Set in America, Singer's novel *Enemies: A Love Story* deals with events after the holocaust. The characters, who have somehow survived the Nazi pogrom, try to pick up the threads of life in their newly adopted country. Characteristically, Singer does not write about people of American origin as he feels that he is not sufficiently informed about their ways:

I never write about people who were born here.... because, when I write about a man, I like not only to know the man and his parents and grandparents but also what the man knows.... When I write about immigrants ... I have a feeling that I know what they know.

Thus he keeps his narrative confined to the Polish-Jewish immigrants. In spite of their comparatively easy life, they find it impossible to forget the horrors of the war and the concentration camps. In fact, characters are after seen alluding to themselves as persons from another world, as walking ghosts. Herman Broder, the hero, is haunted by fear even in the middle of a busy street in New York. He lives
in a world of fantasy where he is forever devising ways of escape from the Nazis. His life is further complicated by his involvement with three women at the same time. For a while, he is able to maintain some sort of a balance in his relationship with them by manipulating his daily routine. But as events begin to pile up, he finds it impossible to continue such an existence, and escapes by cutting himself off from all familiar ties.

Tamara, Herman's first wife, is presumed to have perished in the holocaust. But while her children are killed in the shooting, Tamara escapes into Russia in spite of sustaining injuries. After years of suffering she comes to America only to find her husband married to someone else. Tamara, as Herman remembers her, appears to be hysterical, selfish and unreasonable. In fact, Herman recollects that just before the war he had already decided to divorce her: "This hysterical woman, who had tormented him and whom he had been about to divorce when the war broke out, had risen from the dead." While he had been thinking that her death had spared him a lot of unpleasantness, the news of her being alive upsets him. His bitterness and frustration make Herman blind to Tamara's merits:

In his irritation he had overlooked her devotion to him and the children, the fact that she was always there
to help him and others. Even when he had moved out of the house and lived in furnished room, she would come and clean it for him and bring him food. She nursed him when he was sick, mended his clothes, and washed his linen. She even typed his dissertation, although in her opinion it was anti-humanistic, anti-feminist, and depressing in outlook. (P.55).

Tamara, older than him in years, had always been a steady support, in spite of all their differences. The daughter of well-to-do parents, she had been an ardent supporter of various ideas ranging from Communism to Zionism, but through it all she had continued to help Herman in times of need.

At first sight, Tamara appears to have changed a lot. Her American clothes and well-groomed appearance make her look younger. At the same time, it fills Herman with resentment:

Tamara had aged a little, but she appeared surprisingly young. She was wearing American clothes and had obviously visited a beauty parlour. Her hair was jet black and had the artificial sheen of fresh dye, her cheeks were rouged, her eyebrows plucked, her finger nails red. She made Herman think of a stale loaf of bread put into hot oven to be freshened up (P.58).
He also feels that it is entirely out of character for someone in Tamara's situation: "His embarrassment had subsided and he experienced a feeling of irritation that the woman who had seen their children taken away to be killed allowed herself to be dressed in this fashion" (P.58). But on closer scrutiny he is able to discover some of her familiar features. Moreover, she still retains her alertness of mind and her quickness at retorting, although the war has left a deep scar in her mind. She lives and works mechanically, often behaving as though in a haze:

Like thousands of others of her time, Tamara is sucked into the cruel war, and later thrown out like a pebble. Left without family and friends, she is unable to find her bearings at first. Although she eventually comes to America with the hope of finding Herman, she is not surprised to learn that he has another wife. Only she is upset because of Yadwiga's inferior social background. Subsequently she comes to terms with the situation. She is even prepared for a divorce, rather than thrust herself into Herman's life. But Herman, in his contrary manner, does not want to give her up, as he finds her 'prettier' Calmer, more interesting (P.73) than before.

In spite of her eccentricities, Tamara is a devoted mother. Throughout her years in Russian and Sweden, and even
after coming to America, Tamara is never able to forget her children. She continually thinks of their tragic but heroic death, and has visions of them even in her waking hours. As she says, this memory has sustained her through all hardships, and has kept her from evil. Although Tamara does not believe in God, she accepts the idea of the immortality of souls. Yet at the same time, she regards herself as dead:

You are looking at a different woman. Tamara who left her murdered children and fled to Skiba....is another Tamara.... It's true, this body of mine is still dragging itself about. It has even dragged itself to New York. They put nylon stockings on me, dyed my hair, and polished my fingernails, God help me, but gentiles have always prettied up their corpses, and Jews now a days are gentiles. (P 64-65)

The same idea finds an echo in Herman's thoughts about Tamara:

Whenever he was with her, he re-experienced the miracle of resurrection. Sometimes as she spoke to him, he had the feeling he was at a since at which her spirit had materialized. He had even played with the thought that Tamara wasn't really among the living, but that her phantom had returned to him. (P. 106)
Tamara displays a rare independence of spirit in the face of adversities. Her long ordeal has made her aware of her own strength. She has not only been able to do all the work assigned to her in the camps, but has also looked after the sick people in her group. In America she is initially obliged to accept financial help from her uncle and also from the Jewish Organization, but she dislikes the idea of remaining a parasite, and is determined to stand up for herself as soon as she can. Rather than make claims on Herman's resources, she feels pity for him because of his own insecure condition. Occasionally, the hopelessness of her situation prompts her to seek death: "Over there, I still had some hope. Actually, I had planned to settle in Israel, but when I found that you were alive, everything changed. Now I'm entirely without hope, and one dies of that more easily than of cancer" (P. 115). But she recovers from her moments of depression and approaches life's problems in a decisive manner. She advises Herman on how to get out of his present entanglement. She is able to look at the situation in a dispassionate manner without any resentment towards Yadwiga, although she is her rival.

Tamara's decision to visit Herman's apartment causes an upheaval in his life, and leads to a series of complications. It appears that Tamara's visit is not pre-planned, but is the outcome of a sudden spurt of
curiosity. Moreover, she feels secure in her assumption that she has changed beyond recognition. Thus, inspired by a few drinks, she suddenly decides to see for herself how Herman lives. Her frustration shows through her words:

When a person can't have the soft things of life, he takes to the hard ones....(P. 150).

Such sentimental thoughts are soon discarded, and Tamara becomes her normal self. In spite of her own social insecurity, she declines Yadwiga's offer of her husband and home. Tamara's unselfishness is reflected in the way she accepts her former servant as her husband's new wife. She is full of understanding and sympathy for Yadwiga's condition, and can very well imagine her plight if Herman were to leave her.

The disintegration of her familiar world often makes Tamara apathetic and reckless in her behaviour. Thus, in spite of her earlier lack of interest, she suddenly decides to have her operation: "What have I got to lose? Nothing more than my wretched life" (P.163). At the same time, she would rather go through her ordeal alone, than involve Herman. As she knows that declaring her relationship with Herman would make him pay her hospital bills, she presents herself as a lonely woman cut off from her family. Besides, she realises that her own existence does not have much
importance in the existing scheme of things. So she does not even tell Hermar the name of the hospital she is going into:

What difference does it make? If I live, I'll come out, and if I don't, they'll bury me somehow. You don't have to visit me. If they find out you're my husband, they'll make you pay. I told them I have no relatives and that's the way it must remain. (P.162).

Rather than force Herman into discharging his duties as a husband, Tamara offers him complete freedom of choice, thus making him more acutely conscious of his own inadequacy.

Tamara's ready response to Herman's distressed appeal after the party again points at her generosity and deep understanding of human weaknesses. She does not condemn Herman for his irresponsible behaviour. On the contrary, she accepts him into her home and tries to help him in every way. In spite of her recent illness, she waits patiently for him in the cold hall of her house:

Herman walked the few slippery steps to the glass door of Tamara's house. He saw Tamara in the light of a single electric bulb. She was waiting for him in an overcoat, the bottom of her night gown showing below the hem, her face grey with sleeplessness, her hair uncombed.... It seemed incredible to him that this was
his wife, the same Tamara whom he had met for the first time almost twenty-five years ago.... (P.187).

Life in the Russian camps has made Tamara immune to physical discomfort. In a way, she likes it because it provides a link with her past, and with that of the Jews. She feels that a life of comfort is a betrayal of the European Jews who have suffered hell. She also has a stronger instinct for survival than Herman. As she says, she is accustomed to living in strange places. When Herman is on the verge of a breakdown, it is Tamara who virtually takes him in hand, and brings back some measure of stability into his life. In spite of her own weak condition, she offers him sensible suggestions regarding his affairs:

'....People like you are incapable of making decisions for themselves .....I am not very good at it either, but sometimes it is easier to deal with others' problems than with one's own. ....Let me be your manager. Put yourself entirely in my hands. Pretend that you're in a concentration camp and must do whatever you are told to do.... Beginning tomorrow, I'll take care of all your needs and you must be ready, to do whatever I ask...' (P.189).

With her confidence and decisiveness Tamara puts a new
zest for life into Herman. She acts as a good organiser, trying to help not only Herman but also Yadwiga and her unborn child. The hopelessness of her own situation is reflected in her repeated references to herself as dead. Yet, far from being revengeful, she shows great tolerance and sympathy for the people around her. While on the one hand she appreciates her uncle's and aunt's points of view, she is unable to accept their suggestions regarding divorce, as she has no desire to see Herman humiliated. Moreover, she feels that in the wasteland of a post-holocaust world, a thing like divorce hardly holds any relevance:

My mother, blessed be her memory, once told me a story about dead people who don't know they have died. They eat, drink and even get married. So, since we once lived together, had children together, and are now roaming about the world of Delusion, why do we need a divorce? (P.188).

Herman is surprised and deeply moved by this rare display of goodness in a hostile world: "Where does her goodness come from?" Herman wondered. He remembered Tamara as stubborn and jealous. But now, despite the fact that he had exchanged her for others, she alone was prepared to help him. What did it mean?" (P.190).
True to her promise, Tamara starts planning a fresh way of life for Herman, beginning with the choice of his breakfast in the cafeteria. Her selfless love and compassion evoke a positive response in Herman: "Women had ruined him, but they had also showed him compassion. 'I'll manage, to live without Masha, too, he consoled himself.' Tamara is right - we are not alive anymore" (P.191). In offering to help Herman sort out his affairs, Tamara finds a fresh mission in life. While Herman has always felt confused and indecisive, Tamara sets about things in a methodical manner. She looks after all details, from reserving a bed for Yadwiga's confinement to finding Herman a suitable job. She even keeps up Yadwiga's spirits by talking to her in Polish over the telephone. At the time of Passover, she helps her former maid prepare for the holidays, whereas, in all fairness, their roles should have been reversed. She does not expect anything in return, not even Herman's love or gratitude.

In addition to helping Herman and Yadwiga, Tamara also manages to take over her uncle's affairs quite successfully:

A latent business sense had awakened in Tamara. With Herman's help, she catalogued the books, set prices, and sent the torn books out to a bindery to be repaired. Before Passover, Tamara had stocked up on Haggadahs, seder trays, matzo covers, skullcaps of all styles and colours, and matzo plates. She acquired a supply of prayer shawls, phylacteries, prayer books
Her eye for such small details underlines her keen sense of business. Later, when Herman decides to go back to Masha, it is again Tamara to whom he turns for support. In his absence, she is to contact Rabbi Lampert and see Yadwiga through childbirth. Although not surprised by Herman's inconsistency, Tamara, with her practical bent of mind, advises Herman against such a move. But at the same time she displays no harshness. On the contrary, she accepts the situation and is prepared to accept all responsibilities including that of looking after the bookshop. While Tamara strongly criticizes Masha for her unfairness towards Yadwiga, she makes no mention of her own position in their complex relationship. She is even prepared to bring up Yadwiga's baby, and help her in every possible way.

After Herman's disappearance Tamara continues to be in the centre of the action. Although Rabbi Lampert provides financial assistance, it is she who takes Yadwiga and her daughter into her care, and works in the store all day. The Rabbi's frequent visits and readiness to help do not change her lifestyle in any way. She goes on with her work without any expectation of reward or recognition. In spite of Herman's betrayal and desertion, she tries to look for him in every possible place. Tamara never complains about her
own situation, or tries to find a way out of it. This is seen in her refusal to marry again, when the chance is offered to her. She remains faithful to the memory of Herman, hoping for re-union with him in the next world, if not in this one:

Tamara had several times listed Herman's name in the missing persons columns published in the Yiddish press, but without results. Tamara believed that Herman had either killed himself or was hiding somewhere in an American version of the Polish hayloft. One day the rabbi informed Tamara that, because of the Holocaust, the rabbinate had eased restrictions so that deserted wives could be married a second time.

And Tamara had replied, 'Perhaps, in the next World—to Herrn' (P. 219).

Thus, in spite of her secular education and modern outlook on life, Tamara retains the age-old respect of a Jewish wife for her husband and the institution of marriage. With her correct assessment of Herman's character, she is able to guess that Herman has vanished in order to escape the problems of life. She herself is no escapist, but is shown throughout the novel as facing difficult situations with courage and determination.
If the holocaust has dislodged Tamara from Herman's orbit, it has drawn Yadwiga into it. Formerly a servant in Herman's house, Yadwiga is illiterate and unsophisticated. Even years after her marriage to Herman, and their living in America, Yadwiga is unable to rise above her peasant background. She is simple, hardworking, and absolutely devoted to Herman. Constantly busy in scrubbing and cleaning, she keeps their apartment spotlessly clean. She looks after Herman's smallest needs, but is afraid of facing outsiders. She feels ill-at-ease in the presence of strangers and even her neighbours do not find her very communicative. Thus she lives in isolation, particularly as Herman is frequently absent from home.

Adjustment to the new way of life does not come easily to Yadwiga. That is why even years after settling in America she looks out of place. Her Polish peasant appearance sets her apart from the Jewish women around her. Even her dress has a pattern uncommon in America:

Yadwiga had spent a year with Herman in the German camp after the war and had been living in America for three years, but she had retained the freshness and shyness of a Polish village girl. She used no cosmetics. She had learned a few English words. It even seemed to Herman that she carried with her the odours of Lipsk....(P. 9-10).
She continues to behave like a servant just as she had been in Trivekev. During the war years she had taken great risks to keep him alive, hiding him in a hayloft without the knowledge of her family. After coming to America she had been ready to accept the Jewish faith, but Herman had seen no necessity of it. Yadwiga is slow to adjust to the new way of life. She is afraid of movement or change as, for her, movement is associated with danger, as experienced during her flight from Poland. She is also afraid of the ocean, and never goes for a stroll on the beach.

In spite of her uneasiness over Herman's irregular way of life, Yadwiga considers herself lucky to be living in America, particularly in an apartment of their own. Compared to her life as a servant in Poland, her present state appears heavenly, with her apartment taking on the proportions of an enchanted palace in a fairy tale. She takes pride in the few amenities the house offers. Marriage to Herman seems to be the culmination of her long-cherished dream:

Yes, in this distant country Herman was Yadwiga's husband, brother, father, God. She had loved him even when she was a servant in his father's house. Living with him in foreign lands, she realized how right she had been about his worth and intelligence. He knew his
way in the world—he rode on trains and buses; he read
books and newspapers, he earned money (P.13).

To the simple minded Yadwiga, even riding a train or a bus
seems a remarkable feat. Thus the same Herman who is
repeatedly seen as a failure in life acquires the stature of
a demigod in Yadwiga's eyes.

Yadwiga is hardworking and, in spite of her relatively
comfortable life, always finds something to do. She cooks
Herman's favourite dishes and washes and irons his clothes
everyday. She is never tired of serving him. Yadwiga's one
fear in life is losing Herman: "Every time he went away
from home, she feared that he would lose his way in the
turmoil and vastness of America. His every homecoming
seemed a miracle" (P.15). Tired of sitting alone at home,
she toys with the idea of going to work in a factory, but
her usual dread of distances and trains deters her from
making the move. So she stays at home, waiting for
Herman's return, with only two parakeets for company. As
Herman is the only person with whom she is familiar in this
alien land, she is terribly afraid of being separated from
him. She constantly visualizes dangers befalling him on the
way:
Every time he went away, she said good-bye as if the Nazis were ruling America and his life was in danger. She laid her hot cheek against his, begged him to be careful of cars, not to forget his meals, to remember to phone her. She clung to him with the devotion of a dog (P.18-19).

At heart, Yadwiga is simple like a child. Herman, in spite of his betrayal of her, is impressed by her trust in him: "She was as direct and truthful as he was devious and enmeshed in lies" (P.19). Instead of complaining of loneliness, Yadwiga keeps herself busy with housework, and tries to make the most of the time Herman spends with her. On their outings in the Broadwalk she thoroughly enjoys her ride on the carousel, and her ice-cream and lemonade. When Herman takes her to a musical film, and explains it to her, she regards it as bliss. "'I'm so lucky, God Himself has sent you to me!' she exclaims" (P.48). She goes on believing Herman's lies about his book-selling trips. Instead of being annoyed because of his absence, she is only full of concern for him. Her simplicity surprises Herman: "A gentle soul", Herman said to himself. 'How is it that such goodness survives in this corrupt world? That is a mystery - unless one believes in the transmigration of souls .... She is truth itself!' " (P.72).
Married to Herman, Yadwiga is keenly interested in following the Jewish rituals. For the Sabbath she prepares the special types of food prescribed. She also buys the wine and candles to be blessed, and tries to make the celebration complete in every way:

Although Yadwiga hadn't converted, she tried to observe traditional Judaism. She remembered the Jewish rituals from the time she had worked for Herman's parents.... She had at some point acquired two brass candlesticks, and although she didn't know how to pronounce the benediction, she would cover her eyes with her fingers for a moment after lighting the Sabbath candles and mumble something, just as she had seen Herman's mother do. (85)

Her sincerity is particularly remarkable when contrasted with the apathy of Herman, the Jew. Sometimes when, in a rare mood of relaxation, Herman sings holy songs, Yadwiga feels excited and happy, "full of joy in the Sabbath" (P.86). She prepares for the festival of Rosh Hasanaah with great zeal, but is upset by Herman's absence at such a time. Still she tries to make the most of the occasion, going to the synagogue, even if it is only in the company of neighbours: "She stood among the wives and at the horn's first wailing sound had burst into tears. It had reminded her of Lipsk, of the war, of her father's death" (P.105). Although not bound to follow Jewish customs, she willingly does so, keeping a fast on Yom Kippur. She even buys a new dress for the occasion. While Herman prefers to stay at
home, Yadwiga, a Christian, is eager to join the prayer. In spite of the beating she has received from Herman, she behaves like a good Jewish woman and wife: "She took a holiday prayerbook with her to the synagogue. It was printed in Hebrew and English on facing pages. Yadwiga couldn't read either language" (P.119). She is happy just to be accepted as part of the Jewish community. Her religious earnestness occasionally reminds Herman of his own mother. Although not born into the faith she reflects the age-old qualities of pious Jewish women. But Yadwiga does not remain content with imitating the ways of a Jewess. She wants to become one in the full sense of the term.

After her conversion to Judaism, Yadwiga becomes more deeply concerned with rituals. She observes the laws of purification and constantly seeks Herman's advice on details of everyday conduct. She is confused on the issue of her relationship to her own mother and sister. While she is deeply attached to them, she does not know whether as a Jewess she should continue to communicate with Christians. She also listens to the numerous suggestions of her neighbours, and starts learning the Yiddish alphabet:

Yadwiga no longer tuned into the polish radio programmes, but listened only to those in Yiddish... She asked Herman to speak Yiddish to her, through she understood little. She reprimanded him more and
more for not conducting himself like other Jews. He didn't go to the synagogue, nor did he own a prayer shawl and phylacteries. (P.142).

In her eagerness and unquestioning observance of rituals, she appears almost like a modern version of the convert Wanda in The Slave.

With conversion, Yadwiga loses her diffidence to some extent. She is no longer afraid of her neighbours. The women visit her freely, and advise her on matters ranging from religion to bargain-hunting. The spate of advice leaves the simple and uneducated Yadwiga totally confused: "In Yadwiga's mind, the insurance policy and the dishwasher were both necessary aspects of Jewish observances" (P.142). As a result of greater exposure to the social world around her, Yadwiga becomes bolder in her relationship to Herman, asserting her rights as a wife. Whereas earlier she had accepted all Herman's lies in spite of her misgivings, now she accuses him openly about his mistresses, and even threatens him.

Tamara's appearance on the scene upsets Yadwiga's world altogether. Yadwiga reacts violently to Tamara's presence, initially taking her to be a ghost. Unexpectedly confronted with her, Yadwiga is scared out of her wits:
Yadwiga ran back into the room, slamming the door shut. Her face was white and her eyes seemed to turn upward. She stood there trembling, with her hand holding the doorknob, as if someone was trying to force his way in (P.149).

She tries with all her might to keep Herman away from this terrible apparition. But once she accepts the fact that Tamara is alive, she becomes submissive, reverting to her old role of a servant:

Yadwiga came in, carrying a tray with two cups of coffee, cream, sugar, and a plate of home-made cookies. She had put on an apron and looked just like the servant she had once been. This was how she had served Herman and Tamara before the war, when they had come from Warsaw to visit (P.152).

Although deeply attached to Herman, she is prepared to give him up, to step aside in favour of Tamara, even to go back to her mother in Poland: "'I'm a simple peasant, uneducated, but I have a heart. It's your husband and your home. You suffered long enough'....'I'll cook and clean. I'll be a servant again. That's the way God wants it' " (P.153-154). Endowed with a strong sense of right and wrong, she would not dream of depriving Tamara by her own
selfishness. She accepts the change as God's will. She even accepts the prospect of bringing up her child on her own.

Fresh evidence of Herman's inconstancy makes Yadwiga feel even more insecure, and therefore angry. In spite of her devotion to Herman, she is only human. So she breaks down in front of Tamara, recounting all Herman's lapses, and her own services to him in the past. She clings to Tamara as her only support in her present hopeless condition. Yet, in spite of her anger, she is concerned about Herman's well being. That is why she throws Herman's rubbers onto the ground, when she finds that it is snowing outside.

Yadwiga retains her habit of hard work even in an advanced state of pregnancy. She continues to clean and scrub as she had done earlier. She paints and decorates the house and, with Tamara's help, prepares for Passover. Realizing Tamara's good intentions, she accepts her into the family without any misgivings. She even invites her to stay over for the holiday. With her newfound sense of security, she does not feel alarmed when she finds Herman packing in the middle of the night. Although Herman is afraid of another unpleasant scene, Yadwiga does nothing of the kind. After Herman's disappearance, she quickly adjusts to her changed circumstances. She begins life anew with help
from Tamara and Rabbi Lampert. She takes care of the household duties as she had always done, thus leaving Tamara free for managing their financial matters.

Thus from the beginning to the end of the novel, Yadwiga presents a picture of obedience and industry. Her love for Herman prompts her to leave behind her family ties as well as her religion, and accept him in spite of his numerous lapses.

Masha, the third woman in Herman's life, is introduced at the outset as his mistress. She is beautiful and financially independent, as she has a job in a cafeteria. Daughter of affluent and religious Jews, she has undergone a lot of suffering in ghettos and concentration camps. The experience has made her materialistic and selfish, Masha is highly conscious of her good looks and adopts an air of sophistication: "She wasn't tall, but her slenderness and the way she held her head gave the impression that she was.... A cigarette dangled between her lips. Her face reflected the strength of those who have survived peril" (P.31).

A woman of extreme emotional states, Masha is constantly seen shifting from love to anger, or from
excitement to apathy. She also displays an ambivalent attitude in her relationship with her mother. Although her mother is the person closest to her, Masha criticises her every moment, picking out real and imaginary lapses in her. She even accuses her of falsehood and inconsistency in behaviour. Shifrah Puah is only too well aware of this trait in her daughter. "She has to say something contrary, that's all. She inherited it from her father's family... They all loved to argue" (P.33). Nervous and restless by temperament, Masha is fond of making dramatic statements and gestures. Thus she repeatedly speaks of the holocaust and the possibility of its recurrence, knowing fully well that such statements are highly distressing to her mother. Masha calls her mother a dictator and makes little effort to obey her. Even in Herman's presence she accuses her of being hypocritical and selfish, much interested in material gain in spite of her apparent piety. She also blames her for her own disastrous marriage to Leon Tortshiner. Yet, at the same time, she cannot bear to be parted from her mother. Every faculty in her is tuned to Shifrah Puah's needs: "Masha listened to every sound her mother made, always on the alert, should help be needed. Mother and daughter loved one another, yet held innumerable grudges against each other"(P.40).

Masha's relationship with Herman is completely different from that of Tamara or Yadwiga. She loves to highlight her past experiences, and speaks of the numerous men who had
pursued her: "Herman knew that she was preparing some unusual story for their loveplay. Masha compared herself to Scheherazade....Masha had collected scores of adventures. Sometimes it seemed she must be making them up" (P.40). Although she has been separated from Leon Tortshiner for a long time, she goes on talking about him to Herman, recounting his myriad vices. She seems to derive some strange sort of pleasure from these accounts.

Masha's intense nervous energy carries her through her daily activities. Although she is highly irregular in her habits, apparently she does not suffer on account of it. Her hyperactive imagination keeps her suspended between the two worlds of imagination and reality:

Masha seemed hardly to require sleep. She could doze off and wake up refreshed a few minutes later. Her dreams plagued her. She would shout in her sleep, talk German, Russian, Polish. The dead revealed themselves to her..... Her father appeared to her in a dream and read her verses he had written in the other world. (P.42)

Imaginary pictures of perversion and violence have a strangely exciting effect on her.
Highly possessive by nature, Masha resents Herman's association with other women, even though she herself has had many affairs. She questions him closely about Yadwiga and Tamara, making comparisons between them and herself. She makes use of any excuse to keep Herman with herself, knowing very well that he has to go back to Yadwiga:

She used every device to keep him with her, and made things as difficult as she could. Her hatred of Yadwiga approached the irrational. If Herman had a stain on his clothing or a button was missing from his coat, Masha would accuse Yadwiga of being indifferent to him, of living with him only because he was supporting her. Masha was the best argument Herman knew for Schopenhauer's thesis that intelligence is nothing more than a servant of blind will. (P.45).

In addition to being imaginative, Masha possesses a strong practical sense. She has a keen eye for profitable bargains. She buys cheap cloth and makes dresses for herself and her mother. She also makes other household things like curtains and covers for the furniture. But her talent is rarely appreciated as she keeps away from neighbours.

Masha's sense of rivalry with Yadwiga prompts her to be aggressively Jewish at times. Thus, although she plays the part of an emancipated woman, she makes extra efforts to
observe a proper Sabbath, particularly when Herman is visiting her: "Perhaps because he lived with a Gentile, Masha made sure that her Sabbath candles were lighted, the sanctification goblet polished, the table set according to law and custom" (P.74). Mother and daughter go on preparing for the Sabbath, cooking various dishes. To Herman it appears like a re-creation of the atmosphere in his parents' home.

Neither Masha's apparent frivolity nor her bursts of activity can provide her an escape from the nightmare experiences of the holocaust. She is often haunted by the memory of those terrible years:

I lie there and remember all the savagery, all the humiliations. If I do fall asleep, then I'm back with them immediately. They are dragging me, beating me, chasing me. They come running from all sides, like hounds after a hare (P.78).

To her, the holocaust appears as something final and inevitable. Edward Alxander, in his book *The Resonance of Dust*, observes :

The characters in *Enemies*, many of them, live with the fear that the Holocaust really did show that the nineteenth century ideologues who claimed that the
voices of Nature and History were the voices of God were right after all. "'Slaughtering Jews', says Masha, "is part of nature. Jews must be slaughtered - that is what God wants.'"... Enemies does not...explore the possibility of recovery from the trauma for those Jews who have survived the Holocaust, but assumes that for the Jews generally the Holocaust was the end of the world.3

The trip with Herman provides her a brief respite from fear and anxiety. She begins to sing and dance, her spirit heightened by drinks of cognac. For the time being, she forgets the Nazis, and enjoys Herman's company, even displaying her skill in housekeeping: "Alongwith her playful frivolity, she had the instincts of a mother. She didn't squander money as loose women do (P.91)."

Masha's supposed pregnancy brings out another aspect of her character. In spite of her unorthodox way of life, Masha has the same age-old desire for a family complete with children. So she discards the idea of having an abortion by saying that it is expensive and dangerous. She hopes to get a divorce from Leon Tortshiner and be duly married to Herman. "With all her negativism, Masha had retained the normal instincts, she wanted a husband, children, a household (P.98)." Becoming Herman's wife and the mother of
his child has been a fond dream for her. Once her mind is
set on marriage, Masha stops at nothing; hence her ultimatum
to Herman. Her pregnancy also brings her closer to Herman.
Whereas previously she had followed all her mother's
instructions regarding the observation of festivals, now she
objects to the sacrifice of hens, because Herman dislikes
such practices.

Masha's singleminded pursuit of her selfish interests
drags her into a net of deceit. She lies to Herman about
the circumstances under which she has obtained her divorce
from Leon, and she sticks to the lie, even with false oaths
taken in the name of Heaven. She almost convinces Herman by
her melodramatic outburst:

Masha was screaming, and her voice too was not like her
own, it was like that of a Jewish woman of older times
who had been falsely accused of evil-doing. It seemed
to Herman as if he were hearing a voice from
generations past (P.138).

Under her veneer of sophistication Masha is no different
from the uneducated Jewish women of the past. She tries to
strengthen her own position by cursing Leon and also
herself. But later, when questioned closely, admits her own
guilt.
Masha's eagerness to become a mother makes her accept her pregnancy without any doubt. Thus, in spite of being a modern woman living in an advanced country like America, she does not seek medical advice on her own condition. On the contrary, she imagines all the symptoms of pregnancy in herself and informs her mother accordingly. The truth is revealed only when she falls seriously ill, and a doctor has to be called in. The discovery leaves Masha numb with disappointment. "'I've no feelings left', " she tells Herman (P.148).

Masha's restless nature prompts her to look for fresh adventures all the time. Thus her mood of depression does not last long after her illness. Rabbi Lampert's visit to her home adds a new dimension. She enjoys herself immensely, basking in the warmth of the rabbi's compliments:

The first thing Herman noticed when he entered the door was a huge bouquet of roses in a vase on the dresser. On the cloth-covered table, between the cookies and oranges, stood a magnum of champagne. The rabbi and Mash were clicking their glasses together; they obviously hadn't heard Herman come in. Masha was already tipsy. She spoke in a loud voice and laughed. She had put on party dress. (P.164).
In the opulent atmosphere complete with champagne and roses, Herman's presence appears incongruous as well as superfluous. Masha's effusive greeting seems only a mockery: "It's your home. I'm your wife. Everything here is yours", she calls out (P. 164).

The prospect of going to Rabbi Lampert's party makes Masha so excited that it upsets her normal routine. She takes a day off from work and starts preparing for the evening. As the day progresses, she grows more and more tense, and even starts shouting at her mother, calling her 'old wijch' (P. 165). But here again, she alternates between resentment and enthusiastic participation. Initially she had refused to attend the party as she had regarded it as a plot hatched by Leon Tortshiner in complicity with the rabbi. Subsequently she changes her mind. Always unsettled in temperament, Masha appears to have become even more so after her illness. She suffers from sleeplessness and nightmares. Herman, long familiar with her unusual behaviour, is hardly surprised:

Herman observed once again how Masha went from one extreme to the other. She began to get ready for the party with growing enthusiasm.... She decided to remodel a dress.... She chattered all the while, telling stories of how men had pursued her - before the
war, during the war, after the war.... Herman understood that what she craved was to be a success at the party, to outshine all the other women with her elegance, her good looks. He had known from the beginning that, despite Masha's initial opposition, she would eventually decide to go. With Masha, everything had to be made into drama. (P.166)

Masha's excitement over the party even makes her forget food. She goes on with her preparations, taking only sips of cognac in between.

Masha and Herman proceed to the party, braving the snow and the bad weather. They make their way to the rabbi's house with a lot of difficulty, but once there Masha's spirit revives and she tries to look her best. The prospect of achieving social success brings her a vision of immortality: "Masha went up to a mirror to try to repair some of the damage inflicted on her dress and appearance. 'If I can survive this, I'll never die,' she said" (P.169). Her ego boosted by the rabbi's praise of her beauty, she gains in confidence and no longer needs Herman's company. While the party makes Herman nervous and diffident, Masha minglees freely with the guests, finding familiar people among them. Under the influence of alcohol, she starts behaving in an uncontrolled manner, causing embarrassment to
Herman: "'Here is my long-lost husband!' she called out. She threw her arms around Herman's neck and kissed him as if he had just returned from a journey. Her breath reeked of alcohol" (P.172). Her evident familiarity with Yasha Kotik and their talk of a man called Moshe Feifer makes Herman feel uneasy. But at the same time the discovery of Herman's duplicity upsets her terribly. Although Masha has always known about Yadwiga and has some suspicion of Tamara's presence, she behaves like an outraged wife, accusing Herman of betraying her. She even breaks off all relationship with him then and there. Still, true to her nature, she wants to know about Tamara and to meet her.

Masha re-appears in Herman's life in a dramatic fashion. While Herman is trying to settle down to a regular sort of life, and accept his responsibilities as husband and prospective father, Masha does not hesitate to upset all his plans. Impatient as usual, she does not even allow him some time for taking such an important decision. She is totally blind to the needs of Yadwiga or Tamara. Selfish to the end, she forestalls Herman's objections by putting his affairs in the rabbi's hands. She can think of only one thing: starting life afresh with Herman in a new surrounding. For the time being, she has even managed to shake off her mother by leaving her behind in the
sanatorium. Her mother's prediction that she would be sorry fails to impress her. Concerned only with the pleasures of the present moment, Masha is hardly one to bother about the future: "Only the present counts for me," she comments (P.206).

The burglary at her flat leaves Masha in a state of shock. She starts screaming and shouting, behaving in an abnormal manner. But gradually she calms down and accepts her situation, only to be violently upset by the unexpected return and sudden sickness of her mother. While one half of her mind perceives her mother's condition and demands a doctor, the other half accuses her of sabotaging her plans: "A doctor! A doctor! She's dying! Masha screamed. 'She's killed herself, the bitch, just for spite!' (P.209).

Once again, in a moment of stress, she goes back to a sort of primitive existence:

And Masha let out a wail similar to the one he had heard over the phone a few hours earlier, when she had told him about the robbery. It was a sound unlike her own voice - catlike and primitive. Her face became contorted, she tore her hair, stamped her feet, leaped at Herman as if to attack him.... Masha screamed, 'This is what you wanted! Enemies! Bloody enemies!' (P.209).
Out of frustration she calls others 'murderers' (P.209). Torn between her lifelong desire of winning others' love and affection, and her strong attachment to her mother, Masha loses her mental balance altogether, and finds it impossible to continue living. All her talk of life or death in Herman's company comes to nothing. Instead she chooses the extreme step of suicide as her way out of life's problems.

The character of Shifrah Puah, sketched in some detail, brings in a touch of old-world Jewishness. Shifrah Puah, who had been attractive in her youth, has changed a lot due to her suffering during the war years. She has lost all her family members except Masha. The tragedy has left her broken in spirit and uncertain of her bearing. Shifrah Puah has grown intensely religious. She not only goes on observing numerous laws related to the rituals, but also observes a constant state of mourning for the Jews killed in the holocaust:

She prayed three times a day and often went around with a cloth covering her hair, imposing restrictions upon herself that she hadn't observed even in Warsaw. She continued to live in spirit with those who had been gassed and tortured. She was always lighting paraffin-filled glasses-memorial candles for friends and relatives (P.39).
For her the passage of time does not obliterate the horror of the concentration camps. She continues to look for and read accounts of those years in books and newspapers.

Shifrah Puah alternates between criticism of Herman and sympathy for him. Even while she is horrified by Masha's affair with Herman, a married man, she finds herself unable to condemn him. On the contrary, she treats Herman as her son and admires him for his knowledge of religious matters. She hopes to live long enough to see Masha happily married to Herman. But her haunting sense of guilt makes her feel uncertain about the future:

It appeared that such rewards were not to be hers. Shifrah Puah blamed herself: she had rebelled against her parents, she treated Meyer badly, she had paid little attention to Masha when she was growing up, when it would have been possible to instil the fear of God in her. And the greatest sin she had committed was to have remained alive when so many innocent men and women had been martyred (P.40).

Shifrah Puah often consults Herman on matters related to dietary laws, and cooks his favourite dishes. Sometimes she even tries to protect Herman from Masha's incessant nagging. On the occasion of Yom Kippur, while buying
sacrificial hens for herself and Masha, she wants to buy a rooster for Herman, but desists in deference to his wishes. She also observes the prescribed rituals of the sacrifice.

Masha's illness scares Shifrah Puah out of her wits. In spite of their constant bickering, mother and daughter are closely attached to each other. Thus Masha's condition makes her mother feel highly insecure. The knowledge of Masha's true condition disappoints her not only because she had wanted a grandchild, but also because it would have provided her the means to remember the massacred Jews:

I wanted so much to have a grandchild. At least one to name after the murdered Jews. I'd hoped it would be a boy and he would be called Meyer. But with us nothing works because our luck is black. Oh', I shouldn't have saved myself from those Nazis! I should have stayed there with the dying Jews, and not run away to America (P.147).

Prayers provide her the only remedy for the growing tension and anxiety. Even when it snows heavily and the furnace breaks down, Shifrah Puah wanders about the house, alternately praying and cursing the callous landlord.

Life in the old-age home, in spite of its material comforts, leaves Shifrah Puah dissatisfied. She feels
neglected by her daughter, and dislikes her new way of life. At the first available opportunity, she makes her way home, only to die there. Notwithstanding her closeness to Masha, their last meeting is far from happy. As the highstrung Masha is unable to survive the shock of her mother's death, Shifrah Puah's funeral has to be handled by a complete stranger like Rabbi Lampert.

In the world of rapidly changing values Shifrah Puah stands out as an example of piety and tolerance.

Characters like Tamara's aunt, Sheva Haddas, and Rabbi Lampert's wife are drawn as brief sketches. Sheva Haddas is simple and pious, and shares her husband's grief over the death of thousands of Jews in the holocaust. Every Monday "they fasted, sat in their stocking feet on low stools, and observed all the rules of shiva" (P.57). Later, she accompanies Reb Abraham to the Holy Land and settles down there with him. Rabbi Lampert's wife enjoys greater material prosperity but does not enjoy her husband's love or confidence. In fact, she is treated by the rabbi in a casual manner, even labelled a stupid woman. Other women such as Yadwiga's neighbours appear only as indistinct figures, but even they contribute to the growth of the novel in as much as they help in shaping Yadwiga's personality and outlook on life. One of them Mrs. Schreier, plays a
significant role, as she is instrumental in bringing Mr.
Pesheles into Herman's life.

The situation in Enemies is comparable to that of The
Magician of Lublin as Yasha, like Herman, is involved with
many women at the same time. But while, with the exception
of Esther, the women in Yasha's life are his mistresses,
Tamara, Jadwiga and Masha are all Herman's wives. In his
communications with Isac Bashevis Singer, Burgin observes:

... if you compare a Herman Broder, who was juggling
different women, to Yasha in The Magician of Lublin,
who was doing the same thing, you see that Yasha is
more active. He's trying, in effect, to play God, to
maneuver events like a magician manipulating his wares.

The women in Herman's life are one another's co-wives, and
thus 'enemies' (in Hebrew). In a way, they are also
Herman's enemies, as his relationship with them does not
bring him happiness or peace: "Left in a world where
redemption and transcendence are devoid of all meaning,
Herman can only acknowledge that every lover is an enemy,
every relationship is exploitative."
NOTES


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