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Learning Anotherness through Dialogics:
The Multicultural Writings and Teachings of Bernard Malamud

Masaomi KOBAYASHI

I

It is generally understood that multicultural theory has much in common with postcolonial theory. First of all, "[t]he concept 'multicultural' is based on the idea that it is possible within a politically organized territory to have more than a single culture within its borders" (Murphy, "American" 19). When thought about in this way, the multicultural practice "within a politically organized territory" or "within its borders" can be seen as inseparable from efforts to construct identities—from "serious efforts to develop cultural identities to replace those thrust on them by the culture of their former colonial masters" (Booker 151). To put it another way, the multicultural and the postcolonial are closely associated with one another in terms of "the attempt to build a new hybrid culture that transcends the past but still draws on the vestigial echoes of precolonial culture" (Booker 153). The colonial past is hence projected into the multicultural present in order to build a future and "to build a new hybrid culture." 

In the case of the United States, however, cultural hybridity, namely multiculturality, has been an assumption since its beginnings, rather than an ambition to be achieved in the future. In referring to American history, no other things might be more certain than the following: "The United States has always been multicultural, multiracial, and ethnically diverse" (Murphy, "American" 19). Indeed, as we know, America has been described by terms significant of cultural, racial, ethnical diversity: "melting pot," "salad bowl," and "patchwork quilt," for example. In addition, America has enacted multiculturality by inscribing a motto on its several coins: E pluribus unum. Although it was supposed to be a guiding principle with which to practice multiculturality, the motto (which signifies "one out of many") has been open to criticism. In Kurt Vonnegut's God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, for instance, Eliot Rosewater makes the following remark about the motto:

E pluribus unum is surely an ironic motto to inscribe on the currency of this utopia gone bust, for every grotesquely rich American represents property, privileges, and pleasures that have been denied the many. An even more instructive motto, in the light of history made by the Noah Rosewaters, might be: Grab much too much, or you'll get nothing at all" (13).

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater reflects the author's deep concern about human relationships jeopardized in the capitalist society of America. This is precisely why Eliot, as the author's fictitious spokesman, refers to "an ironic motto," which was to be critically mentioned again in Breakfast of Champions: "the vacant motto might not have mattered much, if it weren't for this: a lot of citizens were so ignored and insulted that they thought they might be in the
wrong country, or even on the wrong planet, that some terrible mistake had been made" (9). To recapitulate, Vonnegut’s argument is that the motto was neither “ironic” nor “vacant” because it was originally indicative of the coordination between “one” as a country and “many” as states, but that it is actually connotative of the division between the few rich and the many poor.

Vonnegut’s critique is largely made from a macroscopic viewpoint to demystify seemingly multicultural America. At the same time, however, a microscopic critique must also be made, given the one-out-of-many principle as an indication that the fifty states constitute the United States. More specifically, American multiculturality is based on myriads of relationships among myriads of cultures that exist even within one district. As an example of such cultural diversity, “there are over 100 languages spoken by the students in the Los Angeles school district” (Murphy, “American” 20). The complex relations among those in such a multicultural district cannot be reduced merely to power relations between majorities and minorities—although it should be mentioned that more often than not the teacher with multiculturalism in mind “encourages identification by connecting texts to experiences of oppression, including those undergone by the teacher herself, and by enabling students to discuss the different varieties of oppression (racial, economic, and sexual) they have felt and witnessed” (Waxman 159).

It is then supposable that in addition to majority-minority relations on which most postcolonial theorists and critics concentrate, minority-minority relations are equally important; and it is particularly so in discussing the ideality in and the reality of multicultural America: “The multiculturalist claims that only when we are free to explore the complexities of our hyphenated American culture can we discover what a genuinely common American culture might look like” (Gates 289). As noted below, “the complexities of...hyphenated American culture” were actualized in, for instance, the City of Los Angeles.

The 1992 riot caused by African-Americans in Los Angeles is of specific significance in addressing the relation and tension among American minorities with relation to the question of American multiculturality. On April 3, 1992, Los Angeles witnessed serious race riots following a decision by court to release four white policemen accused of unlawfully beating a black man, Rodney King. It is reported that exactly 54 citizens were killed, over 2000 people were injured, and about 800 structures were burned. It is well known that during the six days of the riot, Korean-Americans suffered more than half of the total property damage, estimated roughly at one billion. Which indicates that the target of the rioters was not restricted to White Americans as representative of longstanding majorities, but that it was extended to Korean-Americans as representative of rising minorities.

In addition to Los Angels, New York City can also readily be imagined as a culturally diverse locus. In American literature, West Side Story is one of the examples that deal with American minorities, namely Italian- and Puerto Rican-Americans. Even before the advent of the film (whose musical director is the Jewish-American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein), however, minority-minority relations had been treated in the fiction of Bernard Malamud. As we shall see, his work is marked by consent, rather than conflict, between minorities, for his characters, whether consciously or not, learn to embrace cultural differences. Having said that, one is able to notice that his texts can be used to provide multiculturalist
education, in the sense that multiculturalism is in principle "the project of making education more inclusive of the perspectives of women, minorities, and non-Western cultures in recognition of the increasingly diverse character of life in modern Western societies" (Childers and Hentzi 196).

In retrospect, the emergence of multiculturalism, which has attempted to incorporate into its vast universe of discourse "the perspectives of women, minorities, and non-Western cultures," was a paradigm shift of education in, at least, the United States. In particular, multiculturalism has made a great impact on literary studies in relation to the ongoing issue of canon/canon formation. If "the canon of 'great books' in literary study has been formed primarily by a privileged, elite group of white male critics and teachers," it can easily be assumed that "the canon reproduces the shared interests of the members of that group and excludes the works and voices of other significant but marginalized groups such as women, homosexuals, or people of color" (Childers and Hentzi 37). If Jewish-American authors have been viewed as "significant but marginalized groups," then it is worth mentioning that the first Norton Anthology of Jewish-American Literature was published in 1999. According to one of the four co-editors, the anthology is expected to "establish to some extent what works of Jewish-American literature will become part of the canon" (Chametzky 30). Have "works of Jewish-American literature " since "become part of the canon"?

It must be hastened to note that the fundamental purpose of the present study is not to canonize but to analyze the multicultural fiction of Malamud. This essay is, in other words, an attempt to discover and discuss multiculturalism practiced in his writings. In so doing, we will be further able to expand our critical and educational horizons of multiculturality.

II

Malamud's multiculturalism is exemplarily seen in his collection of stories, The Magic Barrel. In "Angel Levin," for example, Manischevitz, a Jewish tailor, encounters a black Jew, Alexander Levine, who introduces himself as "[a] bona fide angel of God" (46). Initially, the tailor was unable to believe him to be a Jewish angel, even when he, as a Jew, was able to recite the blessing for bread in Hebrew, and it is simply due to the fact that Levin is dark-skinned—that he looks like the Other.

It is hard to deny that Manischevitz is more or less stereotypical because he is unwilling to acknowledge Levin to be a black Jew, and that Levine is more or less untypical because he is a black Jew. In either case, it is important to note that the story deals with ethnic minorities. The aforementioned editor of the Norton Anthology of Jewish-American Literature made a statement that the anthology illustrates the degree to which Jewish- and African-Americans have always played an important role in shaping the popular culture in America: "In the twentieth century one might say that without blacks and Jews, there would almost be no popular culture in America" (Chametzky 30). In fact, the publication of the anthology had immediate relevance to the publication of the Norton Anthology of African-American Literature. "Angel Levine" is then worth rereading, if we take into account such a growing concern with literatures by Jewish- and African-American writers.

As pointed out earlier, Malamud's work is characterized by its plotline that minorities
attain their mutual understanding.2 “Angel Levine” is certainly no exception, given the following scene that highlights a quantum leap in the tailor’s belief system:

Manischevitz was recalling scenes of youth as a wheel in his mind whirred: believe, do not, yes, no, yes, no. The pointer pointed to yes, to between yes and no, to no, no it was yes. He sighed. It moved but one had still to make a choice.

“I think you are an angel from God,” he said it in a broken voice, thinking, If you said it it was said. If you believed it you must say it. If you believed, you believed. (54).

Based on the binary oppositions of “yes” and “no,” Manischevitz chooses “yes,” thereby believing Levine to be “an angel from God.” It must be hastened to add, however, that at the story’s very end where he is allowed to see the angel’s “magnificent black wings,” he comes to the conclusion that “there are Jews everywhere” (54). The ending tells us that Manischevitz has eventually embraced Levine’s multiple identities as an angel, a black, and a Jew. It can reasonably be said, then, that the story requires us never to read on the binary model of self and other, namely Jewishness and Gentiledom. Instead, we are urgently required to explore alternative ways of reading the story on the basis of relational difference between self and another—another which is neither adjective nor pronoun but noun.

The concept of “another” is generally employed to practice ecocriticism. As a replacement for otherness in the negative sense of the word, anotherness provides ecocritics with the basis for decentralizing the man-centered universe and for deconstructing the man/nature dichotomy homologous to the self/other dichotomy. In ecocritical discourse, anotherness refers to the interrelatedness of humans and other living things, both of which are situated in and surrounded by nature:

If the possibility of ‘anotherness,’ being another for others, is recognized, then the ecological process of interanimation—the ways in which humans and other entities develop, change and learn through mutually influencing each other day to day—can be emphasized in constructing models of viable human/rest-of-nature interaction (Murphy, “Anotherness” 42).

The anotherness articulated above indicates that “humans” and “other entities” are “mutually influencing each other.” To put it differently, ecocritics maintain that “microcosm and macrocosm are interacting entities and part of a grand, interlaced continuum embracing human society” (Tiffney 7). It can then be said that humans have always been part of an interconnected whole where all life (e.g. animal and vegetable life) inhabit.

Significantly, such an ecocritical perspective is applicable to remodeling human relationships in a multicultural environment. By internalizing anotherness, in other words, the multiculturalist should be able to provide insights into works by ethnic authors, just as s/he should be able to do so when critiquing “Angel Levine.” To repeat, Manischevitz believes at the close of the story that Levine the angel is both a black and a Jew. The tailor’s belief in the angel is an indication that the former acknowledges the latter as being different from albeit similar to himself, namely being another for himself.
A large part of the above discussion attempted at theorization of reading from a multicultural perspective associated with an ecocritical one. The focus of the discussion below should then be on multiculturalism's practical aspects. The relationship between Manischevitz the orthodox Jew and Levine the black Jew suggests that the notion of anotherness is successfully internalized by overcoming otherness: in other words, a sense of anotherness can be attained by interacting with others. In Malamud's multicultural fiction, one's transcultural interaction with others is concretized not only into understanding an angel but into reading a novel as well. The reader finds in his work an important role of literature, and this can best be understood by reexamining "The First Seven Years" and The Assistant.

"The First Seven Years," allocated as an opening story in The Magic Barrel, centers on the three characters: the shoemaker Feld, his daughter Miriam, and his helper Sobel. As a father of Miriam, Feld introduces her to the promising college student Max. It goes without saying that his intention lies exclusively in matching his daughter with Max the Jew. Contrary to his expectation, however, Miriam turns out to prefer reading rather than dating. In her opinion, "books, which Sobel, who diligently read the classics, would as usual advise her on" (9). As the story unravels, the reader comes to know that Sobel has recommended her to "read the classics" with his own commentary that implies his love for her; and she does have "read the classics," which means that she has read not only them but also him.

Thus, "the classics" function as media of interaction between Sobel and Miriam. On this point, "The First Seven Years" provides an idea about literature as a means rather than an end. As far as Sobel and Miriam are concerned, literature has a disciplinary nature: he has introduced her to what he believes to be worth reading and critiquing. Conscious or not, they have therefore formed a mutual relationship at the collegial level. On the one hand, Sobel plays a role as her teacher, although he himself has had no college education because he was originally a refugee "who had by the skin of his teeth escaped Hitler's incinerators" (19). On the other hand, Miriam plays a role as his student, although she is unwilling to have a college education because "she wanted to be independent. As for education, what was it, she asked, but books" (9). What can be inferred from her remark on education is that she considers books as primarily communicative rather than educative. Indeed, as stated above, books have made her affinitive with another person, Sobel.

"She is smart, always with a book" (11), Feld says to Max. Whenever being "with a book," however, Miriam is actually with Sobel. After dating with Max, for example, "she inquired about Sobel, and Feld, without exactly knowing why, said the assistant had got another job. Miriam said nothing more and began to read" (16). Miriam reads books to remind herself of Sobel. On the other hand, Sobel reads books to remind her of himself: His wants were few; in money he wasn't interested—in nothing but books, it seemed—which he one by one lent to Miriam, together with his profuse, queer written comments, manufactured during his lonely rooming-house evenings, thick pads of commentary which the shoemaker peered at and twitched his shoulders over as his daughter, from her fourteenth year, read page by sanctified page, as the word of God were inscribed on them. (13)
What matters most to Sobel is not his books but his "profuse, queer written comments" or "thick pads of commentary," exactly because they have long enabled him to deepen his relationship with Miriam. In this sense, as we shall see, their teacher-student relationship can be supposed as analogous to the student-student relationship in an introductory literary course.

Given that Feld and Miriam interact through reading the literary works, the following hypothesis can be put forward: "The introductory literature course is not 'really' about literature; it uses literature as a study example. It is about thinking and being in the world" (Murphy, "Coyote" 163). In general, introduction to literature has been designed as a course in the appreciation and discussion of literature. At the deeper level, however, literature serves as a vehicle for leading students to realize that they are mutually subjects "thinking and being in the world." In this very point, Sobel and Miriam can be considered as exemplary students in a hypothetical course in the introduction to literature. Since she was fourteen years old, Miriam has read the classical works together with her peer's critical yet personal comments, thereby internalizing his "thinking" and realizing her "being in the world" populated not only by Feld and Max but also by Sobel.

In Sobel, too, reading is inseparable from "thinking and being in the world." The primary purpose of his heavy reading is to seek knowledge: "He read, he said, to know" (18). Sobel's pursuit of knowledge must be specified here, for he reads to know and to share his knowledge with Miriam. For Feld, his assistant's habitual reading proves that he is "the man [who], no doubt because of his terrible experiences as a refugee, was afraid of the world" (13). It is questionable, however, if he, "as a refugee," has really been "afraid of the world," given that he has been thinking of Miriam—the American-born Jew. As the story shows, his reading presupposes her as a reader of his books and comments. In the New World, "this Polish refugee, Sobel" (12), is hence becoming another for her.

It can be mentioned in this connection that Sobel looks much older for his age—thirty years old, to be exact—but that "when he read he looked young" (20). By reading, he is restored to youth, and his rejuvenation is suggestive of his acculturation in the New World. According to Longman Dictionary of English Language and Dictionary, the American Dream conveys "the idea that the US is a place where everyone has the chance of becoming rich and successful. Many immigrants to the US in the early 20th century believed in the American Dream." As an immigrant to the US, however, his dream is to be realized not by "becoming rich and successful," but by becoming closer and closer to Miriam.

In summary, Sobel and Miriam come to have a mutual affinity through reading: that is, they read and understand one another rather than each other. At one time, Feld discovers that "with his books and commentary, Sobel had given Miriam to understand that he loved her" (19). Pedagogically put, Feld discovers that Sobel has cultivated her sense of otherness "with his books and commentary." Equally important, Sobel becomes another for Feld as well as Miriam. When visiting his helper's rooming house, Feld finds "several stacks of books piled haphazardly around on the floor along the wall, which made him think how queer Sobel was, to be uneducated and read so much" (18). Once he realizes that his assistant's real intention of reading, however, Feld starts to think of him not as "queer" but as another, thereby allowing him to propose to his daughter in two years when she will be twenty-one years old.

As an indication that Sobel is being another for Feld, the story's last paragraph begins
and ends as follows: “But the next morning, when the shoemaker arrived, heavy-hearted, to
open the store, he saw he needn’t have come, for his assistant was already seated at the last,
pounding leather for his love” (20). As a future member of the Jewish-American family, Sobel
(who has flatly refused to work since he knew Feld’s attempt at matchmaking between Miriam
and Max) is thus working again for his boss and “for his love,” which implies that he is be-
coming another for Feld and Miriam. In this sense, Malamud discourses on minority-minority
relationships by describing the relationships between Sobel and Feld and between Sobel and
Miriam. “The First Seven Years,” as well as “Angel Levine” that centers on the Jew and the
black Jew, deals with specific multiculturality by thematizing mutual anotherness between him
and them—the Jewish-European and the Jewish-Americans.

IV

Anotherness delineated in “The First Seven Years” is worthy of notice in discussing a role
of literature in relation to the classroom practice of multiculturalism. First of all, as teachers
with multicultural perspectives, “we need to find ways...to educate ourselves so that we can
understand others” (Fox 109). “In our classroom,” Phillipa Kafka asserts as a multiculturalist,
therefore, “we need to begin by actively promoting an attitude of acceptance for a diversity of
cultural backgrounds” (182). In order to promote such an attitude toward the world’s cultures,
the teacher must always be equipped with a sense of anotherness with which “to have stu-
dents feel good and interested in themselves and their ethnic backgrounds” (Johnson 53).

It must be noted here that anotherness is also applicable to using literature in
monocultural surroundings—although it must be quite arguable if there is really such a cul-
tural environment, whenever “common sense reminds us that we are all ethnic” (Gates 288).
As a theoretical and practical modification to otherness, anotherness indicates that we are mu-
tually similar and different. For this very reason, students should never be generalized even
when they are situated in seemingly monocultural surroundings. Indeed, as we have seen,
“The First Seven Years” is analyzable from a multicultural perspective. Granted, it is a story
about the Jews, but it is specifically about the Jewish-European and the Jewish-Americans—
and this very difference concerning bicultural and bicontinental ethnicity dramatizes their mu-
tual anotherness suggested at the close of the story. As we will see, such an international ap-
troach to multiculturality can also be taken in critiquing The Assistant.

It is generally accepted that The Assistant is quite similar to “The First Seven Years,”
primarily in terms of casting. The novel centers on the shopkeeper Morris Bober, his daughter
Helen Bober, and his helper Frank Alpine. As a student majoring in English at NYU, Helen,
just like Miriam, prefers reading rather than dating—dating with, for example, the Jewish
graduate Nat Pearl, who reminds us of Max. It is important to note, however, that her read-
ing experience enables her to have potentially collegial relations with the Italian Frank.
Indeed, “he had told her about his ambitions and plans for college” (122), and:

She imagined all the interesting courses he could take, envied him the worthwhile
people he’d meet in his classes, the fun he’d have studying. She pictured him in nice
clothes, his hair cut shorter, maybe his nose straightened, speaking a more careful
English, interested in music and literature, learning about politics, psychology,
philosophy; wanting to know more the more he knew, in this way growing in value
to himself and others. (126)

Apparently, Helen, a night school student, romanticizes a day school as a place not only for
learning such liberal arts as “music and literature,” but also for meeting “others” whom
“he’d meet in his classes.” This is precisely why she fantasizes about Frank, who may be able
to do what she wants to do in NYU. That is to say, she wants to share a strong feeling of
fellowship with other students as “the worthwhile people.”

If the above-quoted passage is marked by her romantic and fantastic nature, then the fol-
lowing is by her pragmatic nature:

To help him prepare for college Helen said he ought to read some good novels, some
of the ones. She wanted Frank to like novels, to enjoy in them what she did. So she
checked out Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina and Crime and Punishment, all by
writers he had barely heard of, but they were very satisfying books, she said. He
noticed she were holding in her respectful hands the works of God Almighty. As
if—according to her—you could read in them everything you couldn’t afford not to
know—the Truth about Life. (127)

Here again, literature performs an intermediary function: it makes close(r) the relationships
between the hypothetical students, Sobel and Miriam, and between the real and potential stu-
dents, Helen and Frank. Concretely speaking, the former relationship is formed by Sobel’s
written comments as internal dialogues with his reader Miriam, whereas the latter relation-
ship is by Helen’s spoken comments as external dialogues with her listener Frank. In either
case, dialogue is of vital importance to have students feel mutual affinity in the course of ex-
periencing literature.

Herein lies the very reason why it is here worth referring to Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogics,
the gist of which is that “no voice or world view is given superiority over others” (Childers
and Hentzi 81). In order to demystify “superiority over others,” one needs to practice dialogics
exactly because it has “individuals develop and expand their awareness of self through dia-
logue with others, in a process of mutual cultural construction-our identities are created in
the process of cultural participation” (Murphy, “Coyote” 164). Through “dialogue with others,”
in other words, “our identities are created,” because dialogical interaction as “cultural par-
ticipation” leads to “mutual cultural construction.” When attempting to interact dialogically
with others, therefore, we are in the process of actualizing multiculturality as a form of our
mutual otherness.

In brief, dialogics serves to transform otherness into anotherness. At this point, Helen is
in the very process of that transformation. “Although she had only loosely been brought up
as Jewish,” writes Malamud, “she felt loyal to the Jews, more for what they had gone
through than she knew of their history or theology—loved them as a people, thought with
pride of herself as one of them; she had never imagined she would marry anybody but a
Jew” (159). While recognizing her loyalty to Jews, however, Helen struggles with Jewishness
that leads her to othering Frank the Italian. Similarly, Frank struggles with her and her
family’s otherness that manifests itself in Jewishness: “He wanted her but the facts made a
terrible construction. They were Jews and he was not. If he started going out with Helen her
mother [Ida] would throw a double fit and Morris another” (106). In this way, Helen and
Frank, or Frank and Helen, are caught up in the system of binary oppositions of self/other. Significantly, their mutual otherness transforms into anotherness through dialogues. As an assistant, Frank works hard for his master Morris so that he can compensate for his misdeed: he has ever broken into his future master's shop. The assistant's, or the protagonist's, present is therefore based on his past; but it is also relevant to his future: "He lived in the future to be forgiven. On the stairs one morning he said to Helen, 'Things are changed. I am not the same guy I was'" (282). After Morris's death, Frank works much harder, and its fundamental purpose is to support Helen who cannot afford to take full-time courses in NYU. As a consequence, Frank gets unconsciously ready to be forgiven: "In bed, half-asleep, she watched the watcher. It came to her that he had changed. It's true, he's not the same man, she said to herself" (293). In order to be assured of his change, Frank dialogues with her, whereas she dialogues with herself. In either case, as they become more dialogical, they become more mutual in multicultural terms. Notably, the same holds true for Morris and Frank:

"[T]ell me why it is that the Jews suffer so damn much, Morris? It seems to me that they like to suffer, don't they?"
"Do you like to suffer? They suffer because they are Jews."
"That's what I mean, they suffer more than they have to."
"If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want. But I think if a Jew don't suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing."
"What do you suffer for, Morris?" Frank said.
"I suffer for you," Morris said calmly.

Frank laid his knife down on the table. His mouth ached. "What do you mean?"
"I mean you suffer for me."

In the above dialogue between those from different cultural backgrounds, they are trying to understand each other by discoursing on suffering. As has been pointed out, they form a specific type of father-son relationship in Jewish literature—it is well known that Jews are often referred to as "the sons of Abraham." For Morris who has never forgotten his lost son Ephraim, Frank is his son-like assistant. For Frank who has never settled down since he was orphaned, on the other hand, Morris is his father-like master. It can then be said that Malamud draws them into conversation in order to emphasize their specific and symbolic relationship.

At the same time, their father-son-like relationship is suggestive of their mutual anotherness. After reading the Old Testament, Frank has himself circumcised; and the novel ends with: "After Passover he became a Jew" (297). Thus, Frank the Italian internalizes Morris's Jewishness as a result of his multiculturalistic attempt at embracing the others, namely Morris and Helen the Jews. More often than not, Frank has been considered as an anti-heroic failure in that he is a burglar, a stealer, and a voyeur, among others. Nevertheless, he is doubtless successful in one thing, no matter whether it is heroically done. The Assistant is, after all, a story of the assistant who succeeds in attaining anotherness by attaining Jewishness.
While incorporating into the vast universe of multicultural discourse a number of concepts such as anotherness and dialogics, this study has conducted a critical analysis of Malamud’s works that deal directly with American multiculturality. As we have seen, his fiction illuminates teaching for the multicultural classroom, or the classroom which is essentially multicultural, in that his characters are mostly situated in multicultural settings and that they replace otherness with anotherness in the course of their dialogical interaction with each other. It must be stressed here that their mutual relationships are by no means inflexible, just as Sobel and Miriam form both teacher-student and student-student relationships.

In addition to “The First Seven Years,” Malamud’s “The German Refugee” is also worth remarking as a story dealing with complex relationships between characters—one from the Old World and the other in the New. Oskar Gassner is a German refugee learning English from Martin Goldberg in order to give a lecture in “The Literature of the Weimar Republic.” On the other hand, Martin is “a poor student and would brashly attempt to teach anybody anything for a buck an hour” (93). In short, Oskar and Martin play a dual role as a teacher and a student.

Not only are they both teachers and students, but they are also friends—and their friendship counts in terms of multiculturality. Martin looks back upon his college days when he would frequently call on Oskar: “I came every day, as a friend, neglecting my other students and therefore my livelihood” (103). Judging from this retrospective statement, Oskar was presumably Martin’s best friend rather than merely “a friend,” and the following is also one of the examples that show his close friendship with the refugee: “He took to his bed. I took to the New York Public Library. I read some of the German poets he was trying to write about, in English translation. Then I read Leaves of Grass and wrote down what I thought one or two of them had got from Whitman” (104). Martin’s personal feeling toward Oskar manifests itself in internal dialogues with him as a peer reviewer. In his works, therefore, Malamud emphasizes over and over again that literature is primarily a medium of exchange because it enables us to interact with others, just as Oskar and Martin exchange their ideas about German and American literatures.

Additionally, Martin enters into external dialogues with Oskar by teaching him the pronunciation in (American) English. “To these people,” says he, “the great loss was the loss of language—that they could not say what was in them to say. You have some subtle thought and it comes out like a piece of broken bottle. They could, of course, manage to communicate, but just to communicate was frustrating” (97). The fundamental purpose of Martin’s teaching of pronunciation is to have students practice not simply communication but articulation as well. In Martin, therefore, dialogue is almost synonymous with critique, and his successful practice of critical dialogue or dialogical critique reassures us that dialogics serves to cultivate one’s sense of anotherness, especially when s/he encounters those from culturally different backgrounds such as Sobel the Polish refugee and Oskar the German refugee.

Given his efforts to enter into internal and external dialogues, Martin is unquestionably being another for Oskar. Martin’s friendship with him comes to a sudden end, however, when the former knows the latter’s suicide. Subsequently, Martin learns from the letter by the
suicide’s mother-in-law that Frau Gassner, whom Oskar abandoned when he fled Germany, “is converted to Judaism by a vengeful rabbi” and “is shot in the head and topples into an open ditch with the naked Jewish men, their wives and children, some Polish soldiers, and a handful of gypsies” (108). According to the letter, Frau, as a Jew, was shot to death by the Brown Shirts—the members of the Nazis. Which means that she fell victim to the rabbi’s Judaization and the party’s Nazification, each of which is monoculturalistic violence against Others such as Gentiles, Polishes, and Jews.

Notwithstanding its tragic ending, “The German Refugee” is inarguably humanistic in that “Martin’s...growth in human understanding...show[s]...the possibilities that exist even amid tragedy” (Abamson 136). It is well known that Malamud refused to be called a Jewish-American writer because he believed his humanistically oriented message to be universal. It should be stressed that the universal is to him the multicultural in the sense that his work deals mostly with race relations in close connection with the human race as a whole. Indeed, he is reported to have said as to the question of suffering, “Every man is a Jew though he may not know it.” This statement is an indication that he takes a holistic view of humankind, whose specific kind is to him the Jews.

Malamud’s holistic-specific perspective can then be introduced into the multicultural classroom. Especially in an introductory course, the teacher should recognize students as a heterogeneous group of humans. At the same time, the teacher should also recognize that s/he, as one of humans, is always situated level with those individually particular students. In so doing, s/he is able to decentralize the banking model of education argued by Paulo Freire. “Banking education resists dialogue,” he maintains; and what he proposes as “problem-solving education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality” (64). Freire’s particular emphasis on dialogue is based on his following vision of education: “Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students” (53). Given his continuous engagement in “reconciling the poles of the contradiction,” Freire’s critical pedagogy based on poststructural Marxism can be seen as an ongoing attempt to prevent and subvert the hierarchical dichotomy of teacher/student.

Simply put, banking education is representative of otherness between teacher and students. It can readily be assumed, then, that mutual recognition and dialogical construction of anotherness are inarguably crucial in practicing multiculturalism in any environment as a “classroom” where we learn to interact with seemingly cultural Others. By employing a holistic-specific perspective on humans as those with great potential to become mutually another through dialogue, we will be able to direct our steps toward multiculturality inspired by Malamud.

Notes

1The question of the past is also related closely to postcolonialism in the following terms:A key problem remains in the actual naming of this criticism as ‘postcolonial,’ for the prefix ‘post-’ raises questions similar to those arising from its attachment to the term ‘modernism.’ Does ‘post-’ signal a beak into a phase and consciousness of

—115—
newly constructed independence and autonomy ‘beyond’ and ‘after’ colonialism, or
does it imply a continuation and intensification of the system, better understood as neo-
colonialism? (Selden and Widdowson 196)

In short, the difference between “post-colonialism” and “postcolonialism” is crucial in taking
a critical stance on colonialism/imperialism.

Similarly, Eugene Debs Hartke, the first-person narrator of Hocus Pocus, critiques
American capitalism associated with classism: “even our natives, if they had reached the top
or been born at the top, regarded Americans as foreigners” (284).

It must be added, though, that Malamud’s third and fourth novels, A New Life and The
Fixer, differ thematically from his other writings: At the intersection between the third and
the fourth, “Malamud moves from a restrictive, academic setting that could not bear the
weight of his themes, to one of suitable historical density that can provide a solid base for a
tale fraught with moral, religious, and cultural complexities” (Abramson 57).

For example, The Fixer is a story of Yakov Bok, a Jew in Tsarist Russia. On the other
hand, Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition is a collection of interrelated stories of Arthur
Fidelman and of his movements about Italy.

To recapitulate his point, Freire has drawn the following parallel between banking and
problem-posing educations: “In sum: banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixat-
ing forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-posing theory
and practice take the people’s historicity as their starting point” (64).

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要 約

本稿は、ユダヤ系アメリカ人のBernard Malamudの作品において、どのように「多文化主義(multiculturalism)」が構築され実践されているかを検証する。特に注目した作品は“The First Seven Years”や“The German Refugee”などの短編およびThe Assistantなどの長編であり、これらにおいて「他者性(otherness)」が「共者性(anotherness)」へと変容していることを発見することで、作者独自の多文化主義が実現されていることを論証する。

以上の点を論じるうえで重要なことは、文学の役割である。Malamudの文学作品は、文学作品を媒介として人物たちが関係を深める場合が往々にしてある。すなわち、文化的背景の異なる人物たちは、同一の作品を読むことで相互の交流の契機を見出し、結果として自己に対する「他者」は「共者」として認識される。そして相互の交流は、Mikhail Bakhtin が唱える「対話法(dialogics)」によって促進される。具体的には、上記に挙げた作品の主要人物たちは、話すことによる意味交換という「外的な対話(external dialogue)」と、書くことによる意見交換という「内的な対話(internal dialogue)」を同時に実践している。それにより「ユダヤ系」と「非ユダヤ系」という二項対立が相克され、ついには人物たちは相違を認識したうえでの共者間の交流を実現するに至る。

さらに本稿では、多文化主義が教育においても重要であることを説く。文化的背景という点においては、多くの場合、学生と学生ならびに教師と学生は異なる人間である。この意味において、多文化な環境(特に大学)における人間同士の共者性を育む場は教室であり、そこで文学作品を読むことは多文化
主義を実践することと不可分である。かくして、Malamudの「文学 (writings)」は理論的かつ実践的な「教学 (teachings)」でもあると結論する。