

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích  
Pedagogická fakulta  
Katedra anglistiky

## Diplomová práce

The Brothers Isaac Bashevis Singer and Israel  
Joshua Singer: Analysis of Four Jewish-American  
Novels

Bratři Isaac Bashevis Singer a Israel Joshua Singer:  
Analýza čtyř amerických židovských románů

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Rok odevzdání práce: 2011

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### Poděkování

Rád bych poděkoval panu Christopheru Koyovi, M.A., za jeho cenné rady, připomínky, mimořádnou trpělivost a mnohostrannou podporu.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Mr. Christopher Koy, M.A., for his valuable advice, comments, extraordinary patience and many-sided support.

## **Abstract**

The aim of this diploma work is to analyze four novels with American settings written originally in Yiddish by the Singer brothers. Two novels concern the conditions of Jewish immigrants from Poland or Germany who escaped to America to avoid racial prosecution by Nazis. The issues of loss of religion and family, assimilation in the United States and feelings of chaos and confusion are among the pervading motifs in these novels. The novels are placed in their historical context of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Two other novels, one by Israel Joshua Singer deals with a mixed family and a son with conflicting affiliations, and finally a novel of by the Nobel laureate, Isaac Bashevis Singer, concerns an atheist whose Jewish faith is renewed.

## **Anotace**

Náplní této diplomové práce je analýza čtyř románů odehrávajících se v Americe. Tyto romány bratří Singerů byly původně napsány v jazyce jidiš. Dva romány se dotýkají podmínek židovských polských či německých přistěhovalců, kteří uprchli do Ameriky, aby se vyhnuli rasovému stíhání nacistů. Pronikavými motivy těchto románů jsou převážně ztráta víry a rodiny, asimilace ve Spojených státech a pocit chaosu a zmatení. Romány jsou zařazeny do historického kontextu poloviny 20. století. Další dva romány, jeden napsaný Israelem Joshuou Singerem, se potýkají s tématem smíšené rodiny a s tématem syna s konfliktním vztahem k otci. Poslední román od laureáta Nobelovy ceny, Isaaca Bashevis Singera, se týká ateisty, jehož židovská víra je obnovena.

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## Preface

The topic of Judaism is interesting and it has long history. In fact, we can consider Judaism the basis of the most widespread religions: Christianity and Islam. The people who had chosen Judaism did not have easy lives not only in the Middle Ages but also before and during the World War Two. Israel Joshua Singer and Isaac Bashevis Singer are ranked among happier people who survived the Nazi fury. Both brothers enriched the world of literature and hammered out the problem of the alienation, loss of the family and belief. I. B. Singer, the Nobel Prize winner, offers the world of disillusion, sorrow but also satire and humour. The aim of this diploma work is to introduce the history of Judaism which is quite important to know when reading Singer's works and then to analyze four novels describing the destinies of the Jewish immigrants during the World War Two. Three novels, written by Isaac Bashevis, deal with the religious question and the position of people starting a new life. It was interesting to get to know the fate of the main characters.

For the analysis I used primary and secondary literature. The complete work is composed of the introduction, four subdivided chapters of Isaac Bashevis and Israel Joshua and the conclusive comparison.



## **1. Introduction**

Jewish literature has its specific place in the American literary world and it is considered the literature written by Jewish immigrants since 1885. “The field of Jewish American literature is not restricted to one relatively short, well-defined period: it extends over two centuries and is open-ended, continuing to develop in interesting and important ways.” (Wirth-Nesher 2003: 9)

### **1.1 Jewish history: an Overview**

The Jewish nation has a rich history full of fights and broils. Even in secular terms their culture is nescient for many nations. The development of the Jewish nation is complicated and passes over a score centuries. The Jewish generations have influenced society for such a long time and other people have studied to understand their culture, traditions and customs for centuries. Universities all over the world offer courses to learn Hebrew and Jewish history, for example.

Between the dominant position of the white majority and the marginal position of peoples of color (having been perceived as such for most of America’s history), American Jews have no clearly designated place on America’s multicultural map which acknowledges their difference. (Wirth-Nesher 2003: 8)

Local proof of the presence of the Jewish people is for example that in Prague a kosher shop was opened recently. Many Jews are so religious as well as proud of many things like Hebrew which is kept till these days.

But the Jewish people have been in exile for two thousand years; they have lived in hundreds of countries, spoken many languages and still kept their old language, Hebrew. They kept their Aramic, later their Yiddish; they kept their books; they did not forsake their faith; and after two thousand years they are going back to Israel. (Singer, Burgin 1986: 59)

Paul Spiegel's book *Kdo jsou Židé?* (in original *Was ist Koscher?*) summarizes most from the life of Jewish ancestors and customs that have survived until the present. This Jewish author, born in 1937 in Warendorf, moved with his family after the Crystal Night to Belgium to escape the Nazi horror. He and all family members were caught and sent to concentration camps Dachau and Auschwitz. After the war Spiegel returned with his mother to their native town. He never thought of leaving to Israel as many Jews did after the Holocaust. In 2000 he became a chairman of the Central Jewish Council in Germany. Paul Spiegel died in April 2006.

### **1.1.1 Abraham and his offspring**

Spiegel describes in his book *Kdo jsou Židé?* in chapter "Why is Israel so important for Jews?" the first Jewish forefather Abraham who lived approximately in 1900 – 1700 B.C. This important person lived in the city of Ur, which is nowadays somewhere in Iran. His father had a shop with graven images. People prayed to those graven images because they wanted to have better lives.

God firstly spoke to Abraham and He gave him a proposal that Abraham could become a founder of a great nation. (Genesis 12.2) Abraham had originally doubts about it because he did not have any children. Yet he believed so much in the One that he and his wife decided to start on the journey with other like-minded people. They became nomads and shepherds and traveled to Canaan – later renamed to Judea. (Genesis 12.5)

Abraham wanted to succeed in his mission but there was no baby. Abraham's wife Sarah knew very well what it meant to a man to have no descendant: shame and humiliation. She was so devoted to her husband that she allowed him to sleep with her young and beautiful slave Hagar. In 1850 B.C. there was born a baby, a bastard named Ishmael, who should be forefather of Arabs. (Genesis 16.15) This child was not predetermined to fulfil his destiny. There had to be another child; a child of Sarah and Abraham. Although Abraham was not sure about having

a baby with Sarah, soon after Ishmael's birth Sara became pregnant and his son Isaac was born. (Exodus 20.3) Since that time Abraham knew that God was also the lord of law of nature. Isaac is called as a second forefather of the Jewish nation. God and Abraham entered an arrangement (*brit* in Hebrew) in which God promised to protect Abraham, his family and desirable offspring. In return, God requested abidance of the commands and inhibitions he gave up. To accomplish the arrangement, Abraham and all men around had to be circumcised (Genesis 17.10). God was gracious and requested that other generations of boys had to be circumcised on the eight day after birth.

### **1.1.2 Jacob and Israel**

Another forefather of the Jewish nation, Jacob, was born in 1750 B.C. to Isaac. Jacob, who later had two wives, fought one night with an angel. The angel did not outsmart Jacob and it later came to light that the angel was in fact God or if it was the angel it acted upon God's request. After that night Jacob changed his name to Israel. Israel means in Hebrew the one who fought God. (Genesis 32.28) Israel with his two wives had twelve sons and one daughter. Those twelve sons became forefathers of the twelve Jewish tribes. One of those twelve sons was second youngest Joseph; he was intelligent and handsome and also father's favourite one. That was the reason why his brothers hated him and sold him to a caravan which headed to Egypt. (Genesis 37.27) After that ten brothers soaked Joseph's clothes with goat's blood and went back to father. (Genesis 37.31) They told Israel that Joseph had been killed. Although the youngest son Benjamin did not agree with the behavior of his brothers and wanted to tell father everything, he was afraid and remained silent.

### **1.1.3 Joseph**

Joseph spent some time in prison but his ability to interpret pharaoh's dreams saved him and he became Grand Vizier. (Genesis 41.15) He correctly predicted seven years of a fasting period that in Mizraim, Egypt, really happened. Egypt

was saved only because of Joseph. (Genesis 41.27) The poor crops affected Canaan as well and Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt. After their atonement, brothers returned for their father. The pharaoh was so grateful that he allowed Joseph and his family to stay in one of the best parts of Egypt and those ancestors of the Jewish nation stayed there for more than four hundred years. (Genesis 47.6) A new pharaoh brought changes into the society and Egyptians started to feel anger and fear. Israelites became slaves and took part in the building of the great pyramids, sights and cities like Pitom and Ramses. (Exodus 1.8)

#### **1.1.4 Leaving Egypt**

The hope for the Israelites appeared in the form of young man called Moses. In that time in Egypt, the pharaoh wanted to kill all first-born sons of Israelites so his mother tried to save him and put him in the cane basket into the Nile River. (Exodus 2.3) Moses was found and saved by pharaoh's daughter and he grew on pharaoh's court. (Exodus 2.5,6)

#### **1.1.5 Moses**

Moses could grow in happiness but one day he saw an Egyptian warder who was beating a Jew. (Exodus 2.11) Moses could not watch that situation and he killed the warder. (Exodus 2.14) He had to leave Egypt and during his wandering, God appeared before him and wanted him to lead the Jewish people out of slavery. (Exodus 3.9) Moses was afraid because he stuttered and he did not want to be ridiculed, so God gave Moses advice to take his brother Aaron too. (Exodus 4.14) Both men went back to speak with pharaoh but he laughed at them. God sent the Ten Plagues on Egypt. The last plague was that all first-born sons of Egyptians died. To avoid the death of Israelites children, Israelites sacrificed a lamb and with its blood they painted door frames so the angel of death only passed by.

That last plague of Egypt broke the pharaoh so he let Moses with the Jewish slaves go. "Let my people go!" called Moses on pharaoh. That sentence became later a slogan for every freedom movement. That event called Pesach or in English Passover is celebrated up to the present day. Moses subsequently fared more than forty years through the Sinai desert.

### **1.1.6 Ten Commandments**

On Mount Sinai Moses obtained Ten Commandments, the Torah, the book which contained the Jewish laws and basis of Jewish belief. (Exodus 20.1) Ten Commandments are

- 1 I am the Lord your God
- 2 You shall have no other gods before me, you shall not make for yourself an idol
- 3 Do not take the name of the Lord in vain
- 4 Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy
- 5 Honor your father and mother
- 6 You shall not kill
- 7 You shall not commit adultery
- 8 You shall not steal
- 9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
- 10 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, you shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor (Pöhlman, Stern 2002)

The Israeli nation was set as a nation with its own history, constitution and laws. It is interesting that the establishment came true in a desert in contradistinction to other nations where the establishment was set in homeland. (Spiegel 2007: 58) That explains why the Jewish nation remained intact as a religion during the Diaspora and followed the Torah with its own laws. Their religion had a universal force which was not dependent on homeland and property.

### **1.1.7 Promised Land**

After forty years in the desert the Hebrews entered their own land. One generation of refugees died off. It was very important for God because he did not want to have a mentality of slaves in a new free society. Moses died in the desert but once he saw the land of promise. (Deuteronomy 34.4) Twelve tribes were dispersed and there were different kinds of rules. Finally, there was a need to have one king ruling the whole region. Saul became the first king of Israelites in the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. After a great war he was beaten and committed suicide. His follower was David who was known as the author of psalms. He conquered Jerusalem and made it the capital of the empire. The Messiah, important person for the Jewish nation, should be descendant of David's lineage. (Spiegel 2007: 59) Although David served God devoutly, he was punished because David pined for Bathsheba, the wife of one David's leader. David got rid of the leader that he sent him on a certain death and he slept with Bathsheba but he committed an offence against God's law. (2 Samuel 11.15)

God forgave David's son Solomon who also got a permission to build the Temple in Jerusalem standing on Temple Mount. (1 Kings 6.1 – 38) Nowadays there are Muslim sanctuaries or Al-Aksa mosque at this location. It became a religious centre, there were divine services called koheni and immolations. It was the most famous epoch in Jewish history. After Solomon died, there was a quarrel among twelve tribes and finally there originated two kingdoms; Israel in the north and Judea in the south during 930 – 722 B.C. Many prophets warned people to keep with God and not to sin to avoid the God's punishment. In 721 Assyrians attacked Israel and crushed ten of the tribes.

(2 Kings 15.29)

### **1.1.8 Babylonian captivity**

In 598 B.C. Babylonians conquered the kingdom of Judea with both tribes Juda and Benjamin, and thereby destroyed Solomon's Temple and dragged away

the tribes into Babylonian captivity. (2 Kings 24, 25) Before this invasion people called themselves Hebrews (in Hebrew *Ivri* which meant “the one, who came from the other side) and Israelites but after it new term, Jew, appeared.

Promised Land was destroyed as the prophet Ezechiel had foretold. Many Jews turned away from Judaism and became gentiles while other continued in rituals but it lost its worth. Great schools were created later in Babylonian cities Pumbedita, Nehardea and Sura. In those schools, the laws of Torah were discussed which later on became a base for the Babylonian Talmud with the most important rules. Persians later conquered Babylon and they allowed the Jews return to Jerusalem but only a small minority actually returned. Most of them were satisfied with the life in the Diaspora. (John 7.35)

#### **1.1.9 A New Temple**

A New Temple was built on the place of the Solomon's but it was smaller. There was new spiritual centre for the Jews but since that there were two of them - Judea with its capital Jerusalem and Babylon. It was difficult situation for home-comers but it changed in 445 when Nehemiah became the protector of the land and Ezdras who read Torah. (Nehemiah 1 -3) He also persuaded Jews to celebrate the sabbath of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukot. Many of those feasts are also mentioned in novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

#### **1.1.10 Jewish traditions**

Pesach (Passover in English) represents a feast to eliminate the evil or it can be connected with the phases of the Moon and the full moon. It remains from the exodus from Egyptian slavery. The Jews are obliged to eat azym during the feast as it is mentioned in the rabbinical Judaism. The Jews are also forbidden to possess or to eat food in the fermented category also called chamec including ferment, cereals and alcoholic drinks. The difficult procedure of cleaning the dishes led to possessing special pesach dishes. One day before Pesach there is

a control of chamec and rests are burnt while speaking of the special formula. Pesach itself lasts seven days in Israel and eight days in dispersion. It is also interesting that during the feast it is necessary to drink four cups of wine and to lean on one's left elbow which represents the old fashioned dinner time. It is astonishing what else has to be done during this feast because Pesach is with Sabbath the most important. (Sládek 2008: 166, 167) Quote from I. B. Singer's *Enemies, A Love Story*: "Before Passover, Tamara had stocked up on Haggadahs, seder trays, matzo covers, skullcaps of all styles and colors, even candles and matzo plates." (Singer 1972: 246) Quote from I. B. Singer's *Meshugah*: "I began to doze off and dreamed that it was Passover and I was in Warsaw." (Singer 1994: 127)

Shavuot (also Shevuot) which means weeks is the second feast, the feast of weeks. In the biblical time it was the feast celebrating the end of barley harvest. In the Temple it was celebrated with dancing next to an altar and other rituals. The time of Shavuot is associated with the handover of the Torah on Mount Sinai. The main habit is to eat milk food and cheesecakes because the Torah is compared to "milk and honey". (Sládek 2008: 215, 216) Quote from I. B. Singer's *Enemies, A Love Story*: "The night before Shevuout, Yadviga gave birth to a daughter." (Singer 1972: 279)

Sukot which means stalls and sheds is the third pilgrimage feast. In Israel it was the feast associated with the end of the fruit harvest. In biblical terms it was connected with freedom from slavery. The most important religious task is to stay in suka for seven days of the feast. Suka was the place where the Jews studied, ate and slept. The light in suka was decisive. (Sládek 2008: 203)

Judea stayed oppressed for a long time until 333 B.C. when Alexander the Great conquered Persia. (Prophecy in Daniel 11.2-4) Although he was a scholar of Aristotle he allowed Jews to live according to their belief. As gratitude many parents gave their sons the name after this great ruler. The situation was different



in the Diaspora where the Jews gave their offspring non-Jewish names because they did not want to differ and it was easily to guess if someone was a Jew according to the name. Anti-Semitism was dangerous. Children had one extra name which was not in the passport but it was used in the religious sphere.

#### **1.1.11 Alexander the Great**

The empire was divided after Alexander's death and Egypt was taken by Ptolemaios I. who established the dynasty of Ptolemaois. That dynasty tolerated the Jewish way of life. The most culturally considerable Jewish community in history was in Alexandria. The Jewish people kept their belief but they spoke Greek and were more or less assimilated. The Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek and Septuaginta became the basis of biblical research.

When the Antioch dynasty came to power, the Jewish nation experienced cruel times. Antioch III. was intolerant to the Jewish community and wanted to transform Jerusalem into a Greek city. Antiochos IV. Epifanes was the worst ruler who occupied the whole city, forbade divine services and circumcisions and all religious schools were closed. He also desolated the Temple and put the statue of Zeus on the holiest place. That fact fanned hatred among the assimilated and orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews led by Maccabees won a guerrilla war, they purified the Temple, the statue of Zeus was torn down and it was dedicated once again only to one God. Chanukah is the Jewish feast which reminds of dedication the Temple. (Spiegel 2007: 65)

#### **1.1.12 Roman occupation**

By the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Judea was a province under Roman dominion. In 37 B.C. Herod was made a king of Judea. Although he did a lot for the Jewish community they hated him and regarded him as an oppressor of the Jews. He rebuilt the Temple and it was called Herod's Temple, also considered as the Second Temple. (Spiegel 2007: 66)

### **1.1.13 Zealots**

In 66 A.D. a group of militant Jews called Zealots started a revolt against Romans. They were successful and freed Jerusalem but not for a long time. In 70 A.D. Romans led by Titus recaptured Jerusalem, the Second Temple was destroyed by fire and only one west wall called Wailing Wall remained. Zealots escaped into the fortress Masada and they resisted for a few years. The last night before their defeat they decided to commit collective suicide. That act was called Kiddush Hashem. Masada was conquered in 73 A.D. and Rome won the war. The Jewish state was scattered, all Jews were chased out of Judea and they escaped into Europe or Africa. Many Jews wrote memoirs, poems and songs in which Mount Sion became the symbol of Promised Land. (Spiegel 2007: 69)

### **1.1.14 Last hope for Judaism**

When the Second Temple was destroyed during 69 and 70 A.D. Jerusalem was again completely under command of Romans. With every Jew killed they hoped that Judaism would disappear forever. Jochanan ben Sakaj is recognized as having saved the religion. Pretending death was the only way to survive so his scholars took him in a coffin out of the city. Later on he asked the Roman commander to open religious academy in a small town Javne on the seashore of Judea, which was under the Roman dominion renamed into Palestine. Jochanan searched for the best scholars from the whole country and together they discussed religious texts and renewed the basis of Judaism. (Spiegel 2007: 71)

## **1.2 Jews, Christians and Muslims**

### **1.2.1 Jews**

To understand the feud of Christians against Jews we have to return again into history. A group of Nazarenes quickly gained the importance and they renamed themselves Christians. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Christianity became the national

religion of Rome and the Roman Empire. Soon after Christians claimed that they were the chosen people, not the Jews, because they considered Jesus the Messiah. It was the main factor of disagreement between them.

### **1.2.2 Christians against Jews**

In the case that Jews existed, Christians did not have enough proof to be the chosen people. Some of the Christians were liable for the persecution of the Jews because they wrote about them like about blind, obstinate and merciless people because they did not want to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Some gospels described Jews as demonic people and Christ-killers. Christian lands allowed to Jews to live their way of life. The Jews stayed in their own communities and had their own laws and rules. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century great Jewish villages existed in France and along the Rhine and after 1066 when William the Conqueror subdued England, the Jews entered the British Islands as well. Smaller villages were scattered over the Holy Roman Empire. The Church taught people that Jews were murderers of their own God so since that time pogroms started. Also crusades started against the Holy Land which was under control of Muslims and that constituted another danger for the Jews. Masses of crusaders went through the Europe with the holy task – to kill Muslims and make Jerusalem under the control of the Catholic Church.

The worst situation was when plague appeared on the continent, many people died. More of them were Christians than Jews so the Christians started to think that the Jews poisoned the water. The fact was that the Jewish communities maintained a better hygiene situation. According to Christian myth Jews murdered young Christian children and from their blood Jews should prepare azym for the Pesach. The slander circled around the world and in 1290 were Jews driven out of England, and soon afterwards from France. More than 150 Jewish villages in Germany were destroyed during 1298, in 1492 after the Reconquista were more than two hundred thousands of Jews were driven out of Spain.

Salvaged Jews fled to Eastern Europe; into Poland, Turkey, Italy, Holland, Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. The Polish nobility needed Jewish businessmen and bankers so after centuries some Jews became excellent businessmen. Religious wars among Catholics and Protestants in the 16<sup>th</sup> century caused another migration. Polish and Baltic communities were the biggest in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Latvian city Vilno was considered as Jerusalem of the East. (Spiegel 2007: 78)

An interesting fact about Jews is that the Jewish people played also an important role during the 1950s and 1960s when there was the fight for black civil rights. The Jewish people felt that they were a subordinate minority as well as Afro-Americans therefore they helped them. (Procházka 2002: 256)

### **1.2.3 Muslims**

New kind of Judaism came into being in the Orient – Islam and it was considered as the third Abraham's religion whose founder Mohamed (590 – 632) taught Arabs to belief in one God Allah. Arabs considered themselves as an offspring of Abraham's son Izmael and the religion became radically monotheistic. Some of the habits were taken from Judaism like fixed praying period of fasting day other rules were added or changed. (Spiegel 2007: 82)

### **1.3 Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews**

Nowadays we distinguish two Jewish groups; first Ashkenazi (German) these are the Jews from Germany or France and Sephardic (Spanish) which consists of refugees from 1492 and oriental Jews. Although these two groups developed apart they remained the same in basic religious belief. They used Torah and Talmud and same devotions only with different sequences and tones. Ashkenazi Jews were affected by the Slavic music and Sephardic Jews by Andalusia or oriental elements.

Nowadays every Israeli (Sephardic or Ashkenazi) speaks Hebrew like Sephardic. The East European or West European way remains in some ultra orthodox communities or in a Diaspora. (Spiegel 2007: 85)

### **1.3.1 Ashkenazi Jews**

Ashkenaz is originally a biblical name of one of the great-grandsons of Noah. In medieval Hebrew literature it was the name for Germany. This name later came to represent a new cultural kind of Jews coming from Germany and northern France especially since they spoke Yiddish.

Ashkenazi Jews – a community has its beginning in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. For Ashkenazi Jews, the relation with the Christian West European civilization is important. Their stormy historical background like expulsion from England and France, crusades and pogroms ended in migration to Austria, Poland and other countries. Ashkenazi Jews have from Germany colloquial language Yiddish. (Sládek 2008: 44)

### **1.3.2 Sephardic Jews**

Sephard is a name in the Bible, in medieval Hebrew literature it is a name for Spain. This name later came to represent a new cultural kind of Jews coming from Spain.

Sephardic Jews - for Sephardic Jews the relation with the Muslim civilization is important. Because of the reconquest their influence in northern Africa and Mediterranean grows since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Later in the 15<sup>th</sup> century important centers appear in Italy. The Sephardic religion contains Greek philosophy and usage of Arabic has a great impact. (Sládek 2008: 191, 192)

## **1.4 Anti-Semitism**

Anti-Semitism, which developed through the centuries, is a conception that is really aberrant. Arabs belong to the group of Semitic people but they have never become victims of anti-Semitism. The term Semites is used purely for the Jewish people since 1880 although it is not correct marking.

### **1.4.1 Modern Anti-Semitism**

The character of Anti-Semitism and persecutions had radically changed over the past two centuries. Hand in hand with the new position, the Jews “lost” their socio-economical function in the society. Superiority over the weaker parts of the society disappeared. Modern Anti-Semitism first appeared in 1870 in France, Germany, Russia and according to the Jewish socialists it was the consequence of capitalism. On the contrary, the countries where capitalism spread earlier (Britain and Belgium) Anti-Semitism did not extend in such conditions. The early modern Anti-Semitism which is roughly dated from 1880 to 1900 on the continental Europe was as the reaction of the people who deeply hated industrial society in its good and bad aspects. Jews were taken as scapegoats and the biggest problem was only the Jewish race. In comparison with those people, Christian and Muslim societies were able to liberate themselves from all previous feuds.

Nowadays, Anti-Semitism is nearly connected with xenophobia – a hunger for a “pure” homogenous society. In many European countries in 1900, the Jew was the only major minority. German racists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century hated Jews and Africans in the same way but since there were few Africans in Germany at that time they directed their biggest effort against Jews. The hate is easily focused on the present than absent people. A completely different situation was in America where Anti-Semitism developed in its “own” version. (Shahak 1997: 87 - 90) As one scholar noted when the Soviet Union was still discriminating against Jews in the late 1960s.

European governments have often made it an instrument of state policy, a means of diverting the attention of their citizens from internal problems; hereditary monarchies used it in the name of Christianity, Hitler used it in the name of cultural purity, and the Soviet Union is using it today in the name of proletarian unity. But in America anti-Semitism has never had any legal status. It has always been sporadic; an impulsive, sometimes highly virulent outburst of hate by fanatics, like Father Coughlin before the war and George Lincoln Rockwell in recent years. It never had official sanction. (Yaffe 1969: 51)

#### **1.4.2 Reaction against Anti-Semitism**

From the social point of view Zionism was the Jewish reaction to Anti-Semitism and at the same time it was a conservative fellow so even if Zionists sometimes did not realize who their ally or enemy was. The Jews from western countries averted from the Classic Judaism and joined cultural movement Jewish Enlightenment (Haskala) which originated in Germany and Austria in 1780' and later spread to Western Europe. The increase of Anti-Semitism dealt a blow to Jewish enlightenment because it came just after the emancipation of the Jews. In comparison the Jews became full-valued citizens in Austria in 1867 and in Germany after 1871.

In fact there was always narrow connection between Zionists and Anti-Semites because Zionists believed that they could use Anti-Semites for their own purpose – for example the happiness of some Zionist leaders can be cited when Adolf Hitler came into power. They sympathized with the theory of a “pure” race and they had the same aversion to the assimilation of the Jews into German society. They even congratulated Hitler on his victory. (Shahak 1997: 91 - 94)

#### **1.5 Education – Cheder**

Cheder (meaning room, pl. chadarim) was religion school of lower level where pupils were taught the basis of the Torah, the foundation of and Judaism.

This method of education has been developed since the Middle Ages mainly among the Ashkenazi Jews. Cheder was a place where primary education – the Hebrew alphabet, the Hebrew languages, the Five Books of Moses, the Jewish laws and customs were obtained. Young boys entered cheder around the age of five until puberty (age of thirteen). Students should learn how to read the scroll of the Torah. Physical punishment was harsh for lazy students.

The private teacher was known as melamed and he taught in his own home or house (that is the explanation of cheder). “The other children were afraid to play with him. He had a good head on his shoulders, and his melamed predicted that he would grow up a prodigy.” (Singer 1994: 165) Later on, an annex building was built to synagogues. In 19<sup>th</sup> century there were first attempts to provide better education which included expansion of the subject matters. The successful students started to study the Talmudic universities called yeshivot.

Nowadays some Western countries use this kind of education (Hebrew classes) under the auspices of a synagogue or a community. It means that children attend something similar to cheder. The state of Israel uses this kind of education for their ultra orthodox school systems. (Newman 1992: 56) (Sládek 2008: 100)

### **1.6 *The Jewish Daily Forward***

*The Jewish Daily Forward* represented the largest of the Yiddish newspapers in the past. It was founded by Abraham Cahan in 1897 and it was owned by the Forward Association. *The Jewish Daily Forward* provided the important info for the immigrants. The immigrated Jews found practical advice in Yiddish about what is acceptable in New York, how to dress or how to behave, what the Americans like or dislike. It also included info about education or politics. This newspaper exists up to this day and as well as it offers the texts in Yiddish. (Yaffe 1969: 276)



Reviewers hailed Joshua Singer as a new voice in Yiddish prose, and Abraham Cahan, famed editor of New York's Jewish Daily Forward, vacationing in Europe, read the stories and hired Joshua to write for his newspaper. The next year he appointed Joshua the paper's European correspondent and assigned him to share with its American readers what was "piquant" in Polish Jewish life. (Later Isaac too would become-and remain-a Forward writer.) Joshua wrote for the paper (often as G. Kuper) until his death. (Siegel 1981: 50)

### **1.7 Yiddish language**

Yiddish is the Jewish language which was vernacular and later it also presented literary language of the Ashkenazi Jews. It sounds like a strange form of German dialect, older version of German. Yiddish is based on Hebrew, Aramaic and German with other dialects for example Slavic dialect and it was never standardized. That means that there are no grammatical rules and every single group of Jews has its specificity.

There are phases in which Yiddish changes: the early Yiddish (before 1250), the old Yiddish (1250 – 1500), middle age Yiddish (1500 – 1750) and new Yiddish (after 1750). In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Yiddish language spread eastwards to Bohemia, Moravia, Latvia and other lands. It became the vernacular language of the Jews and it was separated from its German roots. Glossary had very important role. It helped to understand Hebrew and Aramaic texts. There were lots of studies of Yiddish since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Many Jewish books were printed in Hebrew during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the literature was available only to scholars. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Yiddish was infiltrated into the folk sphere. (Sládek 2008: 109, 110)

Yiddish language differs from other languages because of Hebrew alphabet and reading from left to right. I. B. Singer also used Yiddish. Although there are English translations of his books, Isaac Bashevis controlled those translations

carefully. For better imagination of the Yiddish there is an example of the Yiddish newspaper in which the Singer brothers' novels were published.



Figure 1

<http://www.danwymannbooks.com/yidper/literarishe.jpg>

## 1.8 Overview of I. B. Singer

Isaac Bashevis Singer also known in Yiddish as Icek-Hersz Zinger was born in Radzymin, Poland, on 14<sup>th</sup> July in 1904. His father was Rabbi Pincus Menachem Singer and mother Bathsheba Zylberman Singer. I. B. Singer grew up in the Jewish shtetl and he was raised in Hassidism. Yiddish language was everywhere around him. He visited the Jewish schools and also a rabbinical seminary. When he reached the age of four, his family moved to Warsaw where Isaac's father established a rabbinical court called in Yiddish *Beth Din*.

In 1917 he moved again with his mother to a small town, where Isaac Bashevis learned about the life of Jews. In 1920's he went to Warsaw and joined his brother Israel Joshua. Although his parents wanted young Isaac to become a rabbi, he got a job as a proofreader and later on he started to write his own works in Yiddish. I. B. Singer became a co-editor of a Yiddish literary magazine, *Globus*.

Singer left Poland in 1935, also leaving there his first wife Rachel and his five-year-old son Israel. Singer immigrated to New York City where he joined his older brother and there he eventually became an independent writer for the *Jewish Daily Forward* edited by Abraham Cahan (1860 - 1951), a famous American novelist, short story writer of Jewish American life. (Brody 2004: 250, 251)

Among these American writers were some who had very good reason to think of themselves as survivors of war and holocaust, and whose entire intellectual heritage had been transformed by the dark wartime events of 1941 – 1945. Jewish intellectuals had often followed the radical path into and out of Communism, had been preoccupied by European intellectual life and its modernist arts. It was they who could speak most validly for the six million victims of the world order, see the dangers of totalitarianism in politics and art, express the argument for a new humanism. By the fifties, a significant new group of Jewish-American novelists had appeared. Their work drew on the Yiddish tradition (brought to the States particularly by Isaac Bashevis Singer) and on Russian and European modernism - especially that part

of it concerned with the dismantling of the self by an intolerable modern history. (Bradbury 1992: 164, 165)

He remained attached to Judaism. “From the religious point of view, you can say I’m assimilated, but from a cultural point of view, I’m not. I stay with my people.” (Signer, Burgin 1986: 60)

Singer married Alma Heimann, a refugee from Germany. It is interesting that they both were vegetarians and they spent a lot of time feeding birds in the park. They thought that what humans did to animals at farms was similar to what Nazis did to the Jewish people in the Second World War and in many books such as his novel *Enemies, A Love Story* I. B. Singer did not fail to mention this idea.

I. B. Singer works with his characters and their names carefully. Some surnames share a special meaning. For example the main character of the novel *The Penitent* Joseph Shapiro – where Shapiro is Jewish Ashkenazic name derived from the German city of Speyer.

The character of Tamara Luria from *Enemies, A Love Story* – where Luria means again the Jewish Ashkenazic name for eastern and western Jewish inhabitants; it can be a variety of Lauria. The surname of Herman Broder has two meanings: it can represent younger son, brother of someone important or it is again Jewish eastern Ashkenazic variant of Brodsky.

Isaac Bashevis Singer remained religious but not with the orthodox for his whole life. He felt that the Jewish society could not survive without rules and authority which was something common for Jews in the U.S. It was caused by the new life in America and of the “modern” upbringing of children, although he personally never raised his only child.

I was brought up in a world where there was a certain kind of hope, a belief that God has created the world and has given us the Torah, and that the Torah points to use the way of life. Children are being brought up today thinking that there isn't such a thing as good and evil, that everything is relative. But men cannot function and grow with a completely neutral way of thinking. A morally neutral human being is a monster. (Singer, Burgin 1986: 6)

### **1.9 Overview of I. J. Singer**

Israel Joshua Singer also known in Yiddish transcription as Yisroel Yeshue Zinger was born in Bilgoraj, Poland, on 30<sup>th</sup> November in 1893. He was an older brother of Isaac Bashevis Singer and a younger brother of Esther Kreitman. He was a writer of realistic historical novels written in Yiddish. In 1920's and 1930's he published short stories which made him famous. In 1933 he immigrated to the United States and his works appeared in the *Jewish Daily Forward* in New York City. In the US he turned away from the Hasidic insularity which was preferred by his father. The novels like *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, *The Family Carnovsky* brought him great success. (Sundel 2002: 275, 276)

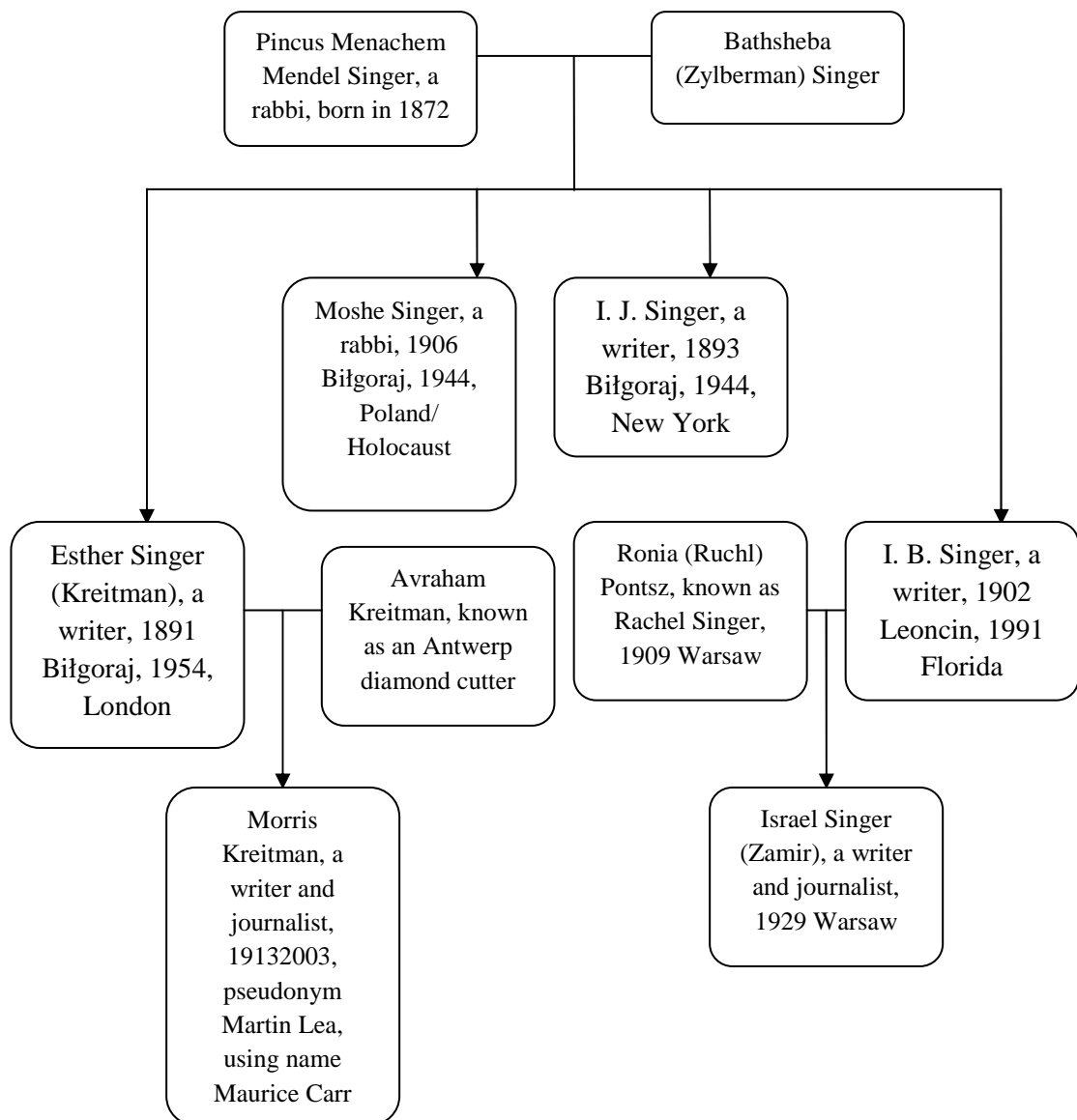
### **1.10 Singers, their relationship and family**

Maurice Carr, a nephew of Singer brothers, said that their relationship

“was not so much the relationship of an elder brother to a younger but [that of] a wise father to a lost child. And Isaac, I believe, smarted under that but accepted it, because he is, at bottom, a very practical man. He knew that I. J. Singer was terribly vain. And he was very, very careful to play second fiddle to accept the role of the lost child who is listening to the wisdom of his father. Isaac was even prepared to flatter I. J. Singer, because his older brother had wonderful tremendous vanity. Isaac has his qualities, but he also had vanity, but he's able to mask it. And Bashevis was very, very careful to keep on the right side of I. J. very, very careful indeed. Not until his older brother's death, in 1944, did Isaac Singer's

talent truly blossom. It was as if some kind of clamp had been taken off him spiritually and he was free and he was able to develop. Yet he does not wish to give the impression that Isaac did not love his elder brother but within this love there were all sorts of complex emotions and fears and jealousies and attachments and enslavements.” (Kresh 1979: 128)

Both brothers came of the old Polish rabbinic family. Although I. J. Singer and I. B. Singer are well known in the Jewish world, they had two sibs. Their brother, Moshe Singer, was a rabbi who perished in the Holocaust in 1944. Their only sister Esther Singer (Kreitman) survived the Second World War and had one son Morris, who was also a famous journalist and writer Morris Kreitman (pseudonym Martin Lea). For better imagination there is a family chart of the Singers family.



### **1.11 Singer on film**

The works of Isaac Bashevis Singer have not been forgotten. Many of his novels are translated into the foreign languages and many of them were internationally successful.

Those energies and talents are remarkably evident in the fields of literature and culture. Indeed, it would be hard to conceive of these areas in the twentieth century without Jewish artists and writers. Of the seven American Nobel Laureates in literature since the end of the Second World War, two have been Jews – Saul Bellow and Isaac Bashevis Singer – and countless other awards... (Wirth-Nesher 2003: 2)

There are also few books which experienced cinematization. One of the movies is *Yentl*, where Barbra Streisand enacted the main character. The book was published in Yiddish in 1960 and was translated into English in 1983.

#### **1.11.1 Yentl**

The movie *Yentl* is based on I. B. Singer's short story *Yentl the Yeshiva Boy*. *Yentl* (Barbra Streisand) is a young woman longing for knowledge but she is not allowed to study because of her gender. She dresses like a man, changes her name to Anshel (her brother's name) and enters a Jewish yeshivot – religious school. *Yentl* makes friends and falls in love with a class mate Avigdor (Mandy Patikin) who should marry his fiancé Hadass (Amy Irving). *Yentl* can not show her real feelings toward Avigdor because it would cause the end of her studies. Avigdor loves Hadass but does not want to break the rules which are against his belief. Although Avigdor loves Hadass, he does not want to break the religious rules and he tries to put Avigdor and Anshel (*Yentl*) together. Later on, the relationship of Avigdor and Hadass is redeemed and *Yentl* leaves for America to start a new life.





Figure 2

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_laba\\_UxfYb8/SZPCCYDOLVI/AAAAAAAAALX0/veS4XmVA\\_bY/s400/yentl+1.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_laba_UxfYb8/SZPCCYDOLVI/AAAAAAAAALX0/veS4XmVA_bY/s400/yentl+1.jpg)

### 1.11.2 Enemies, A Love story

The next film based on the novel of I. B. Singer is *Enemies, A Love Story*. The story takes place in New York in 1949. The main protagonist Herman Broder (Ron Silver) survived the Holocaust thanks to his former non-Jewish servant

Yadwiga (Margaret Sophia Stein). Herman finds a job as a ghostwriter and slowly adapts in New York. He gets into trouble after he realizes that he is committing polygamy with three women: Masha (Lena Olin), next Holocaust survivor, Yadwiga, his lifesaver from Poland, and lawful wife Tamara (Anjelica Huston) whom he thought was dead.



Figure 3

[http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3313/3451496364\\_cfc19e288d.jpg](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3313/3451496364_cfc19e288d.jpg)

## **2. Enemies, A Love Story (1972)**

The novel *Enemies, A Love Story* is placed in New York City five years after the World War Two. Main character, Herman Broder, survives the Holocaust thanks to his Catholic Polish servant Yadwiga. Later on he has an affair with Masha, an other survivor of the Holocaust who could be his next potential wife. What complicates the situation is the fact that Herman's lawful wife Tamara survived as well. With three partners the question of polygamy creates the chaotic plot of the novel.

... to such later fictions as *Enemies: A Love Story*, in which holocaust survivors in New York develop their own personal frenzies. But as Singer observes in his prefatory "Author's Note" to that story: "The characters are not only Nazi victims but victims of their own personalities and fates." (Spilka 1998: 434)

### **2.1 Characters in the Novel**

Like the life of I. B. Singer, Herman Broder, the protagonist of the novel is surrounded by Jewish women. In the novel there are three other significant characters, and all women that definitely affected Broder's life in New York City as well as his comprehension of the world. Masha represents the worst character. She is crazy, senseless and she ruins the main character Herman who is under pressure and perhaps commits suicide.

#### **2.1.1 The character of Tamara**

Firstly Tamara, his first wife and mother of his boys, David and Yocheved, loved her husband whereas he had wanted to divorce her. The only thing that connected Herman and Tamara was their two sons. The situation becomes complicated when the war breaks out and Herman learns from an eyewitness that his wife and two boys were shot by Nazis. However, Tamara survived and escaped to the Soviet Union, and later, to the United States. Herman knows that the uncle of Tamara

lives there but he does not want to contact him because, he married for the second time with his former Polish Catholic peasant housekeeper Yadwiga.

When he reads the advertisement in the Jewish newspaper that someone is looking for him and there is also a phone number, he is afraid that this person could be the uncle of Tamara who lives in the States. After some consideration, he calls the number and he learns that Tamara is alive. Herman is in straits and but he also knows that he has to visit Tamara. When they meet later Herman feels only disdain because Tamara has changed her appearance.

“Why is she wearing pink?” Herman thought. His embarrassment had subsided and he experienced a feeling of irritation that woman who had seen their children taken away to be killed allowed herself to be dressed in this fashion. (Singer 1972: 69)

Herman tries to apologize although he does not mean it but that is in fact the reality that Tamara knows “I didn’t know you were alive,” he said. And he was ashamed of his own words. “That’s something you never knew,..” (Singer 1972: 69)

However, Tamara is still willing to help Herman with his problems. He is even given a new job from Tamara’s uncle in a bookshop. It is a bit incomprehensible that Herman is interested, for example, if Tamara had other lovers in the Soviet Union. However she loved him so much that she remained faithful to Herman through the whole war.

### **2.1.2 Yadwiga: less than wife**

Secondly, a woman called Yadwiga played an important role for Herman in the wartime because, in principle, she saved Herman’s life and that is the real reason why he feels an obligation to her. Yadwiga hid him in her own house

in the hayloft; she protected him and gave him food. If Nazis had found him in the hayloft it would have meant certain death for Yadviga, her family and not only Herman. Since that time he is beholden to her and he tries to compensate this fact.

He tries to express his gratitude and takes Yadviga to America and there he marries her. They live together in Brooklyn where she continues her original role of a servant rather than that of a modern wife. Yadviga is not a well-educated person. She can not read or write. She rarely leaves their home because her orientation is not very good either but she supports him in everything, prepares food for him, does the washing and takes care of the household. She loves him so much that she wants to convert to Judaism and does everything for it. Her greatest dream is to have a child with Herman but his position is reserved. There is a question why Yadviga loves Herman so much. It can be caused by the fact that is linked to him because of the situations they have experienced during the time. Another possible reason is that Yadviga is attracted to Herman because of the different religion and different culture. Maybe she feels her biological clock and Herman is the only person that can help her but the best solution seems to be that she is attracted to Herman because she knows she can never have him. "That night, after a few hours of sleep, Yadviga awakened, filled with desire. She begged him, as she had so many times before, to give her a child, to arrange for her conversion to Judaism." (Singer 1972: 56)

He feels that there is no need of another child and Yadviga means to him only something like a good friend or family. The behavior of Herman to Yadviga is not very nice at the beginning of the novel and it continues to get worse. He does not treat her in a right way, he lies to her every time he leaves home. Even if he is with his lover, he phones Yadviga and continues lying. He makes up the story that he sells books and must travel a lot.

“Yadzia darling, it’s me.” “Oh, yes!” “How are you?” “Where are you calling from?” “From Baltimore.” Yadwiga paused a second. “Where is that?” Well, it makes no difference.” “A few hundred miles from New York. Can you hear me clearly?” “Yes. Very well.” “ I’m trying to sell books.” “Are they buying?” “It’s hard work, but they’re buying. They’re the ones who pay our rent.” (Singer 1972: 86)

His relation to Yadwiga climaxes at the end of the novel when he acts aggressively, it is possible to say that he behaves brutally towards her.

“Herman waited till he could no longer hear Tamara’s footsteps. Then he grabbed Yadwiga by the wrists and wrestled with her in the silence. He pushed her and she fell to the floor with a thud.” (Singer 1972: 204 )

From the beginning Yadwiga is trustful, yet as the lies of Herman continue, she starts to be suspicious. Largely in part due to the other women living in the house. The women in the house were now trying to convince Yadwiga-speaking half in Yiddish, half in Polish-that her husband must have a mistress somewhere. (Singer 1972: 129) Eventually she has a baby with Herman and converts to Judaism.

### **2.1.3 Mistress Masha**

The third and last woman of Herman’s life is Masha who works in a New York City cafeteria and lives with her mother. She is a passionate character and Herman spends most of his free time with her. She is also the person who has the biggest influence on Herman. He does everything that Masha wants. Every time she wants to leave the city Herman is willing to leave everything he has with her. He is also ready to lie to Yadwiga. Masha’s mother and Masha are two entirely different people. Her mother has a stronger religious background, she always speaks about

God as the almighty while Masha has lost her faith. This is the main reason why they quarrel all the time. Masha is also displayed as an evil character. She knows that Herman is going to have a baby with Yadwiga, she is able to lure him away from his family. She wants Herman only for herself and she can be really jealous. When she finds out the truth about Tamara she gets angry.

“Who is this Tamara? Your dead wife was called Tamara, wasn’t she?” Masha asked. “My dead wife is in America,” Herman replied. As he spoke, his knees trembled and he felt sick to his stomach. Was he going to faint after all, he asked himself. Masha’s face became angry. “Has your wife risen from the dead?” “So it seems.” (Singer 1972: 223)

It is presumable that Herman is focused more on bodily contact than on anything else. With Masha he forgets everything bad from the concentration camps and he also forgets his pain caused by the war.

As always, their conversation abounded with promises they both knew would never be kept, with fantasies of pleasure not to be achieved, with questions asked as a spur to their mutual excitement. Masha wondered if she would have allowed him to sleep with her sister, if she had had one. Would she enjoy sharing Herman and his brother, if he had had a brother? (Singer 1972: 57)

In my opinion there are three different kinds of women and also three different kinds of love. Tamara represents the love of intellect. Herman had two children with Tamara and he would not leave them although he did not like Tamara as his wife. The second kind of love represents Yadwiga who was something like a friend and someone to whom he was obliged. The last kind of love, which is physical, is to Masha. Herman is willing to do everything for Masha. He would

even leave Yadviga, who is pregnant. These three women had also different war experience and that forms also their personalities. Only Masha experienced a horror of the concentration camp and that seriously hits her character.

“...or of Masha’s suicide at the end of *Enemies, A Love Story*. (1972). Masha’s death is not surprising; she is a troubled holocaust survivor; but it may be more important that she is also a vain, sensual woman, for Singer seems especially hard on female vanity. (Spilka 1998: 430)

As it was written earlier, Masha is from those three women the worst one. Although Tamara experienced bad times she was not touched so much by the war situation. Yadviga did not see the things that previous women did so she was able to cope with the war situation faster.

#### **2.1.4 Herman Broder as an alienated Jew in America**

The protagonist of Herman is very interesting and full of pain which one can not bear. He is a person who experienced massive traumas in his life and that is something that can easily destroy not only a weak person but even strong person. The first trauma is the loss of his family, which is definitely the biggest one. The next shock comes when he realizes that his lawful wife is still alive and in New York and that he is committing polygamy.

Another embarrassing moment comes when he is visiting party and there is a public speech about his three wives. Herman feels fear and does not know who can report him to the police and accuse him of polygamy. The last straw comes when his beloved mistress Masha, with whom he wants to leave the United States, commits suicide. After that, Herman does not know what to do and we are not sure what will happen because of the open ending story. “Masha, I must go.” “Wait a second. As long as it is this way, go back to your peasant. Don’t leave your child.” “I will leave everybody,” Herman said. (Singer 1972: 275)



There are two possible endings; the first one, which seems more likely to me, is that Herman commits suicide too, because so many bad things happened to him and so many problems went along with his life. The second possible ending is that Herman stays somewhere in the United States. “Tamara believed that Herman had either killed himself or was hiding somewhere in an American version of his Polish hayloft.” (Singer 1972: 280)

## **2.2. Religion**

Another significant topic is religion - Judaism. Many people from the whole world immigrated into the United States of America to avoid the holocaust and to start a new life. Herman is one of the happier Jews who had a non-Jewish friend who saved his life from the genocide. For these people it was very difficult to acclimatize to the new environment, it was also difficult for them to obtain new friends, a new job and a new aim in life. Herman’s religious upbringing from Poland had rules for Jews and the feeling for religion that were stricter than in the United States. Like Singer Broder was being educated to be a rabbi. The job of Herman as a ghostwriter for the corrupted Rabbi Lampert consisted of Herman writing articles about the Jewish history, Jewish customs and the religion in general. We can suspect that he was more conscious of Judaism than any other American-born Jew or Rabbi Lampert because like Singer Broder was being educated to be a rabbi. For example: the case when Rabbi Lampert was humiliated by the editor after he published an article by Herman and there were allegedly some mistakes, (yet what exactly was not mentioned in the novel). This shows a Singer criticism of American-born rabbis – they are corrupt and stupid.

It is obvious that the Jewish people who came to the United States before the Second World War or during the war either completely lost their faith in Judaism or became more devoted to the religion. The main character Herman

Broder belongs to the first group although there are some signs that he is turning to God too.

He was again drinking that potion which enabled him to fathom time, space, “the thing in itself.” His pondering always brought him to the same conclusion: God (or whatever He may be) was certainly wise, but there was no sign of His mercy. If a God of mercy did exist in the heavenly hierarchy, then he was only a helpless godlet, a kind of heavenly Jew among the heavenly Nazis. (Singer 1972: 123)

He lost much of his faith in God when his two sons David and Yocheved were killed by Nazis in Poland. This must be the major turning point in his life. Since that time Herman has turned his back to the religion although he makes living from ghost-writing articles about it. It is unbearable for him the thought that he lost his two children, wife and his home. This must be the worst thing for a person to lose their family and native heath. Herman is not able to cope with this loss and he becomes a stranger in the United States where he has no friends and he lies to his employer. Finally the whole new land becomes one big nightmare after he recognizes that he has three wives.

The question of religion remains uncertain. Herman, in many situations, says that he lost his faith many years ago but in some boundary situations he returns to God. He argues with Masha, Tamara and Yadviga about God but they all have different opinions. When Yadviga wants to convert to Judaism, Herman definitely loses his faith and he rejects it. If he speaks with Masha who is against God and religion (which means that she is also against her mother) Herman retains a neutral position and when he speaks with Tamara there is also some kind of clash.

She was saying: “Thank God, my time of suffering isn’t over. I’m still right in the midst of it. This, more or less, is the way we had to struggle in Jambul. You won’t believe me, Herman, but I find some comfort in it. I don’t want to forget what we went through. When it’s warm in the

room, I imagine that I've betrayed all the Jews in Europe. My uncle feels that Jews should observe an eternal shiva. The entire people should squat on low stools and read from the Book of Job." "Without faith, one can't even mourn." "That in itself is reason enough to mourn." (Singer 1972: 238, 239)

### **2.3 Family**

Family life plays a role at the beginning when Herman has a family, two children and a wife. Everything seems to be perfect, but in the time of the war everything changed. Children die, his wife is missing and the standard model of the classic Jewish family disintegrates. In the United States there is Yadviga who is offering Herman new hope but he turns down this offer, refusing to have another child. Masha, in this case, plays an unimportant role and it is more about the physical attachment than anything else. Regular visits of Masha and her mother are enough and he simply tries to integrate into the new family and also to become a new society member.

A more interesting fact is that Herman has relatives through his first marriage in America but he does not want to contact them even if he knows their address and they live in the same city. This can be caused either by the fact that these relatives are close family members of Tamara or he is embarrassed to have married the family servant and non-Jew, Yadviga. He also tries to assimilate in the way he has new job and lives with the former servant of her family which is quite improbable because many Jews escaping to America wanted to survive some parts of their religion. The act that Herman would be able to marry a gentile is startling. The life in America means something new – human beings have new hope and can have new thoughts. Although Herman wants to assimilate he saves some secrets even from his good friend and he reveals them only to the closest people like to Tamara at the end of the novel.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The situation is the same with Herman's work. He wants to be successful in his work, he tries to find some branches where he could be effective and instead of that he becomes a ghostwriter and hence is never appreciated by society. He still stays in the shadow of Rabbi Lampert. On one hand he makes up the stories and tells Yadwiga that he is a successful book-salesman, and on the other hand when he gets the chance and he could really work in the bookshop, gain experience and be happy with Yadwiga and Tamara he refuses everything and tries to escape maybe for fear of duty or maybe because of his constant disillusion of everything.

### **3. The Penitent (1983)**

The later I. B. Singer's novel entitled *The Penitent* was originally published in 1983. There are few similar themes to *Enemies, A Love story* in both but *The Penitent* is completely different in general terms. In comparison with *Enemies* this novel is more sophisticated; Singer is focused on his religion of Judaism and he goes deeper into the spirituality and conscience of man.

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The story is divided into two days – every day includes shorter chapters - in which Joseph Shapiro retells the story to the author whose name is not told for the whole narration, a former teacher of Joseph. The plot is set in Jerusalem where Shapiro finds asylum against a world of lies, adultery, gentiles and Nazis. Both characters (the author and Joseph) are Jewish, originating from Poland. Joseph and Celia migrated from Germany in 1947 when they received visas to the United States and settled in the city of New York, where he became a famous and rich but a non-religious Jew.

#### **3.2. Role of the women**

Again, the role of women in the plot is very important as they provoke Joseph to make decisive resolutions. The first woman is Celia, a woman echoing Tamara from the novel *Enemies* because she was regarded as dead and then they met again in Lublin. Joseph thought about her reappearance as a resurrection. Celia became Joseph's first wife. They got married in a German Displaced Person's camp near Munich.

### **3.2.1. Celia**

Celia used to be a stubborn Communist and she always quarreled with Joseph about her political conviction. At the beginning of their marriage she seems to be faithful to him but her attitude changed because of the behavior of Joseph. He obviously loses his interest in Celia after she undergoes a serious operation and she could no longer have children. At this time, Joseph's feelings slowly burn out but her feelings for him are not reciprocated, as she still remained faithful. Like Tamara from the novel *Enemies*, Celia represents love and intellect. If she knew that Joseph was cheating on her she would still remain a loyal wife. Shapiro is successful at his business and he moves about the New York high circles where adultery and cheating on wives is commonplace and his colleagues are boasting with their transgressions instead of being quiet.

They spent time with call girls, plain whores that a madam sent to the motel when they phoned her. Others had mistresses. In the circles in which we traveled, adultery was considered the highest virtue, the very essence of life. (Singer 1983: 15)

In the beginning, Joseph resists and is haunted by feelings of guilt, but as he has a lot of money and estates he gives in to temptation and finds a mistress.

### **3.2.2. Liza**

Representing a second type of love, Liza is the counterpart to the character of Masha from *Enemies*. She had a husband but she divorced him and is a mother of one daughter, Micki, who becomes a hippie. Liza is an intelligent woman driven by passion, which later overgrows into tenacity. Although she has a job, she still complains about her financial situation in front of Joseph and tries to compel him to share some of his money. From that point of view she appears like a prostitute.

I found myself a woman like this. Her name was Liza. She had had a husband but she was divorced. Liza supposedly had a job, but she complained that it didn't pay enough to support both her and her daughter. She became my mistress and began to milk me for money. I paid her rent, took her to restaurants and theatres, bought her clothes, furniture, why not? (Singer 1983: 17)

Eventually with Liza there appeared a few factors which made him change and end this adulterous affair. Firstly, Joseph supported her in many spheres but still it was not enough for her, for her daughter and for her daughter's lover. Secondly, he starts to tell lies to Celia because of Liza and he often returned home very late. Thirdly, Joseph is asked to pay for the abortion of Liza's daughter and that is something so humiliating for him that he feels like a killer, yet after the extortion performed by Liza, he agrees. "This ruined not only our supper but our sex as well." When a man gets angry and feels exploited and humiliated, he loses his passion. (Singer 1983: 26)

Lastly, he learns from Micki that Liza has two lovers and only takes money from them. Joseph leaves the apartment where the mother and daughter quarrel and breaks up with Liza afterwards. He wants to put everything in order with Celia but just at the point of his return home she is caught in the act with another man. In that moment he recognizes that not only he but also his wife cheat and commit adultery. From this epiphanic moment he decides to start a new life.

### **3.2.3. Priscilla**

Another woman who enters Joseph's life is a Jewish girl named Priscilla. She is a young girl who travels with him by airplane. Priscilla goes to Jerusalem to be with her fiancé who works as a professor. Joseph is interested because she is beautiful and clever but he deals again with the problem of adultery. He questions

whether she would do the same with any other man in his place. They are touching underneath the blanket but there is no chance to make love in the plane. Later he loses his interest. Since his break up with Celia, Joseph is accompanied by two new elements - good and evil spirits where Priscilla substitutes the evil element of passion or urge.

#### **3.2.4. Sarah**

Lastly, the woman entering the life of Joseph is Reb Haim's Israeli-born daughter named Sarah. Sarah represents for Joseph love at first sight but it is not just the physical love created of passion or urge. She appears to him as a particularly spiritual or supernatural woman. She has an element that he can not understand so easily compared to all of the other previous women. He knows that this is not coincidence but rather his destiny. For him she is so pure that he describes his coexistence with previous women as suffering.

Fate had tossed me from Celia, Liza and Priscilla back to the true Jewishness, to the source from which we had drunk, back onto the path that led to the Torah and to purity. Celia and Liza had often accused me of lacking respect for women. But what was there to respect about them? Both Celia and Liza liked gangster movies. When the gangsters shot or stabbed each other, they laughed. I myself used to suffer terribly during these scenes. (Singer 1983: 124)

### **3.3. Main protagonist Joseph Shapiro**

Joseph Shapiro develops a lot over the course of the novel. He survived the war time and was permitted to go to America. Joseph stays a non-religious Jew and during years he regains his faith, and so his development in fact is the reverse of Herman Broder in *Enemies* whose loss of faith is attributed to the personal tragedy of the Holocaust. His personality rapidly changes during the story. At the beginning he aimed at making money and over time is willing to sleep with



other women although he is married. He slowly recognizes that possessions and cheating is decadent and he follows the way of religious belief though he has so many doubts about God. “Who needs so many yeshivas? And how did the yeshivas help when Hitler came to power? Where was God when they burned His Torah and ordered those who studied it to dig their own graves?” (Singer 1983: 20)

At times he becomes helpless and considers committing suicide although this act would be the biggest sin against the Almighty. He is thinking about death at the point of a mental breakdown. For the first time, it is at the airport where he is exhausted and he has no aim of life. “After a while, I went into a restaurant and ordered dry toast and tea. I ate, drank, and thought about suicide. Since I couldn’t live, I should die. But I wasn’t ready for death.” (Singer 1983: 86) He wants to become a pious Jew when he falls in love with Sarah. He does not know how to make her his wife and he again argues with the evil spirit.

I’ll marry her and I’ll stay with her,” I said in reply to the Glib one. “I’ll be a Jew whether you approve of it or not. He who despises evil must believe in holiness.” “If I can’t be a Jew, I’ll but an end to my life.” I shouted within me. “These are the words of a modern man,” an imp whispered in my ear. (Singer, Isaac Bashevis, 1983 p. 128)

All his important attitudes towards women and religion change many times during the course of the narration. In New York City he is capable of cheating which is against his ethical conviction. Afterwards he studies the Torah and persuades himself that he is not capable of adultery but when he gets into plane and sees young Priscilla, he again quickly changes his mind. In some situations he behaves like an absolute coward and in others he is brave and devoted to his thinking. He acted like a coward when Liza and her daughter Micki argued about money and men. They started to fight to the point that Joseph panicked and ran away. The same cowardice comes into the light when he becomes an eye-witness

to the adultery by his own hither to loyal wife. He is not able to speak with his own wife; he just packs his things and leaves everything behind him.

While depicted as a bad person, he also shows goodwill and tries to help the other Jews who need it. When he was in New York he visited old pious rabbi who takes Joseph to a ceremony. There he meets honest Jews and he tries to go on the path of righteousness to God. After the ceremony he is ready to financially help the rabbi and other members who are in need and he expected that everyone would ask him for money but only two Jews asked him for money. The old rabbi is seriously ill so he offers him free hospital care but the rabbi refuses (he does not trust doctors).

“Are you watching your health?” “The doctors want me to go to the hospital, but I don’t want to.” I knew his reasons. He didn’t trust them to serve kosher food. He said, “I’ll live as long as I’m destined to live.” (Singer 1983: 54)

From that time the rabbi turned into the saint in Shapiro’s eyes. Joseph slowly changes from a materialist into a religious Jew. This transformation is not visible from day to day because there are moments when it looks like he has enough faith but after a few moments he again leaves everything he believes in. Definitely, it is not an easy change for him and readers can not be certain if he can manage everything he wants to. At the end he succeeds in his plan, he becomes conservative Jew, he achieves his dream of having a loving wife and finds his way to happiness and illumination. Good and evil spirits or voices always speak with Joseph. In the novel they substitute Joseph’s conscience in both ways – in a good and a bad one. The interesting fact is that the evil spirit predominates in most situations for example: when there is a theory of a deity the evil spirit always argues:

Your piety is a lie and a self – deception. This God to whom you're going to pray doesn't exist. Where was He when the Jews of Poland dug their own graves? Where was He when the Nazis played with the skulls of Jewish children? (Singer 1983: 47)

### **3.4. Women of the present and the past**

The references to women include their religion as well: a big difference between the gentile women living in New York, because these women are immoral and lack any basic worth of life. They are more concentrated on materialistic aspects and it seems they have no faith. In the world of gentiles – in New York – loyalties of man and woman are shaded and there is no more status as sexual private property. According to society, sex must be shared and there are no more faithful wives and husbands because sex with one person is like constant eating of the same dish. Joseph, after this awakening, leaves New York which is for him is a corrupt society and decided to start new life.

Generations of Jews cried out from within me: “Flee from this abomination! Run from the culture of Hitler and Stalin! Escape from a civilization that is a slaughterhouse and brothel! Flee from women who live like whores and demand to be loved and honored....” (Singer 1983: 63)

On the other hand, older women like Joseph's mother and grandmother represent typical old religious values. Unable to commit adultery, they also would not enslave their husbands. These women of old values helped with earning a living and they remained wives and mothers. Their husbands need not worry about leaving home for years. Sarah is for Joseph Shapiro the same representative of old Jewish traditions and human values and this could be the reason why he is so possessed by her.

That's how my wife Sarah, Reb Haim's daughter, was, and still is to this day. Many such decent Jewish daughters still live in the streets of Jerusalem and even of New York. They are like their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers before them. (Singer 1983:140)

### **3.5. Conclusion**

The novel *The Penitent* uses the spiritual background because Singer describes Jewish customs in a more detailed way than he does in his other American novels. He celebrates old-fashioned Jews more than the modern ones. These modern Jews do not follow customs, for example they do not eat kosher food, or behave in the right religious way. They use religion more to belong in the community rather than believe in the Laws of Moses. The emphasis in *The Penitent* is being real pious person, not to be superficial but to search through one's consciousness. Shapiro tries to find the right way to give his life some purpose I. B. Singer puts plenty of religious motives into this work.

#### 4. Meshugah (1994)

According to the postscript by the translator Nili Wachtel, the novel *Meshugah* is more autobiographical work than any other novel that was written by Isaac Bashevis Singer before and after.

I assumed that his fictional creation drew on events that had actually occurred, as well as on aspects of people he had known. It seemed obvious to me that the first person narrator, the author Aaron Greidinger who wrote for the *Forward*, was based on Isaac himself, though he never directly said so. (Singer, 2010: 230)

Although *The Penitent* is autobiographical work, it is important to mention that there is serious matter in which Singer differs from the character of Aaron. Isaac Bashevis Singer did not have any girlfriend who was prostitute or kapo in the concentration camp. However, I. B. Singer rejected having any child with his new wife.

At first it was issued in Yiddish in the magazine *Forward* from April 1981 to February 1983 and the original name was *Lost Souls*. Later on while Singer wants to translate *Lost Souls* into English, he changed the name into *Meshugah*. The word meshugah (me-shug'-a) means the Yiddish word meaning crazy, senseless, insane. Although the main character and narrator of the story is Aaron Greidinger, the name of the novel refers to the person as crazy as Miriam Zalkind. In the text the word is used when Miriam designates Max as a meshugah. "It's too holy for him. He is meshugah as ever, but also sweet." (Singer 2010:189)

*Meshugah* takes place in and around New York in 1950s where the main character Aaron Greidinger is one of the most popular and reputable Jewish novelists and journalists. The plot of the novel focuses on the triangle of Aaron Greidinger, Max Aberdam and Miriam Zalkind.

## **4.1 Characters**

### **4.1.1 Aaron Greidinger**

Aaron is very interesting personality and he undertakes many changes during the novel. He is a single 47 year old man who at the beginning seems to be as a pious Jew, giving advice through the newspaper and novels to people, mainly refugees from Poland, who try to cope with the stress connected after the World War II, with integration into the new society and with religious questions. It can seem to reader that Aaron wants to start brand new life and he wants to forget and delete from his mind everything that was somehow chained to the old war times. It is maybe also the reason why he does not have a telephone in his office. As an good example can serve the situation when Max Aberdam comes to Aaron and tries to explain that many people Aaron considers to be dead are actually alive and they are ready to meet him.

But Max Aberdam shouted over their voices: “You didn’t know I was in America? Where do you live – in the World of Chaos? I’ve been trying to reach you for weeks. Yiddish papers are all the same. You call up and ask for someone and they tell you to hold the phone, but nothing happens – they’ve forgotten you. Where do you live, on the moon? Don’t you have our own telephone in your office? (Singer, 2010:4,5)

Aaron’s faith is something that experiences stormy development too. Although he is treated as an orthodox Jew, in fact he loses his own faith in God. Only one thing remains important for him: the literary word in which he built up an excellent reputation. It is also the only business he is not willing to stop. However in one moment he is ready to give up fame when he decides whether to pay a visit to his best and beloved friend whom he believed to be on the deathbed or to change a part of his article in newspaper office to avoid the scandal. This scandal could discredit his good reputation and ridicule him.

He is the person who has strong principles but through the time he loses them – for example connection with Miriam. As he gets to know her, he slowly falls in love with her but after he hears from Stanley, Miriam's lawful husband, that she was a prostitute in Nazi Germany, he immediately changes his opinion. He swears by God and by his own mother that he will never seek her out again but he is not able to keep vow for a long time.

After Aaron sees Miriam when she wants to return him his belongings, he changes his opinion again. He is willing to walk with her when she behaves as a prostitute. Even if Aaron knows about her past everything he stays with her.

#### **4.1.2 Max Aberdam**

Max is on the other hand a definitely different personality. Although he is almost seventy, he is in a good condition. He is a person who enjoys all joys of the world, which means drinking, smoking and having sex with a lot of women. He has one giant business and that as a stock broker and trader. He takes care of money of Polish Jews, mainly women, who are his mistresses as well. The money of Polish Jews is in fact a compensation for the Nazi terror they survived and Max tries to invest their money.

Max leaves for Poland and in that time his bookmaker and also the manager of the Jewish money, Harry Treibitcher, commits suicide because of bankruptcy. This event causes that Max and all his customers to lose everything. He is chased by angry Jews. Only one person suffers from the attacks of angry people: Priva Max's lawful wife. After Max gets to know that he can be followed, he tries to hide and change identity.

### 4.1.3 Meshugah Miriam

Although Miriam is only 27 years old, she survived the worst experiences for a woman in the war. She takes care of a child of a lesbian mother, to earn her living. Her parents are divorced and they both have new partners. They are ashamed of Miriam because she is a mistress of the old man Max Aberdam who is nearly 70, and at the same time she has a lawful husband Stanley, an unsuccessful and unbalanced poet, who hates Miriam more and more. He is aware of lovers Miriam has and he nearly kills her and Aaron after he catches them both naked at home.

Miriam is a mysterious person who wears the pressure of history. She tells Max and Aaron almost everything from her life but the two worst secrets reveal the extreme outer limits. Firstly, it is the situation with Stanley, who informs Aaron about the prostitution of Miriam. After Aaron gets to know that, he turns his back on Miriam and he is also willing to say everything to Max. Miriam tries to defend herself and she states that it was only the act of desperation, and that she did not want to die in the concentration camp.

But a sort of ambition grew in me to overcome everything and to come through those swinish times alive and strong. I would say it became a sort of gamble or sport for me: will I make it, or will I not? You often write that life is a game, a wager, or something similar. I had decided to slip out of the hands of the Angel of Death at any cost. When it became clear to me that any day I would be grabbed and sent away with one of the transports, I fled, and my former teacher took me in. (Singer, 2010:92, 93)

Secondly, when Aaron meets an old lady at the party, she reveals to him a second horrific secret of Miriam – that she used to be a *kapo* in the concentration camp and she used to beat Jewish girls with a whip and take their possessions. This is the worst fact for Aaron who, on one hand, tries to support refugees, Polish Jews,



and on the other hand sleeps with the “enemy” but still he does not want to admit it to himself.

Miriam paraded around Stutthof with a whip which only the kapos were allowed to carry. I saw her as clearly as I see you now. That is all I want to tell you. I believe you know that a Jewish girl did not become a kapo for her good deeds. The whip meant to be used. With it she thrashed Jewish girls for the smallest sins, for being slow when called for work, for trying to steal a potato, for similar petty crimes. Some kapos even helped the Nazis to drag children to the gas ovens. Well, that’s what I wanted to tell you. How does the saying go? – The facts speak for themselves. (Singer, 2010:206)

Thirdly, it is the situation when Aaron and Priva evoke a ghost and the spirit reveals the secret that Miriam was actually a kapo and in the same time the mistress of an SS officer.

One evening, when all the lights were out and only the little red light bulb we used for séances flickered in the darkness, the planchette informed us that Miriam had been a kapo. Priva asked, “Where?” and the planchette shaped the word “Stutthof.” Priva went on to ask how Miriam had conducted herself (she posed the question in a solemn voice), and the planchette began to leap with extraordinary speed and formed the following words: “Whipped Jewish girls, dragged children to the gas chambers.” The planchette further revealed to us that Miriam had been the mistress of an SS officer named Wolfgang Schmid. (Singer, 2010:222, 223)

The personality of Miriam interestingly changes a lot – mainly in dependence on Max’s health and the relation to Aaron. She is not afraid to put on a dress which makes her look like a prostitute and then to mix with people.

Singer presents Miriam as a Jew who is able to do everything she wants to. In one moment she pathetically requests Aaron to kill her because her life seems to be

senseless. In the next moment she passionately kisses Aaron and wants a child with him. It can be a consequence of the concentration camp or it may be a part of well-considered game.

The psychological games which are played by Miriam are also disturbing. Whether it is a role of Warsaw prostitute in which Miriam wears, for society, unsuitable immodest dresses in public or when she tries to play a role of prostitute in point of fact. She claims that she is a prostitute just with two customers: Aaron and Max.

You can call me whore; that will be my name from this day on. “What about Max?” “He will call me that, too. I no longer want to play deceptive games. I want to be an honest prostitute.” Something in me wanted to laugh, and I also felt a stinging in my eyes. “And what of the others?” I asked. “What others? There will be no others.” “A prostitute with two clients only?” “Yes, you and Max. If Max does not want me, I’ll be yours alone. (Singer, 2010:99)

Miriam surprises also in her maturing process – when she appears onstage she seems to be young, crazy, and naive with a pinch of savageness. Later on when she realizes that Max may die, she radically changes her attitude toward life.

She was now a mature woman, her hair disheveled, her eyes red. In her gaze and in her pursed lips I could see the despair of those who suffer from permanent melancholy.(Singer, 2010:109)

As mentioned earlier, Miriam takes care of an infant and maybe this evokes her parent instinct and she wants to have a baby with Aaron. Aaron is determined to have a baby with Miriam only once when he speaks with her father but as reader can suppose it is only lie. Miriam realizes at the end of the novel that he does not want to have one.

Sprawled on top of the bed she said, “If we have a child, we’ll name him Max.” “There will be no children,” I said. “Why not?” she asked. “You and I, we are like mules,” I answered, “the last of a generation.” (Singer 2010:228)

The relationship between Miriam and Max can be described as a platonic one although she has liaison with him. She is able to give up everything for Max but during the whole novel it is not clear why. This fact can raise the question if Max Aberdam somehow helps Miriam or if there is any deeper implication. The relationship between Miriam and Aaron on the other hand is clearly physical but it can be caused by something else – she writes a dissertation about his books and she can admire him as well. She does not feel the same devotion to Aaron which she feels for Max. The fact that Miriam wants to have a baby is understandable but she wants to name him Max. That is something that is not admissible for Aaron.

#### **4.2 Religion**

*Meshugah* is obviously full of Jewish and Yiddish vocabularies and names such as Pentateuch (five books of Moses) and Gemara (part of Talmud including rabbinic comments). It seems that most characters lose their faith. For example Aaron Greidinger is aware of the Jewish testament but even though he has lovers and he is able to maintain contact with Miriam and marry her. Max on the other hand remains faithless from the time of the World War II until his death.

My friend, I may have lost everything, but a bit of sense I still have. Though I’m in debt over my head, I owe nothing to the Almighty: as long as He keeps sending us Hitlers and Stalins, He is their God, not mine. (Singer, 2010:5)

Although Aaron’s friends Budniks are Jews, they lose faith too. “There is no God, there are no angels, no demons. These are fairy tales, much ado about nothing.”

(Singer, 2010:172) In fact they adapt themselves to New York City: Misha starts the job of a taxi driver and slowly rejects her religion. Miriam remains faithless as well, and she wants Aaron to kill her which is the greatest sin. Now there is a question if she lost faith when she was sixteen or before it. Most of the people change during the story and almost everyone who is refugee more or less loses his faith and adapts new culture. One opinion mentioned by Miriam is that Jewishness in America is good for nothing. Even those who got married or joined synagogues were thoroughly assimilated. Jewishness in America consists in sending checks to Israel or belongings to Hadassah. (Singer, 2010:96)

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Although some parts of the plot of *Meshugah* are slightly predictable, the end of the novel is astonishing. It is obvious that Harry Treibitcher will become bankrupt and that Max will be in trouble because of money. It is also clear that there will be kind of secret connected with Miriam. Yet the end is like a bolt from the blue. After Max dies, Aaron knows only awful pieces of information about Miriam and in the next moment there is a marriage between Aaron and Miriam.

Winter was nearly over and soon it would be spring. Fania and Morris Zalkind proposed to make our wedding a lavish affair, but Miriam and I insisted on a small ceremony, with only the two of them in attendance. (Singer, 2010: 227)

Another surprise parallels this marriage: Miriam's parents start to live together again thanks to Morris Zalkind who takes Fania back. "In a sense it was a double celebration, because Miriam's mother had returned from Eretz Yisrael having broken with Felix Ruktzug, and Morris had taken her back." (Singer, 2010:227)

Miriam represents an evil element of the novel. The original name *Lost souls* marks Aaron and Miriam. With his act of marrying Miriam Aaron deprecates everything what he was fighting for – Miriam as a *kapo* in concentration camp

or Miriam as a prostitute. Singer offers the amazing end of this novel. Aaron's behavior appears to be eagerness or adoration. The first possibility is that Aaron is offered twenty thousand dollars by Miriam's father if he marries her. At the end of the novel, he tears the check into pieces. So this is the least probable reason why Aaron marries Miriam. Another possible motivation is his desire to purify her bad reputation. Another possible reason can be the great adoration for Miriam. Both second and the third reason is connected with the idea that Aaron is willing to forgive her everything and to forget her evil deeds. Last reason is the opposite to the previous. Aaron wants to do something illogical; maybe to sleep with girl that is nasty. Miriam represents the opposite of good, so it is also possible that he attracted by Miriam's bad background and he wants to try something that is not angelic. I. B. Singer was highly interested in irrational women and this topic repeated as it is obvious from *Enemies*, *A Love Story* or *Meshugah*.

## **5. The Family Carnovsky (1969)**

### **5.1 Structure of the novel**

The book by Israel Joshua Singer was originally published in Yiddish in 1943. The Yiddish English translation was firstly published in 1969. The book is divided into the three parts (45 chapters) and each part represents one male representative of the family Carnovsky – Book I. David; Book II. Georg; Book III. Jegor. The structure of the sentences is more complicated than in previous books of I. J. Singer or later works by I. B. Singer. The author narrates in third person and also plentifully uses direct speech which moves the reader straight into the action. As well as I. B. Singer also Joshua includes Yiddish terms connected with the Jewish culture. Although the text is easy to understand sometimes there are phrases taken from the Torah which are not so simple for uninitiated readers. Full of reversions, the plot is excellently and deeply composed. It is also hard to predict how the story develops. The reader devours the book until he gets to an astonishing end.

### **5.2 The summary of the plot**

The plot is set initially in Poland where the Carnovskys originate. David Carnovsky is humiliated during Sabbath because of defending the book of Pentateuch written by Moses of Dessau also called as Moses Mendelssohn. He is discredited in his neighborhood and leaves the country with his wife Leah. David considers Germany as the city of enlightened society so he finds there a place to stay. Germany becomes a real home for David but his only son Georg suffers a lot in the country. Georg grows up and has a lot of arguments with his father because of religion, faith and life. Georg is alienated from his father and leaves home. The same destiny waits for the son of Georg – Jegor. He is also an alien in the different culture and society and the hatred from son to father grows.

### 5.3 The Carnovskys

#### 5.3.1 David Carnovsky

David Carnovsky is obviously the most enlightened personality in the family. He is the respectable person in Poland until he is restrained in the synagogue. Although he is respected and has a good place in Poland, he is willing to leave his homeland for the country which seems to be the well of knowledge and light. Proud of being citizen of Germany, he requires his wife Leah to speak German even if they are having sex. Yiddish means for David something that offends him and brings the old bad thoughts back to him. If Leah forgets and speaks Yiddish instead of German, David automatically feels rancor. He tries to assimilate in Germany as much as possible because he wants to be a part of the great place of Enlightenment and all this he does for himself. Although he becomes reputable member of the new society, he is incapable of putting himself in the place of his son Georg. David is so deep in religious business that he neglects Leah and also his only child without knowing what his behavior can cause. It is for example obvious when David describes to Georg race and religious matters and he does not give his son an appropriate answer.

“The children say that I am a Jew, Father,” Georg said. “You are that in the house, child,” David said, “but in the street you are a German. Do you understand now?” Georg did not understand and David had no choice but to tell him that he was still too young for such things and that as he grew older they would become clearer. Georg left his father’s study dissatisfied and shaken in his absolute faith in the wisdom of adults. (Singer 1969: 30)

David spends a lot of time with rabbis, mainly with Reb Ephrain and the alienation continues. He is so busy with the study of religion that he begins to ignore his descendant. When Georg does not act in accordance with his father, David always puts the blame on Leah. Georg is not a good student and receives bad grades. In that situation tries to gives his hands off the case. This

means that David wants to keep order and obedience in his family which is not present in Georg's behavior.

“See the fine grades your son brings home,” he said to his wife, emphasizing the fact, that it was her son who was the poor student. Leah flushed angrily. “Why my son all of a sudden?” she asked. “He is much yours as mine.” “All of my family were scholars,” David said smugly. (Singer 1969: 32)

Although David tries his best and at first he pushes his son gently into the studies, his behavior is not successful. Georg tends to bring home poor grades. David wants his son to be a magnificent student so he thinks that beating and scolding can help. The situation is escalated when Georg draws a caricature of his teacher of history.

David's life is full of disillusion. Firstly, it is his son who does not tread in his steps and later on he chooses a profession of physician. Secondly, it is when his friends turn their backs before the World War I. Almost every friend is afraid to do something together with David. Only Reb Eprain stays in those bad times. Thirdly, it is when he gets to know that Georg dates a gentile girl – in Yiddish a *shiksa* (which mainly refers to a non-Jewish woman or a prostitute). This is the most humiliating act for David and he lets Georg choose between him and the gentile girl Teresa. Georg's decision disappoints David and it is also the last straw. From that time David feels that he has no son. Leah is the person who tries to keep the family complete so she often tries to convince him that Teresa is a good and nice girl. David is so angry and claims that it is the next step before Georg completely converts. He also thinks about the fact that his son can exchange him for a gentile slut.

After some time Teresa gets pregnant and expects a baby, who is named Joachim Georg Carnovsky. The first name Joachim is the same as his grandfather.



In Georg's mind, this act can put the family together again but for David it is not enough. More painful for David is the fact that his wife Leah and his daughter Rebecca visit his son and Teresa frequently. David is so far away from his son that he remains cool when Georg invites him to attend the ceremony of circumcision of Joachim, nicknamed Jegor. David feels alone; his wife does not stand solidly by him and only one dearest person stays with him. Reb Eprain, who has always good piece of advice, is able to calm him down.

They were all leaving him, his friends, his children, all those dear to him. Sitting alone in his large book-lined study, he realized, that he was the last of a generation. No one would bother with the vast library he had so painfully accumulated. The whole great Jewish world that had taken thousands of years to evolve, the Torah, the wisdom, the customs, the scholarship for which countless Jews had bled and sacrificed their lives, all would be forgotten and wiped away. (Singer 1969: 158, 159)

The situation between David and Georg rapidly changes when NSDAP members start to take over power in Germany. The policy changes in the whole country including the school system. Teachers who were earlier only for laughs are in the highest positions. After Jegor is humiliated at the university he falls ill. Every member of the family tries to help Georg and Teresa. The mind of David changes and he no longer feels anger for his son. He enters the home he never wanted to enter. The relationship between David and Georg changes and they both feel that everything is in order.

### **5.3.2 Georg Carnovsky**

Georg is one great disappointment for his father. He is not a good student has poor grades and is not determined to improve himself. It is possible to say that he is the black sheep of the family because he is not acting according to the Jewish standard. Step by step all Carnovsky males leave the Jewish culture. Georg's trouble has its beginning in youth. He is raised like a normal child. He slightly

changes after he is branded as a Christ-killer. He is not aware what this term means but his feelings are touched more after he asks the family maid. Georg believes her firmly so he is hit by the fact that she tells him the same. Since that time Georg knows that he differs from the rest of the neighborhood.

His desperation is intensified after he gets to know about a new inhabitant of the family; his sister Rebecca. The pregnancy of his mother hurts little Georg so much. He is not confident with his position in the family or even in society and that makes him suffer. He is lost and does not know how to interact with other people and children. In a way he heals his self-confidence thanks to Helmut who is devoted to him. Georg realizes that he has dominance over him and he stands in the position of the leader. After Helmut kisses Georg on cheek, Georg acts affectedly and the friendship ends.

At the age of 20, Georg graduates from the Gymnasium with honors but he does not want to study at a business college as his father wishes. He revolts against his father because David wants his son to be independent but Georg wants to do anything but a commercial career. It is understandable that David is disappointed because he knows that the main activities of his son are drinking beer and sex. With his behavior following later, Georg revolts against the religion and mainly against his father. He therefore starts new friendship with Judah Lazarovitch Kugel. Students criticize him because of his appearance and his name Judah – the one who (according to the Bible) betrayed Jesus Christ. He is a kind of outcast and this is the reason why Georg inclines toward him.

It is obvious that David does not lose complete faith in his son because he gives him a job as a gatherer which means for Georg another chance. Yet this chance is wasted again and Georg is definitely changed by the company is not capable of giving his father all the money because of his drinking and prostitutes. His personality is altered that he actually tries to avoid his parents. His mentality is also partly deviated. Georg luxuriates in the torturing of people. It is obvious

in the case of Helmut and afterwards in the case of Ruth. Ruth is a clever Jewish girl who admires Georg and wants to be with him as much as possible but Georg does not show any interest and is aware of causing pain to young Ruth. Until this point in the novel it is only Georg who causes harm but after he meets Elsa he falls in love and the situation turns over. For the first time Georg is not the one who holds control over the situation and that makes him uncomfortable. Because of this girl he changes his field of study and becomes a physician even if he is not so interested in that field. He gets his first shock after he sleeps with Elsa and she does not care to marry Georg. For one it is hard to realize that everything that was done was good for nothing. Georg leaves for the First World War with disgust because he knows that he has sacrificed his whole life to medicine and that remains something unacceptable for him.

The First World War changes Georg. Although he gains a lot of experience during the war and he could make his career, he is willing to settle down with Elsa who is devoted to politics. That is the other hit that changes Georg's opinion about women. After that he behaves offensively towards every woman displaying any interest in him and he becomes little bit arrogant as well. A war changes people a lot and also contributes to the variation of Georg's branch so he comes at Havelly Clinic where he becomes a member of obstetric ward, which breeds new life to him rather than watching injured bodies.

On one hand Georg would like to visit his parents but on the other hand the situation with Teresa does not enable it. The question is why Georg does not break up with this gentile girl. Some possible reasons include first that he wants to annoy his father, second that he really loves Teresa, and last that he wants to abandon his faith because the Jewish religion is not important for him. Georg is completely absorbed with his work which soon makes him a reputable doctor. Yet as his father neglected him, he does the same thing to his family. An incomprehensible situation comes after he gives in temptation of Herta Moser. Although Georg respects his wife, he is attracted by Herta because of her nasty

words and behavior. Actually, he is enticed only by filth and vulgarity but her personality does not mean anything to him. The same theme appears in the novel *Meshugah*.

George is changed again after he loses everything during the Fascist entry and something humiliating happens to him. He is forbidden to treat Aryan women and he is also pushed to leave and sell Havelly Clinic which is really hard because the clinic supports the family. He is able to speak with his own son commonly only in the moment of life and death.

### **5.3.3 Joachim Georg Carnovsky and his weaknesses**

Jegor is a person affected by the pre-war consequences. He is raised as a normal child but pampered by his grandmother. He is affected in his childhood when he realizes that he differs from other students. He avoids other children. Most of time, he spends in the garden or with domestic servants. More than his father, Jegor admires his anti-Semitic uncle Hugo. This personality is in charge of all the difficulties that appear in the life of Jegor. Hugo, Teresa's brother, indirectly abets little Jegor against his father which leads to the further broil between Jegor and his father. Hugo visits Carnovskys only because they have money, free cigarettes and alcohol which he can not afford. For little Jegor, Hugo represents an idol, a patriotic war veteran and hero, who fought in combat for his country which is something that his own father never did. These are the main attributes that are played off in this novel between son and father. Jegor hates his weakness and ugly appearance which is, in his opinion, caused by the Jewish part of his father. His pure German mother represents an angel and purity which was blotted by Georg. The march with a mass of people proves his absolute shift– he deprecates everything that his family represents – love, family and emotions.

The broad square was alive with flags, torches, noise, and marching men. From open touring cars the nation's new leaders exhorted the screaming mobs. The people bellowed, thrust our arms, and screamed hysterically.

Jegor felt the blood rush to his head. He found himself cheering and repeating the short, ugly slogans, in fanatical chorus with the inflamed thousands. For the first time he felt that life was good and had purpose. He knew he would never again be the same. (Singer 1969: 219)

Even though Jegor tries to hide his Jewish weaker part, the neighborhood is aware of his Jewish origin. He is absolutely humiliated when he is driven to stand in front of the class and he is taken as illustration of the Jewish representative. After that kind of degradation his professor makes him strip naked. This kind of humiliation leaves a bad aftertaste on Jegor and goes with him through the remainder of this novel.

Jegor in fact blames his father for everything; he does not want to be a Jew. Jegor comes later to the phase that he is able to think about his father's death in order to separate his mother and father. Getting all visas Georg, Teresa and Jegor leave for America. Even though Jegor is humiliated in Germany he still wants to return to Germany. His ideology is clear at school after he exchanges his view with the American professor Levy. Jegor turns against Jews and he tries to convince the whole class that the German army lost because of traitors and Jews. In that phase it becomes clear that although Jegor is a Jew, he has both self-hatred and racist tendencies which were provoked by the teacher. His hatred towards his father is visible when Jegor leaves home, writes a letter to his mother and signs himself as Joachim Georg Holbeck which means the complete separation from his father's roots. His conscience allows him even to accept a job from Dr. Zerbe as a spy of Jewish people for the Nazis. He joins a new friend Ernst Kaiser, young fellow of Germans, who takes him into the Nazi club in the US. Even after those sins Jegor is capable of committing the worst one. After he fails in everything he blames Dr. Zerbe and wants revenge. Yet the hatred he feels is projected away from his father and moves to Zerbe. He returns back to Zerbe's house and kills him after Zerbe kisses him on the lips. His commotion culminates after he takes a revolver from Zerbe's home and realizes that he only has his parents. In this

moment he sees only one way how to be salvaged; he comes home and shoots himself. His father hears the sound of the shot and finds his son.

Jegor took his father's hand and kissed it. The act of love spread a warm glow through Dr. Carnovsky and he took a moment off to kiss Jegor on the lips. Immediately afterwards he grew professionally detached and, holding a cloth to his son's sweat-drenched face, began to drip ether onto it, drop by drop. (Singer 1969: 405)

#### **5.4 Important characters of the novel**

Although Hugo Holbeck and Dr. Zerbe are not the main characters, they notably interfere in the lives of Carnovskys and have significant role. They both share the hatred against Jews but also at the same they have different characteristics. Hugo has a mean, ignorant and envious personality. He can not bear the high position held by his brother-in-law but he keeps on visiting them because of their possession. What is more degrading for him that his sister, a pure Aryan girl, marries a dirty "enema-giver" as he calls Georg. After Hugo finds out that Georg has experience from war and had higher military rank he is mad because Georg used to be a doctor at a field-hospital. War experience from such an environment is not heroism for Hugo. Since that time he feels hatred towards Georg and also has an influence on little Jegor. Jegor is in fact the only person Hugo cares about. Hugo's meanness is obvious after he gets the position in the army and thereafter he is afraid of having a contact with the Jews. Hugo is in principle a racist and always envied the car of his brother-in-law. After the changes break out, he takes the car without any qualms.

For years he had been envious of his brother-in-law's procession of fancy automobiles. He could forgive Georg everything – the elegant home, the clinic, the women who threw themselves at him, the Egyptian cigarettes, and the French cognac – but never the car. He used to gag over the injustice of it – that a Jew who couldn't drive and never went over sixty should own such a fine machine while he, who knew the car

like his own ten fingers, was forced to walk. It was nothing less than criminal. Now more than ever he felt the need of a car. For one, it suited his new position. (Singer 1969: 227)

Hugo later completely breaks off contact with his own sister, Georg and even Jegor whom he loves so much. He is so vulgar that he only offers his sister a divorce with Georg, since it directly contradicts Nazi ideology of German racial purity.

Another character, Dr. Zerbe, stands on the side of Germans and tries to spy on Jewish population in the U.S. He is an underrated intellectual and gets inferior work which becomes fateful for him. Zerbe stands in the way of Jegor's happiness and profanation which means that he uses Jew against Jew. He is another kind of idol for Jegor but after Zerbe changes his position he is subsequently indicted by Jegor as a carrier of evil. His homosexuality becomes fatal for him.

### **5.5 Religion**

It is interesting to follow the plot and learn how all the characters change. Only one member of Carnovskys stays religious until the end of the story and it is David. His belief in good and evil part is often discussed with his best friend Reb Ephrain. He keeps its bounds and he is not willing to do something against that persuasion. His son Georg is on the thin boundary of belief. After he reaches adolescence he completely changes and does not act according to the Jewish rules. He proves that for example by marrying gentile girl. The war changes Georg, he loses his faith in God; God would not be able to let so many people die. Although he knows his religious limitations, his son – the last of the generation Carnovskys, is completely different and changed by the time and environment. He grows up surrounded more by gentiles than Jewish people and this is in my opinion dominant element why he changes too much. In fact he stands against the Jews and is ready to betray both family and close friends.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

*The Family Carnovsky* tries to deal with the Jewish topic in the Germany in late 1930's after the forces of the Nazi Party overtake the country. The generation of Carnovskys grows into the period of uncertain future where David is the most enlightened and reputable member of Carnovskys and also the Jewish population, Georg rebels against the family who does not acknowledge the rules of the Jewish society and Jegor may be the last of the family. It is not certain if Jegor, the last of the Carnovskys, survives the unhappy event.



## 6. Conclusive comparison

Isaac Bashevis Singer and Israel Joshua Singer undoubtedly enriched the world of literature both in a different way and they have become an integral part of the Jewish literature. Although they were brothers and shared the same home in their youth in Poland, their conception of the literature was partly different. “There are two Singers in Yiddish literature and while both are very good, they sing in different keys.” (Howe 1980: 7) However, they used similar topics like the Jewish emigrants from Poland, keeping of faith, the loss of the family and assimilation in brand new society. It is necessary to mention that Israel Joshua Singer died in 1944 so he did not experienced the end of the World War II and therefore held his pessimistic literally feeling whereas Isaac Bashevis often turned in his works to humor or satire. Israel Joshua tried to show his opinion on Nazi Germany where Nazis were in interesting contrast. On one hand they were disciplined and fresh and on the other hand the leadership was interwoven with homosexuals. Israel Joshua uses the same topic in *The Family Carnovsky*. After the First World War many Americans of the Lost Generation were convinced that the state pushed people under the political pressure. Thus many US people thought that Nazis were not so bad. I. J. Singer wanted to reveal the real truth and change American minds so *The Family Carnovsky* is a didactic work. Although Israel Joshua believed at the time – like many intellectuals then - that the solution against Nazism was communism his brother Isaac remained unbiased. However, he connected his characters with this political idea.

Brothers I. B. Singer and I. J. Singer are evidently influenced by both World Wars and by living in exile in the United States. The literal concept develops in the work of Israel Joshua Singer; the generation gap is in fact unstoppable and it is impossible to change. Hope vanishes with every descendant moving from their home which is obvious in *The Family Carnovsky*. This novel also reacts to the future of the whole world. This uncertainty finishes in two counterparts; surviving of the world, life with accompanying new hope or death and total destruction. The world of Carnovskys seems to be the world without

hope, the world where lucid intervals are rare, and the world where almost everything finishes with fatal error.

Israel Joshua Singer builds the world with its specific characters more or less provoking the reader. Humiliation and the hatred against one's own community is not any obstruction to join the oppressor. Masterly polished style in Joshua's work sometimes seems to be absurd and incomprehensible. The question "Why?" accompanies most of the character's decisions. There is a persistent presence of suspension and suffering which is slowly and cleverly escalated until it finishes with tragedy which is a quite different from reading his brother's novel.

"I. J. Singer mastered, as few Yiddish writers have, the problems of construction peculiar to this kind of novel: how to link and contrast parallel plots, how to balance clusters of characters against one another, how to bring together a large span of novelistic time with at least some moments of intensely realized detail. It's hard to say, and probably not very important, whether he modeled himself consciously on the European masters of the family chronicle or, because he was subject to parallel pressures and needs, developed on his own parallel strategies of composition." (Howe 1980: 8)

In contrast with Israel, his older brother Isaac luxuriates in the supernatural elements. He frequently uses good and evil parts and gives them into contrast. Those parts are directly linked to the main characters and make major decisions in the plot. Evil elements are usually associated with Nazi Germany, diabolic Adolf Hitler or Satan itself. Good elements are expressed sometimes as enlightened personalities, God or rabbis although he also shows some bad rabbis as well. One example of the bad rabbi is Mr. Lampert from *Enemies, A Love Story*. He is fully dependent on Herman Broder who writes articles for him. Lampert is not able to do anything without helpers and his reputation as a scholar is based on lies.

“I’m calling you because in your cabala article you made several serious errors which do neither of us any credit.” “What errors?” “I can’t tell you now. Rabbi Moscovitz called me up – something about the Angel Sandalphon or Metatron. The article is in type. When he caught the mistakes, they were going to press. They’ll have to take out the pages and rearrange the whole magazine. That’s what you’ve done to me.” “I’m very sorry, but in that case I resign, and you don’t have to pay me for the work I’ve done.” “How will that help me? I depend on you. Why didn’t you check? That’s why I hired you, to do research so I wouldn’t look like a simpleton in the eyes of the world. You know I’m busy and ..” (Singer 1972: 69)

Isaac uses lot of the religious matters and terms and for the gentile readers it can be quite difficult to understand all the meanings. Many Jewish questions are intelligible only to Jews acquainted with the whole Jewish tradition. Thus the works of Isaac Bashevis and Israel Joshua were firstly written in Yiddish because it was their native tongue. Later these works were translated into English and other languages.

The subjects of the novels were quite different. Isaac was not afraid of working with characters as liars, prostitutes and thieves. “His works can be roughly divided into two groups: those which return to pre-war Poland and sometimes even precious centuries there, and those which take place in postwar America.” (Procházka 2002: 266) He is interested in polygamy which is associated with the previous lives of the characters; for example in *The Penitent* or *Meshugah* where the assumed dead first wife has in fact survived the Holocaust. Characters of Isaac’s and Israel’s novels are forced to leave their homeland (mainly Poland because of the origin of both brothers) so they can survive the Nazi menace. Those characters get a new chance to start a completely new life as it is e.g. in *Enemies*, *A Love Story* or *The Family Carnovsky* but instead of being happy their destinies are affected by a loss of everything, death of family members or humiliation.

His work helped many younger writers link the stock of Jewish fable, narrative, and metaphysical preoccupation with their secular American condition, and encouraged them to reach back into their background in European experience. (Bradbury 1992: 168, 169)

Faith becomes one of the most important subjects of all four novels. In Israel's *The Family Carnovsky* is faith something that slowly disappears generation after generation but it is necessary to mention that every personality keeps something that is primarily in relation with religion. Some characters turn to God in crowning moments or in hopeless situations. Other people hesitate if to remain faithful or to convert. In all the novels some enlightened people maintain the religious tradition.

In Isaac's novels the characters sometimes want to forget their past such as in *Enemies, A Love Story* where a person knowing about relatives is able to avoid them which is quite startling. "The Singers' view of Jewish survival is expressed succinctly in the "private philosophy" of Herman Broder." (Siegel 1981: 54) Why a person without friends and family wants to stay hidden in a new community? *The Family Carnovsky* shares quite similar problem where a son wants to extricate from the Jewish society and is able to betray his own family.

Israel and Isaac experienced hard times during their lives and because of that they chose such interesting Jewish themes. Isaac won the Nobel Prize in 1978 and became internationally one of the most popular Jewish writers at all. His works are full of tragic moments, privation is not missing, satire reveals as well. Sometimes literary critics claim that Isaac freed his writing after the death of his brother. "Some critics have suggested that Isaac was impeded by Joshua, that he felt himself under his brother's "shadow." Several have hinted that only Joshua's death enabled Isaac to free completely his creative muse." (Siegel 1981: 43)

Both brothers' novels have the same value because they are original. Although *The Family Carnovsky* does not contain brighter moments, it is such a heart touching generational novel that it should not be compared with other novels. For better orientation there is a chart comparing the novels.

Author	Title	Year	Summary
Israel Joshua Singer	<i>The Family Carnovsky</i>	1969	No optimism, the destiny of a person comparable to the destiny of the mankind
Isaac Bashevis Singer	<i>Enemies, A love story</i>	1972	Includes tragic situations, comedy sections, satire and anger, filmed in 1989
Isaac Bashevis Singer	<i>Meshugah</i>	1981 - 1983	Serialized in <i>Forward</i> under its original title; <i>Lost souls</i> , partly autobiographical
Isaac Bashevis Singer	<i>The Penitent</i>	1983	Serialized in <i>Jewish Daily Forward</i> , involving dissatisfaction and disillusion, taking place in Israel, a turn toward orthodox religion to solve the problems of alienation

Both brothers elucidated the topic of the Jewish emigrants; they summarized problems associated with the war experience as an impossibility of total assimilation, loss of the family etc. The value of their work can not be measured. They both were great writers and they both brought something less known to the Europeans. However, I. B. Singer became the great figure for young Jewish people in the US.

Although it is difficult to predict anything in this respect, the peak of American Jewish literature is undoubtedly over. Since memories are fading and the sense of a distinctive identity is – in spite of occasional stirs of interest – melting, if there is a revival sometime soon, it will be very different both as a phenomenon and in its manifestations. (Procházka 2002: 267)

## 7. Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce je analýza čtyř románů napsaných židovskými autory I. B. Singerem a I. J. Singerem. V těchto románech se dá pozorovat přerod lidské osobnosti závisící na politickém vývoji v Evropě. Okolnosti druhé světové války zasáhly do osudů mnoha židovských rodin a právě na tyto oběti války se zaměřují oba autoři.

Ztráta rodiny, zapříčiněna emigrací, se stává jedním z ústředních motivů těchto románů. Židé, kteří uprchli před hrozbou nacismu do Spojených států, často zakládali nové rodiny. Někteří z nich neměli sebemenšího tušení, že jejich první partneři přežili válku a tím se nevědomky dopouštěli polygamie. Tuto hříčku osudu zažívá také postava Hermana Brodera z románu *Enemies, A Love Story*.

Ačkoliv hrdinové románů přežili díky emigraci nacistickou rasovou čistku, jejich postavení v nové společnosti nebylo zpočátku nijak lehké. Žili takřka bez finančních prostředků a aby se byli schopni uživit, museli často vykonávat práci, která neodpovídala jejich vzdělání. Často jejich jedinou podporou byla židovská komunita, díky níž se necítili zpočátku v novém světě tak opuštěni. Ne každá románová postava se asimiluje v novém prostředí bez problémů. V případě Hermana Brodera z románu *Enemies, A Love Story* je nový začátek jeho života spjat s novou identitou osobnosti. Dokonce odmítá setkání se členy své rodiny žijícími v Americe. Stejně tak jedná ve svém zaměstnání, kde se živí jako anonymní pisatel. V podobné situaci se ocitá i Aaron Greidinger z románu *Meshugah*, jež prostřednictvím své novinářské práce poskytuje cenné rady židovským přistěhovalcům. Paradoxně se však vyhýbá osobnímu setkání s lidmi židovského původu, s nimiž byl v kontaktu v minulosti.

Vzhledem k prožitým událostem – emigrace, ztráta rodiny a přátel, odloučení od mateřské země, ztráta společenského postavení a majetku, zjištění faktu o vyhlazování v koncentračních táborech – mnoho Židů ztrácí víru. Nemohou se smířit s myšlenkou, že by mohl Bůh dopustit takový zločin na židovském národě. Po prožitých událostech mnoho románových postav ztrácí víru okamžitě, zatímco v knize *The Family Carnovsky* je od víry opouštěno během několika generací.

Díky skutečnosti, že oba autoři, Isaac Bashevis Singer a Israel Joshua Singer, mají židovský původ, mohou čtenáři přiblížit historii židovství. Řada pojmů, která se v románech objevila, mne vedla k tomu, abych se s historií judaismu blíže seznámil.

Vzhledem k jejich vlastním prožitkům jsou autoři schopni autenticky přiblížit čtenářům osudy a mnohdy spletité životní cesty německých či polských židovských emigrantů. Díla bratrů Singerů mají hodnotné postavení v americké židovské literatuře ve 20. století.



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Figure 1

<http://www.danwymanbooks.com/yidper/literarishe.jpg>  
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Figure 2

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_laba\\_UxfYb8/SZPCCYDOLVI/AAAAAAAAALX0/veS4XmVA\\_bY/s400/yentl+1.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_laba_UxfYb8/SZPCCYDOLVI/AAAAAAAAALX0/veS4XmVA_bY/s400/yentl+1.jpg)  
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Figure 3

[http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3313/3451496364\\_cfc19e288d.jpg](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3313/3451496364_cfc19e288d.jpg)  
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