

Abstract

Although Bernard Malamud's fiction has been frequently regarded as allegorical and symbolic, Malamud did not avoid the period's social issues in his works, such as the racial question and the changing nature of relationship between American Jews and African Americans. The present thesis aims to discuss Malamud's selected fiction dealing with Black-Jewish relations, namely short stories "Angel Levine," (1955) "Black Is My Favorite Color" (1963) and the novel *The Tenants*, (1971) and to place them into the context of Black-Jewish relations in the United States and of Black-Jewish literary dialogues and the tensions they express. It thus seeks to evaluate Malamud's role in the discourse of Black-Jewish relations in America.

Calling upon a theoretical framework, outlined in chapter 2, based on philosophical and sociological findings of Judith Butler, John Searle, and Michael Omi with Howard Winant, the study examines the role of language and literature in constructing the Self and the Other (understood both as individual and collective identities, including categories of race and ethnicity), suggesting thus that literary texts, such as Malamud's selected fiction, are a part of discursive dialogue through and against which American Jews and Blacks construct their identities. Apart from the approaches to identity, the theoretical framework provides a historical and socio-political overview of the so-called "Black-Jewish alliance," following thus Omi and Winant's argument that both a social/historical structure and cultural representations must be considered at the same time when discussing race. The thesis also briefly assesses the role of literature, publishing, and press in the history of Black-Jewish relations and then analyses several intertextual dialogues between Jewish and African-American critics and writers. Touching upon issues such as minority-majority tension or cultural authority, the literary exchanges reveal that it is frequently the space of literature where American Blacks and Jews renegotiate their status in American society.

Chapters three, four and five employ the findings presented in the theoretical approach and they provide an analysis of Malamud's selected texts based on close-reading. The third chapter concentrates on the way Jewish Self and Black Other are performatively constructed in relation to each other. In the fourth chapter, the frequently accepted progression of Black-Jewish relations from brotherhood to mutual antagonism is questioned with regard to Malamud's texts. The thesis discusses ambivalence inherent in mutual contacts and Malamud's use of irony, which complicate such a simplistic view of the evolution of relationship between the two groups. The fifth chapter explores discursive tensions over certain words and concepts, which contributed to renegotiation of Black-Jewish relations in American context, such as the notion of the stranger, ghetto and the Holocaust, and the power relations implied in names and naming.