion that she was afraid to have him in the
apartment. Harvitz is an unwilling purveyor of repression. His comments comparing the Soviet Union with the United States are couched in terms of freedom of expression, indicating that he is sensitive to such matters. His initial consideration, however, is to stay out of jail, and in this manner, the Soviet society is able to force him into the role of a facilitator of repression. As in the case of Newman, Malamud again presents a character whose participation in the insane activity of artistic repression results in a manifestation of observably insane behavior.

The Repudiation of Human Nature in "The German Refugee"

In the short story "The German Refugee," the insanity motif is not as overt as it is in "The Letter" and "Man in the Drawer," but in the character of Oskar Gassner, Malamud does develop an individual who, having predicated his understanding of his isolation on the external forces of fascism and anti-Semitism, is unable to cope with the realization that his isolation also has an internal cause. His admission to the narrator that he had not wished for his wife to accompany him to the United States and his avowal that his wife was, "in her heart, . . . a Jew hater" (204), indicate his desire for an external explanation for his isolation. In explaining his loss of confidence to the narrator, he blames the Nazis for not only that, but also
for "whatever else [he has] lost." When word reaches him that his wife converted to Judaism after his departure and had subsequently been captured and executed by the Nazis, he commits suicide, apparently out of the realization that his own actions had played an integral part in the fates of himself and his wife. Gassner was no longer able to place the responsibility for his condition and his life solely on the heinous acts of the Nazis. His own responses to the pervasive atmosphere of fear and suspicion elicited by the Nazis' persecution of the Jews, his suspicion and repudiation of his wife, were also factors that gave rise to his isolation.

Martin Goldberg, the narrator, seems to have a rudimentary understanding of Gassner's condition, suggesting once that Gassner might want to talk to a psychiatrist for help in extricating himself from his creative malaise. Gassner refuses, telling Goldberg that a previous experience with psychoanalysis yielded "just the usual drek." The evocation of psychoanalysis is appropriate to the story because Gassner's dismissal and denigration of the practice is indicative of his inability to partake of any activity that would require an examination or analysis of the role that his own actions and decisions played in his arrival at his current situation, while simultaneously providing psychoanalytic parameters for the interaction between the two men. Instead of dealing with their actual situations in
life, both Gassner and Goldberg transfer their concerns to Gassner's scheduled lecture and its subject material.

As a critic and journalist, Gassner is more of a proponent of art than an artist, but the constrictive conditions that he finds himself in result in a situation closely related to that of Teddy or Levitansky. He is isolated geographically from Germany and isolated culturally and linguistically from the United States. Gassner exhibits certain characteristics of a schlemiel; his separation from societal and cultural structures places him in a position from which he can redefine Martin Goldberg's understanding of the world.

In his first comment as the narrator of the story, Goldberg refers to himself as being "in those days . . . a poor student [who] would brashly attempt to teach anybody anything for a buck an hour." He adds to this the rather cynical clause; "I have since learned better." This passage conveys both the idealism of youth and the disillusion of maturity. While Gassner is affected by the aggressively destructive forces of intolerance and repression in his homeland and by his own ignorance of other cultures and languages, which can render even the most erudite individual situationally illiterate, it is Goldberg's inability to deal effectively with Gassner as a person that Malamud seems to express most strongly.
Gassner's livelihood depends on his preparing and delivering a lecture on Walt Whitman, and this lecture becomes a metaphor for Gassner's life—not in the literary sense, but in the sense that the lecture provides both himself and Goldberg with an alternative conduit for interpersonal interaction. The lecture is elevated to the level of Gassner's life itself when he informs Goldberg of his intention to end his life if the lecture is not completed successfully. Goldberg is finally able to move Gassner out of the intellectual and emotional doldrums not by attending to matters germane to Gassner the individual, but to Gassner the lecturer. When Gassner presents his lecture, Goldberg has become so entrenched in his transference that he hears only the phonetic elements. It is ironic that while the lecture deals with Walt Whitman, certainly one of the more human and humane of poets, Goldberg fails to understand one of Wordsworth's basic aesthetic guidelines, that poets "do not write for Poets alone, but for men" (383). He forsakes the humanity of both the poetry and the presenter, and evaluates the lecture only in terms of its presentation: "[Gassner's] enunciation wasn't at all bad—a few s's for th's, and once he said "bag" for "back" (211).

Goldberg's experience with Gassner is similar to Newman's experience with Teddy and Harvitz's with Levitansky in that the individuals seeking expression obtain it as much
through their influence on the other characters as through their literary creations. While the plot synopses of Levitansky's stories give the reader pertinent information regarding their content, Teddy's letter is blank, and the reader gets only a cursory idea of the thesis of Gassner's lecture. In each of the stories, the created objects (Teddy's letter, Levitansky's manuscripts and Gassner's lecture) represent the force that effects the redefinition of the intellectual environments of Newman, Harvitz, and Goldberg. Viewed in this manner, the artists in these stories are not only creators, but created. Their lives serve the same purpose as their creations in that both affirm the Wordsworthian artistic spirit inherent in nature.

The Isolation of the Artist in

A New Life and The Tenants

In a more extensive manner, Malamud also examines the dynamic forces of these two short stories in two of his novels, A New Life and The Tenants. The setting for A New Life is the fictional state Cascadia, located in the verdant Northwest. A certain irony is noticeable in that the English faculty of Cascadia College is engaged in an enthusiastic pursuit of the status quo (symptomatic of a particularly non-Wordsworthian understanding of the intellectual process) not only within geographically "natural" environs, but in conjunction with pronounced
personal idiosyncracies as well. The faculty's desire for "normality" highlights these individual peculiarities. Sy Levin provides a disruptive force in that he is a new addition to the English faculty, and he brings with him an idealistic enthusiasm and desire to expand and enhance the role of literature within the curriculum. Levin’s actions and expressions of purpose are met with resistance by both Gilley, his immediate supervisor, and by Fairchild, the head of the English department because of the threat that they pose to the stasis in the English department at Cascadia. This situation is particularly ironic, since literature has a disruptive effect on the status quo, forcing individuals to think, to examine, and to question. As proponents of literature as a discipline, the English faculty at Cascadia should be aware and supportive of this role of literature, but Malamud presents a group of faculty members whose confinement in the prison of apathy visits a pall of lethargy and mediocrity upon the academic milieu. Levin’s first professional encounter with Gilley occurs while Gilley is busy working on his "picture book of American lit," which he is preparing to correct the problem that most students "can’t tell Herman Melville from the Smith Brothers on the cough drop box." This action can be seen as a perpetuation of the apathetic condition prevalent in the faculty. There is evidently a strong desire among faculty members to wrap themselves in that which is comfortable and static (the
physical images of great authors) in order to protect themselves from that which is challenging and dynamic (the works and ideas of great authors).

In addition, Professor Fairchild's misguided, yet apparently sincere, explanation of the English department's role at Cascadia partakes strongly of the miasma of apathy that seems to engulf the liberal arts. His assertion that the need for "foresters, farmers, engineers, agronomists, fish-and-game people, and every sort of extension agent" is superior to the need for English majors is based on an arbitrarily materialistic basis—that one cannot "fell a tree, run a four-lane highway over a mountain, or build a dam with poetry" (40). The criteria of practicality and economic necessity are faulty choices for a comparison of value between the hard sciences and technology and the liberal arts, because they predetermine a result favoring the mundane over the aesthetic, the physical over the intellectual, the conceptual over the perceptual. As an individual seeking conformity within the confines of rationality, Fairchild would find the consistency inherent in such a predetermination a powerful argument against the radical influences of the liberal arts. The motif of psychological aberration is evident here—Fairchild has an almost paranoid fear of the initiation of a liberal arts program at Cascadia. He refers to previous mentioning of such a development as "false alarms," eliciting the idea
that the possibility of his being called on to produce English majors would be a negative occurrence, a cause for alarm. This aversion to being forced by Levin into an active, as opposed to a passive role in the academic process, can be seen as a manifestation of latent anxiety. His lip service to the value of English majors ("I was one myself") has a particularly hollow ring—being "for" English majors should be a given for the head of an English department. By giving voice to something that for Levin should literally go without saying, Fairchild indicates his own discomfort with his position, a discomfort that might well arise from the tension inherent in forsaking his intellectual indoctrination in the liberal arts for the comfort and consistency of the status quo.

A similar psychological pattern can be seen in the case of Gilley. A cursory Freudian examination of his cutting out pictures of literary figures with "a pair of shears with blades a foot long" (31) for his picture book of American literature presents a symbolic castration, removing the vitality from and domesticating the primal forces in literature. A logical extension of the castration motif can be seen in Gilley's neurotic fixation with the superficial elements of literature. His placing more importance on the authors' pictures than on their texts seems to be indicative of the gelded nature of the liberal arts at Cascadia. There is a certain sense of reciprocity in that while Gilley is
busy symbolically emasculating the preeminent figures in American literature, Levin develops and consummates a relationship with Pauline, Gilley's wife. Levin makes a cuckold of Gilley, and as a personification of the vitality of artistic integrity, supplants Gilley first in the masculine role of lover, and subsequently in the roles of family provider and supporter.

Levin is not an artist in the sense of Levitansky, Gassner, or even Teddy. He is not a creator per se, but rather an advocate of that which has been created. While this might technically prevent his being an "artist as schlemiel," he still fits Wisse's definition of the schlemiel character. He functions apart from his societal environment, in this case, Cascadia's academic environment. There is an intellectual distance between himself and his bureaucratic superiors in the English department. This distance both prevents his corruption and allows him the affirmation that serves as a powerful indictment of the academic apathy at Cascadia. Granted, Levin does not effect major changes in Cascadia's English department; he leaves it in basically the same intellectual condition in which he encountered it. His affirmation is evident in his redefinition of his own existence. He is assaulted by the forces of apathy, and while he does not vanquish them, he withdraws from the conflict with his self-respect, a family (wrested from Gilley), and perhaps most important, his
intellectual integrity and the attendant knowledge that he had successfully resisted the constraining forces of intellectual apathy in place at Cascadia.

The final verbal exchange between Gilley and Levin ends with Gilley questioning Levin's ability to deal with the responsibilities that he will incur if he takes Pauline and the children away with him. The argument is somewhat extended, but its crux lies in Gilley's final question: "Why take that load on yourself?" Although the issue in question is practical—supplanting another individual's role in a family structure does entail certain responsibilities—Levin's terse answer has a strong intellectual foundation. The answer, "Because I can, you son of a bitch," gives voice to the basic idea regarding the liberal arts that Malamud seems to hold. Humans have the ability to function at an intellectual level beyond quotidian necessity. This level of activity grows out of the choice to pursue what an individual is able to do, not out of a response to external forces. The liberal arts celebrate this choice of activity over passivity, and by extension, perception over conception. The affirmation that Levin attains develops out of his perception of the role of the liberal arts in the academic community. His actions in support of this belief result in a clear delineation of what Wordsworth and Malamud see as natural perception redeeming humanity from the
conceptualized necessity of maintaining the status quo in the intellectual, political or religious communities.

It is Levin's ultimate understanding of his situation—that he is a principled man and a possessor of academic integrity isolated within an intellectually corrupt environment—that precipitates his leaving Cascadia. His isolation is a result of his perception of the artistic and intellectual process, and his solution circumvents the threat that this isolation presents to his own intellectual integrity, allowing him to escape the constraining environs of apathy and political expediency. In the action of his departure, he creates a new perception of himself, yet this new perception is possible only because his intellectual honesty was refined and solidified—created, in a sense—by the academic environment of Cascadia College.

In The Tenants, Malamud provides a different example of the dynamic effects of the interaction between isolation and artistic expression. In this novel, Malamud's characters and situations represent the quintessence of the conditions germane to artistic expression. Harry Lesser lives in abject conditions within the confines of the urban environment. This sort of environment is common enough among Malamud's characters; what sets Lesser apart is that he has made a conscious choice to live and write in the environment of the dilapidated, condemnable tenement building. He has become isolated as the other tenants have
moved on, and while the actions of the other tenants that initially isolate him are beyond his control, he does exercise his will in his attempts to maintain his condition. The disruption of his isolation by Willie Spearmint brings a dynamic flux to the stasis that Lesser seeks. Lesser's interactions with Willie affect his writing process, serving as first as a distraction, then as a venue for artistic introspection, then as a causal factor in his novel's destruction.

As a writer, Lesser perceives himself as so much a part of his environment that he is unwilling to separate himself from it. In a sense, Lesser's environment is representative of his commitment to the artistic process. On a superficial level, Lesser could view himself and his creative capabilities as having developed out of the environment, and if this is the case, his artistic integrity would be well-served by maintaining the consistency of it. He argues that he "could not leave in the middle of a book," that if he did, it would "take six months to overcome the distraction and get back to work" (17). On a more profound level, however, Lesser could perceive his choice to refuse more comfortable living arrangements, even when this possibility is enhanced by Levenspiel's recurring offers of monetary incentives to leave, as a substantiation of his dedication to the artistic process, a psychological necessity in a man who sees his work in progress as the ultimate test of his
fitness as a writer. While he predicates the legitimacy of his artistic expression on his being able to maintain it in the face of the physically disruptive elements inherent in the abject conditions of the building, he might actually be attempting to base his artistic viability on his ability to place it mentally in a position superior to that of the nagging distractions of Levenspiel's money.

Lesser's standard for fidelity to his artistic idealism delineates him as the character who is perhaps the most fiercely attentive to the creative process in Malamud's fiction. Lesser has it within his power, unlike many of Malamud's other characters, to effect an improvement in his physical and economic condition. Lesser must actively pursue the continuation of his condition by repeatedly refusing Levenspiel's offers of money and other attempts to remove him from the property. Since Lesser predicates his action on his desire to maintain his artistic integrity, his identity, as it is made manifest in his actions, can be seen as being created by the artistic process.

As creations of an adherence to an intellectual and artistic ideal, both Levin and Lesser function outside the parameters of socially sanctioned reasonable behavior, and therefore beyond the understanding of more practical-minded characters. In much the same way that Gilley expresses his incredulity at Levin's repudiating his job and leaving with Pauline and the children in his sincere but naive
interrogative ("Why take that load on yourself?"). Levenspiel is unable to understand Lesser's recalcitrance in accepting a monetary settlement and mistakes Lesser's assertions regarding his dedication to artistic integrity as a ploy to increase the amounts of Levenspiel's offers. Ironically, the affirmation of both Levin and Lesser arises not from their being understood, but from their being misunderstood. The necessity for the redefinition that they effect in their spheres of existence is particularly poignant in that even after the redefinition is accomplished, those individuals irremediably entrenched in arbitrary, societally conceptual frameworks remain blissfully unaware of the ramifications.
NOTES

1 James A. Notopoulos, The Platonism of Shelley (New York: Octagon, 1969) p. 17. While Shelley is the primary focus of Notopoulos's examination, he makes the claim that Wordsworth's aesthetics are particularly Platonic.

2 Unless otherwise noted, the prose sections cited are from William Wordsworth, Selected Prose, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).


CHAPTER V

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ROMANTIC THOUGHT

IN WORDSWORTH AND MALAMUD

The writings of Malamud and Wordsworth indicate that both writers held distinct, well-developed political theories. The writer's approaches to the discipline of politics arise from the intellectual positions of the artists, and as a result, partake strongly of the role of art in the human experience and in the disruptive effects that governmental action and policy can have on both art and human existence. The political philosophies of Malamud and Wordsworth are not as evident or well-developed as their artistic ideologies, but both writers recognize the nature of the social milieus within which artistic expression occurs. As a result, the political ideologies of both writers is ancillary to their aesthetic ideology.

The political ideologies of Malamud and Wordsworth differ from their aesthetic ideas in that while their aesthetics are basically parallel, the relationship between their politics is complementary. This observation can be seen as a validation of the sanctity of artistic expression. Art, the focus of their aesthetic ideology, remains constant as an expression of the immutable natural order, while their
responses to political situations remain in flux in order to apprehend the vagaries of political systems.

Both Charles W. Roberts and Edward Niles Hooker cite Wordsworth's "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" as the document that most clearly reveals his political ideology.¹ There is evidence that Wordsworth based the politics evident in this letter on contemporary political theory. The influences of Godwin, Paine, Priestly, Fawcett, Tooke, and Thelwall are particularly evident (Hooker 522). In an article that attempts to refute Roberts's claim that Wordsworth's politics were appropriations of the basic ideas put forth in William Godwin's Political Justice,² Hooker refines this list considerably, making a convincing case for Paine's "Rights of Man" and "Common Sense" as the primary bases for Wordsworth's political positions (525). If the argument is examined in terms of the poet's stylistics, there is additional support for Hooker's position. Paine adheres to a style similar to Wordsworth's own use of common language. Eric Foner says Paine achieved success in both political science and literature, describing Paine's style as "clear, simple and straightforward; his arguments rooted in the common experiences of mass readership" (xvi); this is an observation that is applicable to Wordsworth as well.

Several letters between Wordsworth and his college friend William Mathews in the early 1790s indicate Wordsworth's political views.³ The subject of these letters
was the possible development, by Wordsworth, Mathews and others of their acquaintance, of a "monthly Miscellany," a journal of liberal opinion tentatively entitled The Philanthropist. In a letter to Mathews dated 23 May 1794, Wordsworth delineated what he felt to be the appropriate political tone of the magazine.

Of each other's political sentiments we ought not be ignorant . . . I am of that odious class of men called democrats, and of that class I shall for ever continue. In work like that of which we are speaking, it will be impossible . . . not to inculcate principles of government and forms of social order of one kind or another. (66)

Roberts speculates that Mathews's response was equally political and suggested a particularly radical agenda (86). Wordsworth's next letter included a more precise statement of his disinclination to violent revolution, a philosophical position that Roberts attributes to Wordsworth's "natural timidity or conservatism" (91). Hooker interprets a similar lack of radicalism in "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff." He believes that in this correspondence, Wordsworth distances himself from Godwinian radicalism and aligns himself with a more moderate approach to private property and the existence of a centralized civil authority. These expressions of moderation indicate that Wordsworth was
closer ideologically to liberal humanism than he was to radicalism.

Wordsworth maintains one relatively radical position in this basically moderate letter. In response to the Bishop’s position on the violence involved in the French revolution, Wordsworth defends the killing of Louis XVI, expressing sympathy in a distinctly indirect manner:

They [thinking and feeling men] are sorry that the prejudice and weakness of mankind have made it necessary to force an individual into an unnatural situation, which requires more than human talents and human virtues and at the same time precludes him from attaining even a moderate knowledge of common life, and from feeling a particular share in the interests of mankind. (142)

A reciprocal sentiment regarding political structure appears in Malamud’s *The Fixer* (1967). Yakov Bok’s ultimate perception of the injustice that he has experienced is that there is "no such thing as an unpolitical man . . . you can’t sit still and see yourself destroyed" (335). As dissimilar as Louis XVI and Bok may be, they are regarded by the respective writers as being subordinated to some external system. It is evident, at least in the context of Malamud’s novel, that if justice were attainable in Czarist Russia, it lay beyond the grasp of individuals who shared Bok’s religion and socioeconomic status. A less patent
observation is made by Wordsworth in his assessment of Louis XVI. Wordsworth seems less distressed by the death of Louis XVI than by the existence of a system that forces individuals to violate their own natures. In this sense, both the common Bok and the regal Louis XIV are the victims of corrupting political structures. The political ideologies of Wordsworth and Malamud parallel their aesthetics in this case because of the effects that external societal and governmental forces have on individual freedom.

A key element of Wordsworth's defense of deadly violence as an inescapable eventuality in political revolution (particularly in the French Revolution) that he presents in the "Llandaff" letter is that political violence is a reciprocal action; the apparatuses of terror and violence that oppress the masses make those masses capable of incorporating terror and violence in a just pursuit of an improved political climate:

Alas! the obstinacy and perversion of men is such that [liberty] is too often obligated to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence. (142)

In book XIII of The Prelude, the remaining vestiges of Wordsworth's political militancy are assimilated into the overarching romanticism of his poetic desire to align his
writing closely with the language and issues of common individuals:

The promise of the present time retired
Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes,
Ambitious virtues pleased me less, I sought
For present good in life's familiar face
And thereon built my hopes of good to come.

(XIII.59-63)

This shift in poetic focus does not represent a desire on Wordsworth's part to remove himself from the arena of political exchange or an intellectual retreat from matters of social justice. Wordsworth's narrator decides to forego his "sanguine schemes," opting instead for a more introspective confrontation with the established order.

"Inspect the basis of the social Pile:
Enquire," said I, "how much of mental Power
And genuine virtue they possess who live
By bodily toil, labour exceeding far
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
Ourselves entail . . . (XIII.94-100)

The poet's decision here is not predicated on a desire to adopt a less confrontational approach to what he perceived as legitimate criticism of the government. Rather, it has its basis in his understanding of his particular capabilities. The use of physical violence in political
revolution—reversing the force of oppression into the force of rebellion—is paralleled in Wordsworth's poetic endeavors.

Wordsworth desired to address the existing social situation and to bring about through the poetry his "hopes of good to come." In the "Preface to The Excursion," he indicates that he will need "a greater Muse," for what Abrams refers to as his "[shifting] to a new province the challenge to his audacity." Wordsworth's withdrawal from militancy, therefore, did not signal a withdrawal from his political activism, which continued to be a central focus for his intellectual and creative pursuits. In 1833, Wordsworth told the American Orville Dewey, that even though the world knew him primarily as a poet, he "had given twelve hours of thought to the conditions and prospects of society, for one to poetry" (90).

Wordsworth's poetry of the common individual is far from apolitical, and its political nature is, by and large, indicative of his overarching romanticism. The literary treatment of quotidian elements and individuals in society necessitates attention to the conditions extant in common existence that result from the thoughts and actions of the political and social structures. Abrams finds evidence of this transition in Wordsworth's perception of the political milieu in The Prelude (Natural 404). The narrator describes
his "destined poetic enterprise" to be to turn from "... . . .
Men / Who thrust themselves on the passive world / As
Rulers of the world . . . ." (XIII.67-8) in order to acquire
"A more judicious knowledge of the worth / and dignity of
individual Man, . . . ." (XIII.80-1).

Malamud's Political Ideas As a Complement
to Wordsworth's: An Aversion
to "Preachment"

Malamud's political theory is complementary to
Wordsworth's, as he indicates.

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 artistry.

(Wershba M.2)

The moderation implied here serves as a seminal point
for an examination of the complementary nature of political
philosophies of Wordsworth and Malamud. Both writers
perceive an activist role for the artist, but it is an
activist role that requires a delicate balance between the
artistic and the political. As humanists, Wordsworth and
Malamud have aesthetic ideologies that are designed to meet
a particular political agenda.

Wordsworth, however, is apparently less willing to
insulate the aesthetic from the political than is Malamud.
In chapter two of this dissertation, I cited Parrish's attention to Wordsworth's stated desire to "put into each man's hand a lantern to guide him." In both that chapter and in Parrish's *Art of the Lyrical Ballads*, that quotation is used in relation to the aesthetic implications of Wordsworth's attempt to reveal the force of nature through the poetry. The quote has an alternative context as well—it is taken from Wordsworth's 1794 letter to William Mathews that was designed to promulgate his political philosophy. This dual context indicates Wordsworth's perception that artistic expression would further aesthetics and politics collaterally. This idea is evident in the following passage from *The Prelude*:

How Glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
To look through all the frailties of the world,
And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
Infirmaries of nature, time, and place,
Build social upon personal Liberty,
Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
Superior, magisterially adopts
One guide, the light of circumstances flashed
Upon an independent intellect. (XI.236-44)

The "independent intellect" is a valid basis for either political or artistic endeavor. By placing overt political commentary within artistic parameters, however, Wordsworth demonstrates a different philosophy regarding the
relationship between the political and the aesthetic than does Malamud.

Wordsworth's extolling of social liberty based on personal liberty in *The Prelude* and Malamud's admonition against the artist's engaging in "ministerial" artistic pursuits could be considered contradictory rather than complementary were it not for the difference in the historic and political milieus of the two writers. The power and centralization of the British monarchy provided Wordsworth with a central entity of oppression of both aesthetic and political ideas. The constitutional republic of mid-twentieth century America, however, presented Malamud with different mechanisms of oppression. Wordsworth comments in the "Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads"*\(^7\) that the nation was in need of "an improved education of the middle and upper classes," indicating that democratic reform would benefit from higher levels of quantity and quality in education and information. Wordsworth's political ideology is sound here; it is axiomatic that true democracy benefits from an inquisitive and informed populace. Conversely, as the examples of government's role in artistic expression mentioned in chapter four indicate, it is necessary for more authoritarian regimes to abolish or strictly control activities predicated on the acquisition and dispersion of knowledge and ideas. The free exchange of ideas has detrimental effects on the absolutist environment and
authoritarian governmental structures. The dynamic relationship between the populace and the government in the relatively democratic system within which Malamud wrote, however, resulted in a juxtaposition of artist and potential audience that differs from Wordsworth's speculations regarding the role of the education of the populace.

A basic irony of American democracy is that while the democratic system is championed by most artists and intellectuals, the very nature of its egalitarianism denigrates the existence of artists and intellectuals (Hofstader 51). American democracy, therefore, presented Malamud with the necessity of developing a political ideology in relation to his aesthetics that Wordsworth did not face. The empowerment of the populace resulted in dual apparatuses of repression. Formal and informal societal structures are both outgrowths of the political dynamics of democracy. They are, however, suspicious of the possible undermining effects that artistic and intellectual activity could have on their share of political power. Hofstader proposes that the basis of this situation is that Jacksonian democracy has effected an irreparable rift in the relationship between art and democracy and has removed the idea of a symbiotic relation art and democracy from the American political consciousness.

... literature and learning [have been] stigmatized as the prerogative of useless
aristocracies . . . It [seems] to be the goal of the common man in America to build a society that [shows] how much [can] be done without literature and learning . . . . (51)

This concept of the frivolity and irrelevance of artistic expression by the mainstream of the American populace indicates a pathology in the democratic system that is antithetical to the effective perception of artistic or intellectual pursuits. Utility, because of its quantifiable nature, has provided an American populace anxious to validate free-market capitalism with criteria that can be applied directly to economic development. This results-oriented mentality has, at least as it appears in Malamud’s description of the mission of Cascadia College in *A New Life* (1961), supplanted intellectualism as the effective evaluative medium of expression.⁸

This schism seems to be at the crux of Malamud’s determination that attempts at artistic evangelism ultimately undermine the artistry. The perceived value of the common individual, both aesthetically and politically, is no different in the post-Jacksonian Malamud than in the pre-Jacksonian Wordsworth. The difference lies in the common individual’s rejection of the artistic product, and this rejection is based not on any lessening in the value of the individual, but on the individual basing his or her reaction to art on a faulty socially-mandated determination.
Malamud's assessment of this irony, and his determination to maintain an artistic as opposed to an overtly political intellectual position in relation to it, is legitimately Wordsworthian in that he attempts to "look through the frailties of the world" and maintain an artistic constant.

The most obvious irony of artistic expression in post-World War II America was that the country ostensibly celebrated and revered the first amendment, yet it simultaneously fostered an environment that resulted in an egregious insult to the amendment in the form of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The fear and suspicion in the American culture that gave rise to this phenomenon was the quintessence of anti-intellectualism, and did not escape Malamud's notice or comment in A New Life:

The country was frightened silly of Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers, Communist spies and Congressional committees, flying saucers and fellow travellers, their friends and associates, and those who asked them for a match or the time of day. Intellectuals, scientists, teachers were investigated by numerous committees and if found to be good Americans were asked to sign loyalty oaths. Democracy was defended by cripples who crippled it. (229)

The motif of the dichotomies in American democracy is evident in this passage; the country is frightened by actual
men and imagined extraterrestrials, committees and the
targets of those committees, the dignity of unspoken loyalty
and the enervation of the loyalty oath, the "cripples"
defending the country and the crippling effects of that
defense. In a similar dichotomy, Malamud makes a definite
political statement about the ideological environment of the
time in what is ostensibly an academic novel: that "America
was, in the best sense of a bad term, un-American" (95).

A situation that is less ironic, and seems in line with
Malamud's determination that effective art cannot assume a
ministerial role, is that while freedom of expression
invites social commentary, there is a seductive element to
that invitation. A focus on social commentary can cause
artists to forego nature as an impetus for artistic
expression and gravitate too strongly toward a transparent
treatment of issues relating to socio-political inequity and
injustice. In this sense, artistic attention to even just
social and political concerns can undermine art because this
activity allows the societal and governmental structures a
role in setting, even negatively, the artistic agenda.
"Preachment" in art, as Malamud sees it, is a reaction to
the prevailing social environment. The result, therefore,
is an act of conception as opposed to perception.

This particular aesthetic position of Malamud cannot,
however, be interpreted as an admonition to artists to
insulate themselves from matters of inequity and injustice
in society. Malamud's own perception of the role of the artist ("to keep civilization from destroying itself") indicates a decidedly activist course for those engaged in the pursuit of artistic expression, and a great deal of the scholarship written in response to his prose--particularly that of Alter, Bilik, Malin and Tanner--is based on the social criticism evident in his choices of plot, character and theme. Malamud's focus on the artistic quality of expression, however, separates him from earlier politically active writers, whom Walter B. Rideout describes as

... not really novelists at all, but tractarians [who] simply "sloganized" their endings as they had sloganized their characters throughout, flatly asserting a doctrinal message in their own persons or through inadequately concealed mouthpieces. [Some] were less obvious in their methods, but nevertheless ended with the clenched fist of revolutionary hope whether it was consistent with the preceding action or not. (223-24)

Malamud's aesthetics and political ideology are aligned in a manner that is highly suggestive of Wordsworth's understanding of the need for a greater Muse. In his strict attendance to the perception of nature as the prime motivator in artistic expression, Malamud provides an effective venue for artistic treatment of appropriate social concerns. Only by remaining cognizant of the relationship
between art and nature can the artist effectively address and ameliorate the adverse social conditions perceived by Malamud to be harbingers of what he sees as civilization's destruction.

Malamud's aversion to preachment in his writing is evident in the context of political ideology in the relatively few examples of overt oppressive governmental structures that he includes in his fiction. When he does address governmental structures, he assiduously attaches them to an artistic context. It is perhaps no coincidence that the short stories that partake most strongly of political oppression—"The German Refugee" and "The Man in the Drawer"—are also among the works that yield themselves up most readily to examination as aesthetic statements.

Schulz defends Malamud's prose against the comments made by Klien and Roth regarding the lack of "realistic specificity" in The Natural by invoking the aesthetic elements extant in what Schulz calls a "resolutely realistic" novel, The Assistant (1957). The non-definition of place and time in The Assistant, according to Schulz, allows "the mythic superstructure to assume great thematic importance . . . [where] characters and incidents are easily abstracted into symbols and universals" (61). Even though Schulz is correct in his assessment of the lack of specificity in the chronological and geographic settings for The Assistant, he attempts to posit a general set of
chronological parameters by referring to the setting of the novel as a "depression milieu" (56). Some of Bober's comments, however, indicate political and economic conditions that I see as placing the novel in a later time frame. Bober's insistence on paying Vogle cash for the liverwurst and wieners because "from a German he wanted no favors," (4) could indicate Bober's reaction to the atrocities of Nazi Germany and his comment to Frank that "the chain store kills the small man" (37) could indicate his perceptions of the economies of scale in post-World War II America. The subtlety of these remarks do as much to perpetuate the "vagueness" that Schulz refers to as they do to alleviate it, but it is apparent that Bober is a multidimensional character--aware of, and responsive to, the political and economic forces in his environment.

Malamud's Perception of Oppressive Political Systems

Malamud's conviction to the supremacy of art over preaching does not lessen the impact of his social commentary. In "The Loan," Bessie, the wife of the baker Lieb, registers her distress at Lieb's decision to lend money to an old friend for his wife's headstone in a brief
but revealing recount of the political oppression that she has encountered:

... the Bolsheviki came when she was a little girl and dragged her beloved father into the snowy fields without shoes; the shots scattered the blackbirds in the trees and the snow oozed blood...

... and how she... years later found sanctuary in the home of an older brother in Germany, who sacrificed his own chances to send her, before the war, to America, and himself ended, with his wife and daughter, in one of Hitler's incinerators. (190)

Malamud addresses the oppression to which Bessie has been subjected on his own aesthetic terms. What could have possibly been a passage simply meant to provide a rationale for Bessie's suspicion and recalcitrance explains her actions while simultaneously providing a powerful description of inhumanity and injustice.

The fact that Bessie's tale of grief indicts both the Bolsheviks of Russia and the National Socialists of Germany is most probably not an attempt at political balance. Throughout the Malamud canon, the political structures that are attacked as oppressive are more societal than political. Bessie's father is killed by forces of the left, and her brother is killed by forces of the right, but they are both victims of political movements that found the demagoguery
and suspicion inherent in anti-semitism to be an effective apparatus for solidifying and maintaining public support. Since this technique of political expedience is evident on both ends of the political spectrum, Malamud's condemnation of these injustices seems to be directed toward the societal forces that make fear and mistrust readily accessible to those in political power who seek to enhance and solidify that power.

The commentary in Malamud's prose seems to be an attempt to reconcile Wordsworth's "lamp" metaphor and his own interpretation of the writer's role in keeping humanity "from destroying itself." The characters and situations in Malamud's fiction provide paradigms designed to guide humanity away from the direction of civilization's destruction. These paradigms address two of the four social conditions (social injustice and necessity) that he mentions as the elements of the human condition that are the imprisoning forces of mankind's existence (Malamud 12). The other two conditions Malamud mentions, apathy and ignorance, are intensifiers of social injustice and necessity and provide a fertile medium for prejudice, anti-intellectualism, and the blind pursuit of materialistic success that are manifestations of the expediency with which societal entities exploit matters of injustice and necessity.
The Fixer, for example, is described by Bilik as Malamud's most political novel (49). What develops in Malamud's description of Yakov Bok's unjust conviction and incarceration, however, is a sense of the synergistic relationship between the totalitarianism of pre-revolutionary Russia and rampant anti-semitism fueled by fear and superstition. The totalitarian state benefited from the existence of this particular social injustice because it provided a venue for directing the focus of the oppressed populace away from the oppressive force and toward an expedient scapegoat. The populace was rewarded for its attitude toward Jews by having the auspices of the government (i.e. the prison and court systems) validate what they, because of their anti-Semitism, held to be true.

During the funeral for the boy whom Bok will eventually be accused of murdering, pamphlets bearing the message "We accuse the Jews" swirl through the air around the mourners. The plural usage indicates that the indictment falls not on a single perpetrator, but on an entire group of people--Bok's guilt or innocence is of little consequence; he is a Jew, and one Jew will apparently do as well as any other. Later, the Kiev Union of Russian People, along with the Black Hundreds, place a wooden cross on boy's grave, and call on "all good Christians . . . to preach a new crusade against the Israelitic enemies" (68). The fear of a pogrom results in Bok's aborted attempt to flee Kiev and his
subsequent indictment for the crime. The agencies of the Czarist government that arrest and incarcerate Bok are conspicuously selective in their administration of the will of the people. The people of Kiev called for the arrest of a Jew, and the government provided one with alacrity, apparently satisfied to have the attention of the populace diverted from Nicholas II's regime in such a convenient manner. When Grubeshov, the prosecuting attorney, informs Bok that the Tsar is convinced of the fixer's guilt, he fails to provide substantive support for his statement. He does not produce the letter he claims to have received, and relates the pertinent information "from memory" (221). The assurances that Grubeshov gives the fixer of the Tsar's "sensitivity" and extraordinary powers of intuition are read as an attempt by the prosecutor to overwhelm Bok with a false appeal to absolute authority. Rather than substantiate the existence of the Tsar's involvement, the passage leaves the impression that the Tsar's lack of knowledge of Bok's case is surpassed only by his lack of concern about it.

Yakov Bok is a traditionally romantic character, a common man who leaves his environment and who encounters and is ultimately destroyed by the corruption existent in a social structure that he does not understand and to which he cannot adapt.
Roy Hobbs, Harry Lesser and
Morris Bober: The Conflict
With Capitalism

Roy Hobbs is not destroyed by a formal governmental structure, or by organized baseball, but by the profiteers and gamblers who exist in a symbiotic relationship with the sport. For all of their deceit and manipulation, Goodwill Banner, Gus Sands and Max Mercy are not villains comparable to Nikolai Maximovitch or the other hate-mongers of the Black Hundreds, nor is their rigged gambling a moral offense equitable to anti-semitism. What the actions of Banner, Sands and Mercy represent, however, is the lure of expediency inherent in the capitalist system. Malamud's comment that "necessity is the primary prison" (12) would indicate that his social consciousness would be attuned to the economics involved in the pursuit of those things deemed to be "necessary," and the possible excesses attendant to systems that provide for that pursuit. While capitalism is not in and of itself corrupt, the romantic ideology involves meticulous examination of socioeconomic political phenomena because the relationship of power positions of the government and the governed result in the possibility of corruption and abuse of power in governemntally sanctioned organizational structures. Capitalism is also a system that inherently invites quantitative analysis, and its analysis
is effected with utilitarian measurements. Free-market capitalism is susceptible, therefore, to corruption not only by the intrinsic power relationship attendant to a governmental entity but also by members of the populace whose desire to attain a high level of utilitarian measurement supersedes their willingness to abide by a set of arbitrary rules. Since money can be measured objectively, and integrity cannot, the capitalists Banner, Sands, and Mercy are able to justify (at least to themselves) placing the acquisition of money above the maintenance of integrity. When Roy strikes Gus Sands in his final act of repudiation to the front office of the Knights, Memo mounts a shrill verbal defense of Sands, accosting Roy with a verbal admonition rife with capitalist overtones—"Don't touch him you big bastard. He's worth a million of your kind" (240). The pejorative "bastard" seems generically innocuous, a mere prelude for what Memo intends to be the more caustic part of her remark, that one Gus is worth a million Roys. By invoking the concept of the comparable value of humans, and then by arbitrarily making Gus worth disproportionally more, Memo is assessing a quintessentially capitalist slur to Roy and his ilk—that humans are not equal, that their value is determined by the products of their activities. Those who possess talent and opt for the pursuit of activities that do not lend themselves to measurable results are inferior to those whose
endeavors are objectively quantifiable. The apparently apolitical Roy Hobbs is ultimately unable to align himself with this rearrangement of priorities, but he does manage to rebut Memo in terms familiar to her. His comment to her, that she "act[s] all right . . . but only like a whore" (240) enrages her to the point that she attacks him physically. Memo's capitalist interpretation of Roy's rejoinder would find the questionable moral implication of prostitution a minor matter; the infuriating message for Memo is that Roy now understands the relationship, and her physical investment has not provided the anticipated returns.

While the enhancement and perpetuation of greed and avarice that develop out of the profitable alliance of ownership, gambling and the media in The Natural (1952) provide evidence of the corrupting influence of unbridled capitalism, Malamud's The Tenants (1971) provides a more positive view of a controlled capitalism that is forced to adhere to some form of regulation. Levenspiel, the owner of the building within which Lesser lives, has a capitalistic interest in having Lesser out of the building so that he can raze the decrepit brownstone and erect newer and more profitable apartments. The city statues concerning rent control and tenant rights prevent him from forcibly evicting Lesser, and even require that he provide Lesser with the modicum of utility service necessary for a meager existence.
These statutes make it possible for Lesser to resist Levenspiel's repeated attempts to purchase his cooperation in vacating the premises, requiring Levenspiel to develop a communicative relationship with Lesser. The landlord is no longer the insulated and detached capitalist; he is forced to make repeated contact with Lesser if he is to realize his own ambition. Levenspiel's contacts with Lesser are made for the most part within an environment of reason--his lack of understanding about the artistic process precludes successful arguments, but he manages to place them within a relatively humanistic framework, offering to Lesser the money and opportunity to move into more comfortable and less forbidding arrangements. The city statutes impose on Levenspiel the requirement of dealing on a human level with Lesser, and in so doing, elicit from him, albeit in a forced manner, some sense of humanism and compassion.

The situation in The Tenants not withstanding, abuses of capitalism exist in the urban economic setting, and those that victimize Morris Bober, his family, and eventually Frank Alpine in The Assistant are less acute, but no less debilitating than those encountered by Roy Hobbs. Iska Alter describes Morris Bober as a figure of static and absolute honesty in an environment of dynamic situational integrity.

In a society that elevates transience and prizes mobility, Morris . . . remains frozen and
immobile, actually as well as metaphorically going nowhere. He does not cheat. He will not steal, even in a business situation where such behavior is not only commonplace and justified, but also necessary to insure that magic word—profit. (20)

The dual-faceted nature of Bober’s refusal to move is appropriate to the geographical and ethical setting of the novel. The economic expansion that America experienced after the second world war enabled many denizens of inner-city environments to move to a more attractive life in the suburbs. This movement, while not inherently evil, was predicated on the ability of people to sever the traditional bonds of extended family, the old neighborhood, and to relocate in a location that carried with it the more superficial, yet powerfully attractive, reinforcements of status, prestige, and visibility. The desertion of the inner city was a function of the capitalist system, and the utilitarian elements of expediency attendant to it.

Bober has not moved physically from his inner-city location, nor has he moved ethically from his standard of honest, good-faith dealings in the matters of retail sales. He maintains a traditional family grocery in a neighborhood whose dwellers have gravitated away from tradition and toward upward mobility. He refuses to adapt ethically as well, subsisting in his grocery and delicatessen while Julius Karp the liquor dealer and Sam Pearl the gambler and
candy shop owner re-adjust their ethics in order to maintain a comfortable profit margin. Even though his actions are perhaps not totally altruistic (he tells Ida that he chose not to procure a liquor license because he could not afford stock [9]), Bober is uncomfortable with Ida’s suggestion that he would have made more money had he pursued the liquor business. The agitation that Morris feels does not appear to have its basis in regret over poor business planning, but rather in having his decision not to make money off people’s dependency being called into question.

In *The Natural*, *The Tenants* and *The Assistant*, Malamud portrays individuals who are victims of social and economic forces beyond their control. While Wordsworth focused his descriptions of oppressed individuals on the abuses of the monarchy, Malamud’s direction is somewhat different. The socio-economic forces in place in a capitalistic democracy are rife with possibilities of excess; and all too often, it is individuals intent on maximizing their social and economic positions who abuse those in less advantageous situations. In this sense, Malamud’s humanistic proclivities often result in his addressing the negative actions of individuals rather than governmental structures.
NOTES

1 Unless otherwise noted, the prose sections cited are from Wordsworth, William, Selected Prose ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).


12 The lack of "realistic simplicity" in Malamud's fiction is addressed by Marcus Klein in After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century, 1956; and by Philip Roth in his essay "Writing American Fiction" in volume 23 (1961) of Commentary, pp. 223-39.


CHAPTER VI

EXPERIENCE AND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROGRESS: THE INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY IN WORDSWORTH AND MALAMUD

Formal education, at least within the parameters of Wordsworth’s romanticism, undermines its own ostensible purpose in that it allows the formality of the experience to supersede its educational value. Raymond Dexter Havens, in his commentary on *The Prelude*, *The Mind of A Poet*, indicates that Wordsworth’s idea concerning education was that true education arose from an increase in the awareness of the individual brought about through experience in the physical environment (352). The key elements of the epistemological process, according to Wordsworth’s narrator in *The Prelude*, are the perceptions of nature, "... untaught things / Creative and enduring . . . " (XIII.309-10). In an 1845 letter to Seymore Tremenheere, Wordsworth poses a question regarding the relevance of a formal structure of education as opposed to the self-realization that arises from an effective perception of the natural environment.

Is not the Knowledge inculcated by the Teacher, or derived under his management, from books, too exclusively dwelt upon so as almost to put out of
sight that which comes, without being sought for, with intercourse with nature and from experience . . . (1268)

Wordsworth's reference to education as incidental to the life experience indicates his perception of the value life experience has in an individual's political or aesthetic theory and practice.

Georg Roppen maintains that "no poet in the English language has been so drawn to the journey as an imaginative structure as Wordsworth" (113). While this comment is presented as the basis of a structural analysis, the observation relates to the poet's ideology as well. Wordsworth's proclivity toward the value of the life experience in an individual's epistemology finds an effective outlet in the motif of the journey. The mythic cycle provides a framework for sensory input that results in an experience-based education for the individual involved in the journey. Archetypically, the journey provides the opportunity for the traveller to expand intellectual horizons and to function with more skill, compassion, or intelligence in response to the recurring challenges of the journey.³

In The Prelude, the expansion of intellectual horizons takes the form of an individual's awareness of nature that develops collaterally with the life experience. The freedom to pursue life experience at the expense of a more formal
educational structure is necessary, even when it violates ostensibly useful instruction and education as conceived by the societal structure. These mighty workmen of our later age,

Who, with a mighty highway, have overbridged
The mighty chaos of futurity,
Tamed to their bidding; they who have the skill
To manage books, and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with a flower; the keepers of our time,
The guides and wardens of our faculties,
Sages who in their prescience would control
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
Like engines; when will their presumption learn,
That in the unreasoning process of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us,
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings and most studious of our good,
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?
(V.349-65)

The warning against the subversion of the educational process by the forces of practicality and pragmatism is evident here, and this philosophical position is evident in Malamud's prose as well. It is possible to interpret Malamud's creation of Professor Fairchild, the results-
oriented head of the English department at Cascadia College in *A New Life* (1961), as a personification of the "guides and wardens of [the] faculties," anxious to direct the educational process into a form that yields an end-product that society can value for its standard, homogenous qualities.

Rather than assess the value of the educational process in relation to arbitrary societal norms, however, Wordsworth evaluates the educational experience by the degree to which the individual engaged with it is able to increase and enhance perception of the natural order. The awareness (or lack thereof) of the individual *vis-a-vis* the physical and ideological environment is crucial in the expression of artistic endeavor or political development. The individual's access to the elements of life experience makes awareness available. This access, therefore, is the venue through which education can most effectively be approached within the ideological context of both Wordsworth's aesthetics and politics.

Wordsworth's aesthetic decision to forego the support for armed martial revolt is discussed in the previous chapter. He instead chooses the more intellectual approach of chronicling the plight of the oppressed in order to remove the wall of ignorance that allows and perpetuates oppression. Such a choice reveals his perception of the importance of awareness on the part of individuals in the
ongoing quest for political justice. This decision delineates his alignment with major components present in the political philosophies of contemporary political theorists in relation to the role of education (in the form of the achieved awareness of the individual) in the development of a political ideology.

Abrams describes the function of freedom as being equally important to Wordsworth in The Prelude as it was to the proponents of German idealism, with "freedom and bondage (together with a variety of synonymous and related words) [being] key references in Wordsworth's narrative of the growth of his mind through perception" (Natural 367). The freedom of intellectual movement that Wordsworth perceives as necessary for the effective epistemological quest of the individual is paralleled in the pursuit of self-consciousness by consciousness that is integral to the political philosophy of Hegel. Hegel's metaphor of the "great mirror" indicates his perception that the knowledge of nature gained through an interaction with it is in actuality the knowledge of self (Hyppolite 144). The parallel in Wordsworthian and Hegelian philosophy regarding the role of nature in the intellectual development of individuals is evident in their respective intellectual responses to the French Revolution. Hegel's assessment of the French Revolution was that it was an example of an abortive attempt to achieve freedom through violent outer
revolution (Abrams *Natural* 363). The actual attainment of freedom, for the French and for humanity as well, would occur intellectually. This philosophical position seems close to the one that Wordsworth puts forth as his rationale for foregoing a call for violent action against oppression and opting instead for less sanguinary (yet in his estimation no less effective) focus on poetry as a method for pursuing political justice. The individual's freedom to pursue the sort of self-knowledge necessary for a noble and altruistic enterprise relates directly to what Northrop Frye calls the "great Romantic construct [of Hegel] ... an expanding of the consciousness which destroys the antithesis of subject and object and creates a larger identity" (112).

This particular romantic construct is crucial to Wordsworth's perception of the role of poetry in the epistemology of the individual as well. Abrams describes Wordsworth as a poet astutely aware of the necessity of the breaking down of the linear activity of merely describing nature through poetry, seeing nature as "a great deal more than its component physical objects, and that to which the mind becomes enslaved is the material thing which is the residuum of nature after it has been filtered through the merely physical eye" (*Natural* 369). In chapter XIV of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge comments on the aesthetic legitimacy of this "breaking down" motif as it relates to
his discussion of Wordsworth’s poetry in the *Lyrical Ballads*:

In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical process of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philosophy. (6)

Later, in chapter XVII, Coleridge remarks that Wordsworth "deserves all praise for both the attempt and the execution" for his attempted "reformation in our poetic diction" (34–5). Aesthetically, therefore, Wordsworth perceives the role of the representation of nature in art as transcending patent mimetic renditions of natural observations and occurrences and instead serving as the appropriate apparatus for the extension and expansion of the epistemology of the individual. In this sense, the artistic representation of nature is essential to the education of the individual, partaking of and perpetuating the expansion of the individual consciousness. Art requires the individual to perceive relationships and interactions in nature that function beyond linear interpretations. The physical elements of nature, therefore, become more than simply representations of their corporeal forms.
Wordsworth is both proponent and purveyor of the intellectual freedom necessary for the individual's intellectual journey. Coleridge's choice of the noun "reformation" as end result of what Wordsworth hoped to bring to the milieu of poetic diction is both appropriate stylistically and prescient ontologically. To reform the diction in poetry is to reform its ultimate effect on the epistemological process. Wordsworth's aesthetic choice of what Coleridge calls the "language of real life" reforms not only poetic diction into a structure more in line with the actuality of nature, it reforms the individual who comes into contact with it into one who is more capable of perceiving the implications of natural occurrences and Wordsworth's romantic philosophy, therefore, is both dependent on and supportive of the individual's ability and necessity to pursue the intellectual journey and return with a greater understanding of what he perceived to be the "mighty unity."

Enlightenment Versus Didacticism

in Malamud's Fiction

It is within this motif of the reformation of the individual through experience that Malamud most closely parallels Wordsworth. The idea of re-formation itself is addressed in Ruth Wisse's definition of the schlemiel—a character whose affirmation comes from his or her ability to
redefine his socio-economic, political, or philosophical milieu. This redefinition is not synonymous with the Wordsworthian reformation, but the character's reformed perception of his or her environment is a result of the events that redefine the character as one who is capable of that perception. This capability is a indicator of an individual who possesses what Frye calls the "larger identity."

In Malamud's prose this redefinition of the perceived natural environment results, for the most part, from the implications of a geographic, philosophical or symbolic journey. This situation, however, holds no particular relevance to Malamud's romantic philosophy because of generic strictures. The traditional plot structure of prose fiction invokes a course of action that is closely tied to the journey motif. The progression of plot from exposition to conflict to climax to dénouement requires from the genre a certain attention to the role that physical or intellectual movement plays in the development of characters and situations. Since the majority of Malamud's prose is structurally traditional (Pictures of Fidelman (1969)^5 and The Tenants (1971)^6 represent a more experimental style) the analysis of the fiction as representative of journey motifs, and therefore indicative of a correlation between Malamud's prose and the Wordsworthian romantic aesthetic, would be superficial and banal. In addition, to address the romantic
implications of understanding in terms of a character "learning something" is a similarly invalid approach to the determination of Malamud's romanticism because the plot structure of prose works that are not even patently didactic requires the expression of knowledge acquired through the development of action.

A more relevant connection to Wordsworthian romanticism in Malamud's prose exists in Malamud's ability to transcend mimetic representation of movement. In the journey motif, conditions are re-formed based on perceptions developed through the journey that provide access to individual understanding and the epistemological process. In Malamud's fiction, this process is not contained within a didactic framework; the character does not "learn" some redefining lesson. Rather, the character, in the course of movement through the action of the prose, achieves a level of self-realization that manifests itself in the character's ultimate affirmation.

Malamud's third novel, A New Life, provides a good example of his ability to present a more richly textured version of individual self-realization than is found in more obvious didacticism. Because the novel deals with issues germane to the academy and the dispersal (or lack thereof) of elements central to a liberal education, A New Life can be classified within the sub-genre of education novels. Education is a crucial matter in this novel, but there is a
particular irony in its treatment. Students, other than Nadalee Hammerstad, the young woman with whom Levin engages in a brief affair, play a small role in the novel. There is no patent linearity between those desirous of an education and those whose dedication to the status quo denies the access to that education. Instead, Levin is an individual who comes to self-realization through his attempt to establish himself as an educator, not as one seeking to be educated. It is, however, Levin's valid perception of the educational process—that it requires the freedom of intellectual movement beyond a utilitarian measurement—that results in his ability to partake of the self-realization process that develops out of his conflict with the forces of intellectual stasis. Levin's movement through the physical and intellectual environment of Cascadia provides him with the ability to discern and substantiate his own intellectual condition, ultimately affirming his expanded identity in his departure from the college.

Iska Alter's use of the Edenic myth as an image central to her treatment of A New Life in The Good Man's Dilemma is appropriate to the self-realization of Sy Levin. Her analysis of Levin's departure indicates this consistency when she describes Levin's being forced to give up teaching as "the ultimate sacrifice [for] the prophet of the Serpent's knowledge" (60). This evaluation stems from her argument that the American west (at least within Levin's
case) fails as Eden. A more romantic interpretation of the conditions involved in Levin's fleeing Cascadia with Pauline and the children, however, would find Levin continuing his journey of self-realization. In a marked difference from the biblical occurrence, Levin is driving himself (along with Pauline and her children) out of the ostensibly Edenic environment. The difference between action and passivity here indicates the validity of Levin's epistemological accomplishment. As in the Biblical scenario, the attainment of knowledge is the proximal cause for the separation of the Edenic environment, but as Alter indicates, Cascadia is a false Eden, an environment where the lack of challenge to the established order is conceived as the imprimatur of validity for the established order.

Levin is capable of movement (both physically and intellectually) beyond that of the Cascadia faculty. Gilley's quasi-triumphant call of "Got your picture!" (367) to the departing Levin and Pauline provides a last pathetic reminder of the conditions at Cascadia; Gilley captures Levin and Pauline within the static condition of the photograph, managing to do symbolically what Cascadia's English department could not do in actuality. Levin's epistemological journey re-forms him as an individual with sufficient freedom to allow him the pursuit of a future in an unknown, uncertain environment. It is this sort of
freedom that Wordsworth’s narrator in *The Prelude* describes as being critical to a life of intellectual expansion:

Oft when the dazzling shew no longer new
Had ceased to dazzle, ofttimes did I quit
My Comrades, leave the Crowd, buildings and
groves,
And as I paced alone the level fields
Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
With which I had been conversant, the mind
Drooped not, but there into herself returning
With prompt rebound, seemed fresh as heretofore.

(III.90-7)

This Wordsworthian re-formation of the protagonists’ "larger identity" in Malamud’s prose is a recurring phenomenon, yet the ultimate condition of the character does not necessarily result in the positive situation found at the end of *A New Life*.

The "Larger Identity": Enlightenment and Affirmation

Of Malamud’s eight novels, four (*The Assistant* [1957], *A New Life*, *Pictures of Fidelman* and *Dubin’s Lives* [1979]) provide the protagonist with a positive future and the ability to continue in the pursuit of self-realization. Even within these four, only two, *Pictures of Fidelman* and *Dubin’s Lives* leave the protagonist in a situation of
relative intellectual comfort and resolution. Fidelman, after returning to the United States, finds his artistic self-realization not as a great artist or art critic, but as a craftsman. While in Italy, however, he had sought out sexual exploits with a fervor similar to his artistic curiosity. He continues after his return to love "men and women" apparently in response to his lover Beppo’s admonition regarding the creative process "If you can’t invent art, invent life." He has attained affirmation through his self-realization that in relation to art, he is a craftsman, no more or less, and he is still afforded the capability to expand his creative and emotional boundaries through his continued erotic pursuits.

A similar situation can be seen at the conclusion of Dubin’s Lives. Dubin realizes that in order to be true to himself, he cannot dissolve his relationship with either his wife or his lover. This realization affords him the resolve to maintain both. In the novel’s last description of an assignation between Dubin and Fanny, Dubin displays this heightened understanding. He explains to Fanny that while he loves her, he also loves Kitty’s life. While the differentiation between loving an individual and loving an individual’s life could be seen as an exercise in hair-splitting rationalization, this does not seem to be the case with Dubin. As he departs for home, Fanny calls from a window "Don’t kid yourself" (362). This statement can be
seen as indicating Fanny's awareness that Dubin is being less than honest with himself regarding his assessment of his relationships with the two women. I believe, however, that Dubin's personal and artistic accomplishments substantiate the positive nature of Dubin's understanding. His decision to remain in relationships with both Kitty and Fanny validates his masculine virility, and he is able to effectively balance responsibility and libidinousness in what is, for him, their most advantageous juxtaposition. His work is apparently helped by his decision to maintain the two relationships. He is able to finish his biography of Lawrence, and even extends his success into his familial relations by collaborating on a biography of Anna Freud with his daughter, Maud. Both Fidelman and Dubin benefit from the epistemological results of their journeys into the realms of the erotic and the intellectual. The self-realizations that they develop allow them to function within the artistic structure with high levels of fidelity and competence.

The fates of Sy Levin and Frank Alpine, however, are not clearly resolved and present more complex romantic implications in the novels. A clear external resolution can even be viewed as non-Wordsworthian in that the validation of the epistemological process is made manifest in the character's surroundings, not in the character. A clear external resolution, particularly in the form of a described
reestablished order can be viewed as non-Wordsworthian because the end results of the plot are often made manifest in the setting rather than in the character.

The ambiguous nature of the fates of Malamud's protagonists in *A New Life* and *The Assistant* enhances the compatibility of their interpretation within a romantic construct, because the ambiguity indicates a less fully resolved existence of self-understanding. This ambiguity is a positive condition within the parameters of Wordsworthian romanticism because it indicates the character's continued involvement with the journey of self-understanding. Even though Sy Levin attains his affirmation through self-realization in his hastened departure from Cascadia College, the future that he encounters is rife with an uncertainty that evokes the on-going nature of the intellectual journey of self-realization. In much the same way, Frank Alpine's conversion to Judaism at the end of *The Assistant* is not an ending or a beginning of his movement toward self-realization, but rather an indication of his understanding that his ongoing quest had reached a point that necessitated a spiritual substantiation of its validity. At the end of the novel, all of Frank's movements—the physical relocation from California eastward, the social shift from indigent to thief and the moral transformation from the disrupter of the Bober family to its supporter—have culminated in his
perceived necessity to elevate his pursuit for self-understanding to a higher plane.

Unlike Fidelman and Dubin, neither Sy Levin nor Frank Alpine functions in a comfortable or resolved setting at the end of the novels. The redefinition that is brought about by these characters is not patent or definitive. Cascadia does not undergo a transformation into an institution dedicated to the ideals of a liberal arts curriculum because of the efforts of Sy Levin. Frank does not negotiate a sale of the Bober's store or even manage to make it more than marginally profitable. Still, there is an evident affirmation in both characters' ultimate actions. Sy Levin understands that he has the ability to escape the intellectually moribund Cascadia College with Pauline and the children, and Frank Alpine converts to Judaism in response to his perception of his spiritual destiny. These acts indicate the characters' ability to transcend their physical milieu and rise to the requirements of self-realization regardless of positive or negative external consequences.

In both *The Fixer* and *The Tenants*, however, the protagonists' affirmation occurs in conjunction with active forces hostile to the characters, heightening the conflict between the protagonist's enlightenment and the external forces. It is true that in *A New Life*, the English department of Cascadia College is hostile to Levin's ideas,
and is anxious to subvert or destroy them, but he is able to escape the department’s sphere of influence. In addition, the Bobers’ store does suffer from the adverse effects of rampant competitive forces, but these forces do not represent an active attempt on the part of any entity to destroy the Bobers or the store. The struggle that Morris and later, Frank face is a war of attrition against the burgeoning oppressiveness of the profit motive and urban apathy and despair. Yakov Bok’s imprisonment for a murder that he did not commit, however, is the action of individuals within the society who have a desire and ability to destroy him. Yakov’s incarceration provides him the opportunity to move from his intellectual position as a simple fixer to a complex individual who has developed a strong philosophical position regarding the idea of justice. His position as a victim of injustice makes him attune to the concept of justice in general and in its failure in his particular case. The irony of Bok’s situation is that his heightened awareness of justice requires that he hold out for a trial in which to clear his name. This perception of a need for justice guarantees his further incarceration. The goal of the Russian penal system is not justice but expediency, and Bok’s understanding relevant to the humanity in appropriate justice and his desire to attain it results not in justice but in further degradation.
In *The Tenants*, Harry Lesser understands the value and necessity of a dedicated approach to the artistic process, and Willie Spearmint understands that his prose—in its unrefined, visceral form—has the power that he wishes it to have, yet he is unsure about its artistic quality. Lesser, on the other hand, has such a high allegiance to the continuity of the creative process that he will not vacate Levenspiel’s dilapidated tenement for fear of disrupting the continuity of his creation. His decision to rebuff Levenspiel’s requests to leave the tenement leads directly to his encounters with the African-American squatter Willie Spearmint and his own attempts at artistic expression. Lesser addresses Willie’s prose in the only venue available to him, which is attention to aesthetic precision. Willie, who views his prose as a violent, visceral response to oppression, fails to see the validity of fine-tuning based on formulaic elements.

The two men’s relationships with Irene develop in a parallel manner. Willie wants Irene to dye her hair blond, to become as "white" as possible. Their conjugal relationship becomes emblematic of Willie’s artistic desire, to subjugate (sexually) the entity he perceives as subjugating him. Lesser, however, encourages Irene to let her black hair grow out, to return to a more natural state. Irene eventually chooses Lesser over Willie, triggering a vortex of revenge and retribution between Lesser and Willie.
that culminates in physical conflict and the destruction of Lesser's novel, and Willie's instrument of expression, his typewriter. Lesser's understanding of the role of form in art is valid, but his attempt to apply it to the expressions of Willie Spearmint results in the destruction of his own artistic creation.

Malamud's first and last novels, The Natural (1952) and God's Grace (1982), involve characters whose epistemological journeys provide them with a greater self-identity, but only as a result of conditions and actions that have culminated in the character's destruction. When Roy Hobbs is unable to respond to the newspaper boy's question ('Say it ain't true, Roy') in the final passage of The Natural, he provides a non-verbal validation of his self-realization. He wants to say that the accusation of his sellout is not true, but he is able only to cover his face and cry. Roy's affirmation is that he realizes that his talent was not sufficient to insulate him from the corruption in his environment. His understanding that he has failed to learn from his past life and must suffer the consequences of that lapse comes too late to save him from any fate other than the most wretched of existences. His actions have resulted in his immanent expulsion from organized baseball, the venue for his natural ability. Roy's affirmation, however, transcends the negative implications of his actions. His inability to deny his
guilt to the paper boy is not a particularly triumphant act, but it is an act of resolution and repentance. Roy's understanding for the need of repentance is a direct result of his own corruption. It is Roy's involvement in baseball that brings about his journey of understanding, and his ultimate understanding requires that he sacrifice that area of his life.

A mirror image of the forces that destroy Roy Hobbs in *The Natural* leads to the destruction of Calvin Cohn in *God's Grace*. A singular comparison can be made between Hobbs and Cohn, however, in the role that their attainment of self-realization plays in their ultimate fates. The paleontologist Cohn is the sole human survivor of an apocalyptic nuclear holocaust. In his post-apocalyptic attempt to reassert control over a situation that has gone wildly out of control, he becomes the teacher of a group of chimpanzees capable of spoken language and rudimentary abstract thought. Cohn, in vain, attempts to teach the primates in a manner that would lead them to a peaceful and rational existence. Unlike the dissolution of Roy Hobbs, Cohn's demise does not arise from his involvement with corruption. It is not Cohn, but the apes who succumb to the lure of avarice and jealousy that seems to be inherent in any structure of central authority. Cohn's death at the hands of the rebellious chimpanzees takes place within a sacrificial context, with Cohn as a martyr to his principle
and dedication. It is Cohn, the sacrificial victim, who lends spiritual significance to a process that from the perspective of the chimpanzees is little more than a ritual execution. Cohn becomes the victim of his own creation. His endeavors to organize and educate the apes have resulted in a social structure among them that allows them the capability to vent their hostilities on him. Cohn's self-realization is almost absolute; when he is dragged from his cave bound by leather thongs, he requests that Buz remove the bonds, assuring him that he would not violate the order of things.

"Untie my hands and I won't move, I promise you. I shan't blemish the sacrifice. If that's what I am, that's what I am." (257)

Cohn's death takes the form of an odd compilation of Judeo-Christian martyrizations. Blood bursts forth from his throat prior to Buz's striking the fatal wound in a stigmatic occurrence, and Cohn's passing is marked by George, the gorilla, sitting in a tree in the valley below, wearing a discarded yarmulke and chanting a Kaddish for the paleontologist.

The affirmation of the protagonist who has reached a viable level of self-realization is a constant in Malamud's fiction. There is, however, a marked difference among the eight novels in the conditions within which these affirmations take place. These varying conditions present
expressions of affirmation that transcend a superficial didacticism and result instead in the legitimate development of a character who, in Wordsworthian fashion, has attained a larger identity through interaction with the forces of the natural condition in his environment.
NOTES


3. The basic mythological structure of the journey is addressed by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton UP), 1949.


CHAPTER VII

SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS IN THE ROMANTICISM
OF WORDSWORTH AND MALAMUD

The essential romantic element regarding the enlightenment of the individual in the writings of both Wordsworth and Malamud has as its basis the idea that an individual's life experience provides an opportunity for understanding that transcends the experience itself. Because humanity seeks to reason through and to understand contingencies that are relevant to, but not necessarily contained within the actualities of the life experience, the sum of enlightenment is greater than its parts. A given experience in the life of an individual not only provides the individual with an opportunity for understanding matters relevant to that particular experience, it also provides the opportunity for an analysis of the conditions and situations within which the experience exists. The enlightenment of the individual, therefore, develops not solely from experience, but from an abstract awareness of the possible implications of the experience.

Both Wordsworth and Malamud seem to be astutely aware of this dynamic element that exists in the epistemological process. The awareness of an intangible element in an individual's life experience that transcends rational,
scientific analysis of the physical phenomena that ostensibly comprise it is axiomatic in romantic thought. Northrop Frye, in *A Study of English Romanticism*, expresses his belief that in romanticism, the sense of "something outside ordinary experience which nevertheless completes experience, symbolized by 'nature' in Wordsworth and elsewhere, must be something mysterious, because it cannot be directly apprehended" (84).

**Spirituality as an External Force in Romanticism**

Wordsworth's most direct statements regarding the spiritual nature of the "mysterious" intangible force in experience appear in comments that he makes about *The White Doe of Rylstone,*¹ in comments to Edith Batho, and in a letter to Francis Wrangham.² Wordsworth, according to his later comments, was not only aware of the separate, intangible, elements of experience in this particular poem, but anxious to call attention to his assessment of them. John Jones, in *The Egotistical Sublime*, postulates that even though Wordsworth seemed to believe that the poem lacked a powerful motivational force, it still maintained a legitimacy in its treatment of spiritual matters. Wordsworth apparently felt that the poem was "a complete failure in terms of physical action," yet "[making] large claims for its other part" (154). Jones goes on to
reference Edith Batho, who holds that Wordsworth chose to publish the poem in quarto as a gesture to the romances of Scott and Byron, which were also printed in quarto. This choice of publication form was an attempt by Wordsworth to substantiate the spiritual legitimacy of the poem, or as he put it in dinner conversation with Lady Davy "to show the world my own opinion of it" (Batho 83-4). Wordsworth's assessment that he had indeed achieved a high level quality in his treatment of spirituality in the poem is evident in a letter to Francis Wrangham dated January 18, 1816:

Throughout, objects, (the Banner, for instance) derive their influence not from the properties inherent in them, not from what they are actually in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects. Thus the poetry, if there be any in the work, proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of Man, communicating its energies to the images of the external world.

(705)

Wordsworth's comment here, while not as eloquent as Keats's contemporary observations regarding negative capability, or as erudite as Eliot's idea of the objective correlative that would be put forth a century later, is still a cogent commentary on the complex epistemological effects that the
description of physical phenomena can have on the individual.

Jones's theory regarding the spiritual elements in Wordsworth's poetry is that his decision to deal with spiritual matters did not come readily or painlessly, that a culmination of events in Wordsworth's life required a reassessment on his part of his early ideas of monism.

The most certain thing about Wordsworth's religion is its initial poverty. Little more than an admission of defeat in a long war in which his brother's death was the last and decisive battle, it had at first no chance of engaging his finer powers. It lacked joy and creative interest, and in a sense, conviction, for a man is not entirely convinced of necessity: there is a difference between admitting and accepting the truth. (168)

It is Jones's contention that not only the White Doe of Rylstone, but also sections of The Excursion suffer from the efforts of a perhaps overwrought Wordsworth to deal poetically with the ramifications of an external spiritual force.

Jones's description of the agonized nature of Wordsworth's creative product bespeaks a marked intellectual integrity on the part of the poet. While I believe that his assessment of the tortured nature of Wordsworth's poetry could be appropriate depending on his reading, the poetry of
Wordsworth written in response to a perceived external force is not all of a piece. The external force is a central idea in some of Wordsworth's most venerable poetry, particularly the "Immortality" ode ("The Soul that rises with us, our life's star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting," [V. 2-3]) and "Tintern Abbey" ("While with an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony, and the deep power of joy, / We see into the life of things." [46-8]). Wordsworth's perception of the validity of an external force in nature placed upon him the duty to address it. The perceptive conundrum that Jones develops, the tension between admission and acceptance of truth, could be a determining factor in the lack of continuity in Wordsworth's poetry that deals with spiritual matters.

The idea of external force appears to have been so problematic to Wordsworth that he was obliged to address it in a generic sense outside the ideological boundaries of romantic poetry. In a note to the "Intimations" ode, Wordsworth makes what is arguably his most direct statement about spiritual force. Wordsworth momentarily eschews the anti-rationalism of romanticism in order to develop an analogy predicated on an anecdote from the history of mathematics and physics:

Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has
not felt the same aspirations as regards to the world of his own mind? (464)

This Archimedean analogy indicates a particularly Wordsworthian approach to romanticism. A sort of separation from the society is necessary in order to gain intellectual purchase on the actions of society. This separation motif is evident in the recurring common characters and situations that appear in Wordsworth's poetry. A separation from society and sophistication is used to present the dangers in the forces of society and sophistication. Havens argues that Wordsworth's romanticism is predicated on his realization that "truth is found only through the whole man; the affections, the will, and the senses . . . " The "whole" individuals who effected Wordsworth's perception of the epistemological development were the commoners, the children and the intellectually challenged--people whose simplicity precluded the pretentious pseudo-intellectualism that brought out "the differences between men and [concealed] their fundamental likeness, which the heart reveals" (130).

Wordsworth's affinity for themes and characters that display this "fundamental likeness," or commonality of universal natural experience is integral to his romantic ideology. As was the case described in chapter two, there is a parallel between Wordsworth and Malamud in the creation and use of the common elements of society. The use of
common characters and themes in the writings of Wordsworth and Malamud is, in one sense, archetypically romantic. By portraying individuals whose identities are developed in environments that are directly influenced by not being insulated from the natural order, both writers are able to address the seductively corrupting forces of pretension and avarice that are intrinsic to a culture that is predicated on the dictates of a society that has both the ability and desire to insulate itself from the natural order and to establish its own norms and mores.

The Role of Suffering in Romantic Spirituality

The fundamental image of Wordsworth's analogy between Archimedean mechanics and poetry evokes the metaphysical, the idea of needing to function beyond the parameters of physical existence in order to attain a desired goal. Herbert Read reconciles Wordsworth's anti-rationalism with the role of the poet by stressing Wordsworth's Hartleyian approach to empiricism.

Wordsworth . . . [as] a poet is a man for whom the world exists in disjunction, and the extraordinary complexity of Wordsworth's attitude toward Nature is due to this fact. The world was so viable and real to him because he had to build it up from
brute sensation, element by element, till it was actual and objective. (123-24)

The choice of the verb "to build" is a propitious one, relating directly to a vivid correlation in the themes of both Wordsworth and Malamud. In Wordsworth's "Heat-Leap Well," a hunter develops a natural spring and builds a house of pleasure and a sylvan bower in close proximity to it in order to honor the valiant effort of a hart that he and his dogs had run to ground there. After the hunter's death, however, the edifices and the well fall into ruin and evoke in the narrator a sense of desolation and despair. He remarks to a local shepherd that the decrepit ruins indicate a basic folly on the part of mankind.

"One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide, Taught both by what she shows and what conceals; Never blend our pleasure or our pride With the sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

(177-80)

Sir Walter's attempts to glorify the suffering of the hart by erecting a monument to human pleasure in honor of it are eventually worn down by the certainties of nature, and the bleak ruins emerge as a much more fitting tribute to the hart's abject suffering.

Suffering, particularly acts performed as a response to its perception, becomes a matter central to Wordsworth's treatment of spiritual matters. It is John Jones's theory
that Wordsworth perceived particular consequences germane to humanity's incarnation.

Eternal movement from heaven earthward . . .
justifies poetic effort; for although the poet
must nourish his imagination at the "secondary founts" of time and space, he is still being
"tutored for eternity." (183)

Crucial to this tutoring process is the role of the supernatural. Jones cites lines of blank verse written by Wordsworth prior to the writing of "Hart-Leap Well" that indicate the overarching force behind the phenomenon of suffering:

. . . the hunted beast, who there
Had yielded up his breath, the awful trance,
The vision of humanity, and of God
The Mourner, God the Sufferer, when the heart
Of his poor Creatures suffers wrongfully . . .

(319)

Wordsworth's intellectual paradigm of the eternal movement from heaven earthward, of the eternal tutoring, and of a God who suffers collaterally not only with man but also with the most wretched of living creatures subsumes inquiry regarding any noble purpose suffering might have. Instead, it invites inquiry regarding its cogency to the spiritual relationship between mankind and God. Wordsworth's position regarding suffering seems to have its basis in the axiomatic position
that it is impossible for the finite to apprehend the infinite. Because suffering is finite, it can serve only as a vehicle for access to the supernatural, not as a definitive statement regarding the supernatural. Suffering, therefore, comes to be seen not as a manner of proving oneself worthy of God's grace through contrition or dedication, but rather a manifestation of human conditions against which the interposition of grace is played out.

This idea of external suffering is evident in Malamud's writing as well. In a comment about the setting of The Assistant (1957), Frederick R. Karl makes the observation that Morris Bober's store is, above all else, "a repository of exhausted desires and lost hopes; recoverable only at moments, needing less a king to rule it than an Osiris, less a Job than a schlemiel" (242). The basic romantic motif of conditions redefined by characters who function apart from it is evident here in his invocation of the schlemiel's basic thematic function. Bober, like the majority of Malamud's protagonists, is a man whose conditions of existence and life experience result in his living and functioning at the periphery of social, cultural and religious structures. It is Karl's contention that even though Malamud's characters are predominantly Jewish, there are elements of their cultural, intellectual or spiritual identities that separate them from the ostentatious,
ambitious Jews found in the fiction of a writer like Philip Roth.

When [Malamud’s characters] are store owners (Bober), or fixers (Bok), or writers (Lesser), or painters (Fidelman), or baseball players (Hobbs)—still they are not classed or classified. They move well outside the categories we associate with Americans. Even their Jewishness is not a form of belief or adherence. (Karl 243)

The separation from social structures of the protagonists of Malamud’s novels is evident in the minor characters of his novels and in his short stories as well, and this motif of separation closely parallels Wordsworth’s attempts to imbue his characters with a sense of spirituality through their separation from communal structures.

Jones’s assessment that Wordsworth’s focus on the common man (the individuals having the least interaction with the corrupting influences of society are the individuals who can best represent humanity’s "fundamental likeness") has a particular relevance to the role that suffering plays in a Malamud character’s spirituality. Using Karl’s assumption that the store in The Assistant perpetuates the motif of the schlemiel as a basis for examination, the case can be made that suffering, particularly the suffering evident in the character of
Morris Bober, is the redefining force in Frank Alpine's coming to grips with his own spirituality.

A prime motivating factor in the decision of Ward Minogue and Frank Alpine to rob Bober's store was that Bober was a Jew. When Frank hesitates at robbing a store that exhibited a marked lack of prosperity and voiced his speculation to Minogue that he doubted that the store took in thirty dollars in the course of the day, Minogue's reply indicates that monetary gain is a secondary motivator; he seems to be driven primarily by anti-Semitism. "'Thirty is thirty,' Ward said, 'I don't care if it's Karp or Bober, a Jew is a Jew.'"

Frank Alpine's anti-Semitism, while no less repugnant, is of a less virulent strain than that of Ward Minogue. Alpine's prejudice takes a more pedestrian form, a sort of passive acceptance of the popular stereotypes. Even though Frank attempts to redeem himself for the physical and economic injuries done to Bober in the robbery by serving as Bober's assistant, his efforts are routinely undermined by his lack of ability to resist the easily accessible means of petty larceny in the store's environment. At one point, after Morris has explained to him some of the ways he has seen in the past to cheat customers, Frank tentatively suggests to Bober that he might be able to increase his profits if he were to abuse the trust of his customers.
Morris looked at him in surprise. "Why should I steal from my customers? Do they steal from me?"
"They would if they could."
When a man is honest, he don't worry when he sleeps. This is worth more than to steal a nickel." (84)

Frank, who is a patent thief, attempts in vain to provide some sort of rationale—that Bober's customers would steal from him if given the opportunity—for dishonest behavior to an honest man. There is obvious irony here in that Frank, who is actually stealing from the store, is trying to spread his dishonesty to a Jewish storekeeper, an individual who, if the stereotype held true, would be the first to occasionally cut an ethical corner in order to improve his economic situation.

Frank's description of a reciprocal desire on the part of the store's clientele to steal from Bober is, as such rationalizations tend to be, intellectually unsound. Frank, however, is greatly in need of a rationalization of some sort. He has violated both Morris's trust and Helen's privacy for his own gratification and is susceptible to anything that can ameliorate these situations. At one point, when he hears Bober and the peddler Breitbart crying over Breitbart's lot in life, Frank resorts to unadulterated anti-Semitism, making what he believes to be a cogent comment on the Jewish experience:
That's what they live for, Frank thought, to suffer. And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold onto it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew. No wonder they got on his nerves. (88)

By arbitrarily placing the suffering of the Jews in this context, Alpine is able, in a childish and self-serving manner, to assuage his own guilt; any wrong that he could do them would only give them more suffering, and therefore the potential for being better Jews.

Frank's blatant misapprehension of the role of suffering indicates his conception of suffering as an internal activity—that suffering is something that people do, almost as a choice, in order to affirm their spiritual value. Frank's actions, however, seem to be at cross purposes with his simplistic assessment of suffering. When he assumes responsibility of the store after Morris's death, his motivation does not appear to be to sacrifice himself on the alter of humility but rather to respond to the eventualities of necessity in the lives of Ida and Helen.

It is perhaps his love for Helen that provides Frank with his ultimate understanding about suffering. When Frank rapes Helen in a fit of self-serving lust, it is evident that the suffering that he causes her does nothing to advance any sort of spiritual, romantic or religious affirmation. Like the traveller in "Hart-Leap Well," Frank
realizes that suffering is not a valiant and noble experience, and that forcing suffering on others is not a cause for self-aggrandizement. In actuality, it is because Frank has caused suffering that he becomes a sufferer. At the end of The Assistant, when Frank has himself circumcised and becomes a Jew, he undergoes the conversion to Judaism not in order to suffer, but because he suffers.

The Mentally Disabled and the Privileged
Access to the Supernatural

Both Wordsworth and Malamud occasionally engage in extending the idea of external suffering into the area of the anthropomorphic, expressing human characteristics through beings biologically separate from humans. Both the doe in The White Doe of Rylstone and the ass in "Peter Bell" exhibit human traits of nobility and spirituality. As was discussed in the last chapter, the apes in God's Grace (1982)8 assume the mentality and personality of the human populace. On a smaller scale, the talking bird in Malamud's "The Jewbird" is able to present the "human" implications of Jewish suffering in a manner that eludes the understanding of the human Cohen. Both writers, however, appear to address external suffering more relevantly through the use of characters whose separation is due to a lack of mental competence.
Alan J. Bewell cites Wordsworth’s familiarity with the lurid story of a mentally retarded woman brutally murdered by her husband in Dodington Common as a central force in his creation of "The Idiot Boy," "Peter Bell" and even sections of The Prelude (321). Jones argues that Wordsworth’s focus on individuals of reduced mental capacity, particularly in "The Idiot Boy," is based on his perception of people in that condition, who—much like children—have a "privileged access to the supernatural" (173). The evident paradox in Wordsworth’s assessment of individuals with diminished mental capacities is that while they suffer from the indignities visited upon them by people’s responses to their condition, the same difference in their condition that invites misunderstanding and ridicule also provides for them a venue into the supernatural.

There seems to be support, therefore, for a certain commonality of ideology between Wordsworth and Malamud in the fact that in two of Malamud’s short stories that deal most directly with the supernatural, mentally retarded individuals function in crucial roles. As the point of physical demarcation between the realms of the natural and the supernatural, the conditions and ramifications of death have a venerable thematic relevance to both the physical and the spiritual. In both "The Silver Crown" and "Idiots First," Malamud deals with the physical conditions
attendant upon death, and by extension, the spiritual matters it involves.

In "The Silver Crown," Albert Gans, a teacher of high school biology, is attempting to come to grips with the terminal illness of his father. As a man of science, he is predisposed to place his faith in the rational and scientifically based decisions and speculations of the medical community, even though their expectations for Gans’s father are low. Gans’s hope for his father wanes, and in the depth of his despair, he has a serendipitous encounter with a young, mentally retarded girl who places in his hand a Rabbi’s soiled business card that reads "Heal The Sick. Save The Dying. Make a Silver Crown" (5). Gans, although skeptical, eventually agrees to let the Rabbi make a crown for his father. He is, however, unable to relinquish his skepticism, and his insistence on proof of both the efficacy and existence of the crown results in his ultimately cursing his father’s life and expressing his desire that his father die.

Death is the most certain of biological eventualities, and yet even as a trained biologist, Gans cannot cope with its relentless imminence. He is, however, noticeably uncomfortable in assigning spirituality any legitimacy as an alternative manner of intellectually dealing with it. As scientist, Gans has been trained to be skeptical regarding matters that fall beyond the purview of the rational, but
ironically he seems intent on placing the basis of his skepticism not on the irrationality of the project itself, but on Rifkele, the Rabbi's retarded daughter. Even as he inches intellectually toward agreeing to engage in this patently irrational endeavor, the repeated appearances of Rifkele cause "doubts of the enterprise [to rise] before him like warriors with spears" (12).

Gans's rationality will not allow him to accept completely the role of the spiritual. By making Rifkele's condition the center of his skepticism, Gans proves himself to have a particularly non-Wordsworthian ideology. Rifkele is a distinctly Wordsworthian character; her mental retardation appears to have a direct relevance to the supernatural. Gans's rationality forces him to conceive of Rifkele as having a function diametrically opposite to what it actually is. Rather than seeing her as a means of access to spirituality—it is Rifkele who appears on the subway and gives him the card and later admits him to the Lifschitz apartment—she comes to personify his doubts about the endeavor.

Even though Gans agrees to have a silver crown made for his father, his rationality prevents him from being comfortable with his decision, and rather than accept the spiritual implications of his decision, he resorts to interpreting Lifschitz's actions as deceptive and self-serving. In his final affront to Lifschitz and Rifkele,
Gans accuses the rabbi of "freaking fake magic, with an idiot girl for a come-on" (29). By casting Lifschitz in the role of con-artist, with Rifkele as his unwitting shill, Gans is able to align the actions of the rabbi within his ideology of the rational. When he is cautioned by Lifschitz to think of the well-being of his father, Gans replies by delivering a curse upon the elder Gans, sacrificing his father to the sanctity of his sense of reasoned order. His final attempt at rationalization ("He hates me, the son of a bitch, I hope he croaks" [29]) is indicative of the sort of superficial reciprocity evident in the pre-enlightened Frank Alpine. In addition, Gans's curse of his father seems to galvanize his allegiance to the rational order. His wish of death for the old man invokes the essence of rationality. By dying, the elder Gans would respond to the ultimate finality of human existence. He would not only remove himself from the realm of the living; he would alleviate Albert's intellectual struggle with faith healers, silver crowns, and other spiritual matters. When Lifschitz responds to Gans's curse with the cry of "murderer," he is referring not just to Gans effecting his father's death, but to his killing of his nascent belief in forces that transcend the physical as well.

One of Malamud's more poignant short stories, "Idiots First," involves the interaction between the Angel of Death (Ginzburg) and an old man (Mendel) whose death is immanent.
The complicating factor in the arrangement is Mendel’s retarded son, Isaac, for whom Mendel must make arrangements prior to his death. On a superficial level Mendel’s attempts to gather enough money to send Isaac to his uncle in California have a distinct practicality. On a more profound level, however, Isaac’s presence in the story takes on particularly Wordsworthian implications. It is the character of the mentally retarded son who forces Mendel to face and understand the terrible finality of death. Still, because of his son’s needs, Mendel is able to face the inevitable with a dignity and a resolve that allow him to transcend the horror and despair of death. At the end of the story, Mendel has managed to scrape together enough money for Isaac’s train trip west. When he arrives at the station, however, he finds that it is after twelve and the only ticket booth open is manned by the egregiously detached and apathetic Ginzburg. Ginzburg’s refusal to allow Isaac on the train is predicated on his laconic explanation that "the law is the law." Mendel’s first response is to reason with Ginzburg, but when Ginzburg is not responsive, Mendel attacks him physically.

Clinging to Ginzburg in his last agony, Mendel saw reflected in the ticket collector’s eyes the depth of his terror. Ginzburg, staring at himself in Mendel’s eyes, saw mirrored in them his own awful wrath . . . His grip on the squirming old man
loosened, and Mendel, his heart barely beating, slumped to the ground. "Go," Ginzburg muttered, "take him to the train." (15)

In the anthropomorphic struggle between life and death, Mendel does not triumph, and he does not vanquish Ginzburg. After he has gotten Isaac safely aboard the train, Mendel trudges back up the stairs to find Ginzburg. Mendel's success lies not in avoiding death, something that is impossible to do, but rather in his ability to transcend the physical ravages of death through a dedication to a higher purpose.

Wordsworth indicates in the first of his "Essays on Epitaphs" that there is a close bond between the supernatural and the human intellectual experience.

We may, then, be justified in asserting, that the sense of immortality, if not a co-existent and twin birth with Reason, is among the earliest of her offspring: and we may further assert, that from these conjoined, and under their countenance, the human affections are gradually formed and opened out. (325)

While Mendel will meet his ultimate demise at the hands of Ginzburg, it is his positive perception of the conjoining of reason and the supernatural that allows him to both provide for Isaac's future and face death with dignity. Gans, on the other hand, rather than understanding the relationship
between the intellectual and the supernatural attempts to pit one against the other and destroys both his father and his own ability to believe in a force larger than himself.
NOTES


Unless otherwise noted, the prose selections are from William Wordsworth, *Selected Prose*, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).


