

by Linda Blackaby

Carnal Knowledge: *neither the strong nor the weak shall inherit the earth*

"Carnal Knowledge" examines two friends, Jonathan (Jack Nicholson) and Sandy (Arthur Garfunkel), through their attitudes toward women and sex. They were 12 in the summer of '42, roomed together in college and get laid by Susan (Candice Bergen) in '48; In the late '50's Sandy has established a nice by-the-book marriage with Susan while Jonathan searches for the ultimate "nice-piece-of-ass with-big-tits", finding Bobbie (Ann-Margaret). We learn that both men require different sorts of servicing by women, which in 1970 they get in their own way.

From college days to middle age Jonathan uses women to assure him that he's a real man, whether it's by copping a feel, talking big, taking his best friend's girl, living like a playboy, feeling his girl friend up in public, or playing the "let's swap" game. But

from Susan's initial rejection of him for Sandy, to his own short-lived marriage, Jonathan gets his ego hurt and starts having trouble making it a failure which he blames on modern women who become to him either "more well hung than the men" or "ball busters."

Sandy, on the other hand, starts off shy and thinking he might like to talk to a girl, Jonathan's pupil, who finds out that sex isn't exactly the way he was told. The teacher role is soon taken on by Susan, and later by the marriage manuals which they follow faithfully. Sandy needs women to tell him who he is. He appreciates Susan because she can tell him "thoughts I didn't even know I had". He is Jonathan's opposite in preferring women with brains and competitive spirit rather than women with builds.

Assessed by Susan as sensitive and

trusting, Sandy finds marriage after a while very convenient, but dull, in a sense he transcends it by becoming more like Jonathan. But as Sandy starts playing around, Jonathan is trying to keep Bobbie at home. To make their relationship more like his version of Sandy and Susan's domesticity, he makes her quit her job, but she never was good at cooking. By the end of the film, Susan has been replaced by an 18-year-old "love teacher" who helps Sandy "find himself" once again, in a more serious version of "Alice B. Toklas."

While the two men contrast as character types, in their acceptance of conventions across time they are just the same. The way they were in 1948 is the basis for the way they are in 1970, the cliches they say are appropriate to the time, but their behavior seems to

have been conditioned by the past. In "Catch 22", people really were trying to kill Yossarian, but Jonathan is messed up because he took his best friend's girl, lost her because he wasn't Sandy, and so thinks all women are "ball busters."

In "Carnal Knowledge" Mike Nichols sets up a familiar situation where two styles are compared, but undercuts the issue of "who to be" by having behavior determined by convention. Two other recent films also set up a similar problem to show the flaws in each side. In "Five Easy Pieces" the Jack Nicholson character tries to decide about social class as exemplified by the two women; and in "Two-Lane Black Top" a heroically personal but dysfunctional life style competes with one which is expensive, mass produced, and a lie, neither wins. "Carnal Knowledge" starts off as a satire and tries to become a serious analysis of those conventional problems which Jonathan and Sandy don't really know they are revealing when they talk full front to the camera.

The Tenants by Bernard Malamud

"The Tenants," by Bernard Malamud
Reviewed by William McPherson

"Home," Harry Lesser tells himself, "is where my book is"—on the top floor of an abandoned tenement at 31st Street and Third Avenue, where Harry, one of New York's statutory tenants, is holding out alone until his book is finished.

It is Harry's third novel, following a first critical success but financial disaster at 24 and a second, at 27, that was the reverse. Now, at 36, Harry has been wrestling with his new book for almost 10 years, "unease like a horse dragging him by both bound legs out of bed" and over to the typewriter. He hopes, rather expects, the result will be his "best book . . . a small masterpiece though not too small. How small are the psalms—"

Its subject is "love, I guess—one with which Harry has had little first-hand experience. "What do you know about love?" the girl he is falling in love with asks. "Lesser wouldn't say." But he could learn. " . . . if during the course of three books he had written himself into more courage, why not love? He will learn through some miracle of transformation

as he writes . . . "

But there are intrusions and interruptions. First there is the landlord, Levenspiel, who comes by regularly to offer Lesser increasingly larger bribes to get out of the building so it can be demolished for a more profitable one. "What's a make-believe novel, Lesser," the landlord asks, "against all my woes and miseries that I have explained to you."

"When you read it, Levenspiel, even you will love me," Harry replies. "It will help you understand and endure your life as the writing of it has helped me sustain mine."

"For Christ's sake, what are you writing, the Holy Bible?" In this world "It's the heart that counts," Levenspiel tells him, not art, and in truth Lesser is a little weak in the heart department, lavishing more love on the language of his work than on the people of his life.

Then there is Willie Spearmint, a Black revolutionist, intruder in the tenement, another writer with the same problems as Harry. "Writing down words is like hitting paper with a two-ton hammer," Willie says. Both write and rewrite. Terrible work for Willie, too.

So Schlemiel meets soul brother, but instead of the healing epiphany one might have hope for, there is the apocalypse. Harry writes about love; Willie writes about destruction, revolution and death, especially the death of Jews. Learning to love; learning to hate.

Harry has another definition of home. "Home is where, if you get there, you won't be murdered; if you are it isn't home." Back in his study, Harry "wrote hurriedly, as though he had heard the end of the world falling in the pit of time and hopes to get his last word written before then."

Harry had heard something ominous, all right. A first fragile opening between the Black and the Jew is quickly replaced by wariness. Willie asks Lesser to criticize his manuscript but does not like it when Lesser finds fault with its form. Lesser begins an affair with Willie's girl; Willie, poisonously angry, burns Harry's manuscript. Harry buys an ax and chops up Willie's chair and table, then he begins again on his book. The two avoid each other but read each other's work in the rejected scraps of paper in their garbage cans. Willie is writing about "The first pogrom in the U.S. of A."

Finally they meet again on the tenement stairway.

"I forgive you, Willie, for what you did to me," Harry says. "I forgive you for forgivin' me," Willie replies.

"For God's sake, Willie, we're writers," Harry tells him in a last effort to find a common ground. Nothing comes of it; there can be no accommodation. Unable to finish the last scene of his novel, Harry chops up Willie's typewriter. Then they chop each other up. Green tendrils curl around the tenement; the jungle has won.

At the end, "Each, thought (Harry) feels the anguish of the other." But neither can communicate it. The book ends apocalyptically, with the writers dead and a plea for mercy from the surviving Levenspiel, "an unfortunate man in form and substance."

In "The Tenants," Bernard Malamud has come a long way from the first of his "Pictures of Fidelman" stories, written more than 10 years ago. That one dealt with a destroyed manuscript, too, but it was burned because "the words were there but the spirit was missing" and the act was ultimately redemptive.

Here, in Mr. Malamud's eighth book, the act is destructive. I don't believe that explains why this book, so excellent in its parts—full of brilliant writing, horrendous irony, marvelous wit and fantasy—should be, for me, at least, finally unsatisfying. But maybe it does. It's pretty much the same reason Harry didn't like Willie's book—the message bothered him.

(C) by Washington Post

Starting Sunday Oct. 17

E.M.U. Lanes
Sunday Breakfast
and Bowling
Bowling League
mixed doubles \$1.20

Breakfast 10:00 - 11:00 AM

Hash Browns
2 Eggs (served any way)
Toast & Jelly

Bowling 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

3 Lines of League Bowling
plus shoes

For Info. call Ext. 3711

or sign up at the
Recreation Area

DUCK DOPE

CHECK THESE MERCHANTS:

Metzker & Associates
Thrifty Auto Repair
New Moon Imports
John Warren Hardware
STAGE 1
CRYSTALSHIP
The Bon Marche
Western Graphics
1st National Bank
Sheppard Motors
Pizza Kitchen (2 coupons!)
Baskin-Robbins
Hi Fashion Fabrics
Mr. Lustre Car Wash
Mazzi's
International House of
Pancakes (2)
The Fish Market
Mandala RugsCraftsmen
Center
Eugene & West 11th Drive-
Ins (3)

Valley River Twin
Cinemas
Alexanders
Gottlieb's
Fennell's
the Candle Carte
Eugene's Toy & Hobby
Hickory Farms
the New Anchorage
Merle Norman Cosmetics
the Bull Shed
Mattox Pipe Shop
Harry Ritchies
the Pot Shop
Gold Cross Discount Drugs
Freeman's Selectronics
Emporium
Papa's Pizza (2)
Mac's HiFi
Man's World
Red Rooster
Oswalt's Fish & Chips (2)

H. Salt, Esquire
Stadium Club
Mr. Steak (3)
Sambo's (2)
EMU Recreation
Dunkin' Donuts
Fredrick's
the Rolladium (2)
Clown Prince Drive-Ins (2)
Peterson's One Hour
Martinizing (2)
EMU Cafeteria
(2)Gerlach's
Gerlach's Camera Center
North's Chuck Wagon
Bruno Photo Studio
Hallmark Shop
Green Acres Golf Course
B.F. Goodrich
Gantsy's Ice Cream
Stretch-& Sew
Nickles' Shoes

73 BIG COUPONS

ALL FOR ONLY \$3⁰⁰

AVAILABLE AT THE CO-OP & EMU TERRACE

SPONSORED BY THE OREGON DAILY EMERALD