Isaac Bashevis Singer was born in 1904 in a tiny Polish town called Leoncin, in the province of Warsaw. He was the second son of Pinchas Mendel Singer, a Hasidic rabbi originating from the town of Tomaszow, and Bathsheba Zilberman, the daughter of the Rabbi of Bilgoray, in the province of Lublin. His father was extremely pious and, in spite of his impoverished condition never questioned the ways of God. Singer pays tribute to his father with the words: "... he lived like a saint and died like one, blessed with a faith in God, His mercy, His Providence." On his father's side, Isaac had descended from a long line of rabbis and holy men. The family even claimed that they could trace their lineage to a disciple of the founder of Hasidic Judaism. Isaac's paternal grandfather Reb Samuel was a noted scholar of the Cabala which was to have so great an influence on Isaac's ideas and work.

Bathsheba displayed a mixture of scepticism and deep faith. Her father Jacob Zilberman, the rabbi of Bilgoray, was a man of reasoning. He was a true Mitnagged, a member of a European sect that put emphasis on learning and the law. While the Hasidic approach to Judaism stressed emotion, zeal, and mysticism, the Mitnagdim based their faith on
scholarship, enlightenment and logic. Bathsheba was rather good looking and liked to dress fashionably. At the same time she was well-read in both the Hebrew language and the holy books. It was also said of her that she knew almost the entire Jewish Bible by heart.

The conflicting traits in Singer's own character and in the characters he portrays are reflections of the conflict between the character of his parents. Paul Kresh comments:

The contradictions in Isaac's own nature and in the characters he writes about, the conflicts between the rational and the irrational, the innocent and the worldly, the demonic and the cherubic, the real and the fantastic, the romantic and the conservative - can all be traced to the marriage of his parents and the legacy of a Polish-Jewish past\(^2\).

Pinchas was unworldly in his attitude and careless of personal appearance. He wore traditional and often outdated clothes. He was different from other Jews around him in manner and profession. Even when he offered advice to people in his courtroom, he was not particular about collecting his modest fees. Singer's younger brother Moishe took after him.

Very early in life, Isaac became aware of the difference between his own family and others: "Already in Radzymin I began to realize how different our family was from the others. Our family was made up of unique characters"\(^3\). His
father spent his days writing commentaries although he lacked the means to publish them. Isaac's mother also read books, but she was more practical in her outlook:

My father and mother were both honest and charitable, but still what a difference between the two of them! My mother's eyes were sharp.... She saw through a person, behind all his or her masks. She could be sarcastic and biting. My father was the opposite; good natured, full of faith in almost all people.

Besides holy books, Bathsheba read newspapers regularly and even went through some of her son Israel Joshua's secular books. The difference between his father's orthodox beliefs and his mother's rationalistic attitude is illustrated in Singer's account of the geese that screeched after being slaughtered. While his father regarded the geese as religious omens, his mother stopped the noise by removing the windpipe of the dead geese. Such incidents shook Singer's faith in his father's otherworldliness.

Israel Joshua Singer, in his *Of a World That Is No More*, called the marriage between his parents a 'mismatch'. He commented that "they would have been a well-matched couple if she had been the husband and he the wife".

Isaac had only one sister, Hinde Esther. She thought that her parents were equally different in appearance and in spirit. While Pinchas, a devoted scholar, was "more a
creature of heart than of intellect", Bathsheba was "an accomplished worrier, a fretter, a doubter, totally devoted to reason and logic", in short, "the complete intellectual". She was constantly brooding about people, about the state of the world, about God and his mysterious ways. Joshua recalls that she had no friends in Leoncin, as she was withdrawn with strangers. As a result, she was often lonely, depressed, and alienated. His mother's mild scepticism suggested to Singer early in life "the distinction between the wonders of God and the limitations of man, leading him to a cosmic optimism".

Older than Isaac by eleven years, Israel Joshua was the first to revolt against life at home with all its rituals and restrictions. He often challenged their father's views on religious matters. In his debates with his father Joshua questioned God's intentions, and his father kept defending Him. Joshua cited instances of meaningless killings in the wars and pogroms, some of these directed against the Jews. He was unable to believe how a merciful God could allow this to happen, particularly to His chosen people. He even believed that there was no God. He and his sister were delighted with the city of Warsaw while their mother thought it a place of sin. The city was full of girls in short dresses and decorative hats. Joshua ignored his father's warning against looking at such women as they evoked sinful thoughts in a man's mind. He took up painting and writing secular
Caught between these two opposite forces in his childhood, Singer found it difficult to accept any one point of view. Even while he was learning the holy texts and the Cabala, he was deeply fascinated by the serial stories of love and suspense appearing in the newspapers, and by his brother's books. Darwin and Malthus left a strong imprint on his mind. He was even conscious of the numerous contradictions in the Scriptures. He was afraid that he was becoming a heretic. The conflicting traits of asceticism and a desire for indulgence in himself often worried him and made him feel ashamed. To him the Cabala books appeared more convincing as they described the earth as a den of evil. He was torn between faith and doubt, between God and Satan. In his desire for the truth he read book after book, yet did not find the answer.

The conflict between faith and doubt persists in Singer in later years. While calling himself a pessimist, Singer believes in providence. He feels that life is neither accidental nor chaotic, but that there is always a plan behind it. In his own words

I am a pessimist so far as our small world and our businesses are concerned, but I am not a pessimist as far as the universe is concerned. I am sure that the creator of the universe had a plan in it and that this
plan was not a vicious plan. In other words, I believe in a good God, not a malicious God. But a good God can also make a lot of trouble to little beings who don't understand His design. Singer considers himself a pessimist from his own point of view and an optimist from his universal point of view. He identifies God with the world. He believes that "whatever happens in the world seems .... like a part of the huge universal plan."

Like his brother Joshua, Isaac also doubted the logicality behind various Jewish customs. He did not agree with his father's view that every little law or every Jewish custom was handed to Moses on Mt Sinai. Quite early in life he had come to realize that most of these customs or laws were man-made. Yet he never lost faith. Singer believes that there is a believer in every sceptic and a doubter in every believer. Ambivalence is the keynote of existence. His novels are concerned with the conflict between faith and denial, God and Satan. Even though God is all powerful, He allows Satan to exist, because it is necessary for the existence of the material world:

The material world is a combination of seeing and blindness. The blindness we call Satan .... since God wanted us to have free will this means that Satan, in other words, the principle of evil, must exist. Because what does free choice mean? It means the freedom to
choose between good and evil. If there is no evil there is no freedom.\footnote{10}

The non-rational aspects of human life appear highly fascinating to Singer. In his fiction he frequently writes about the devilish. Irving Buchen observes: "There is not a single major theme in the works of I.B. Singer that is not excited by demonics". While traditional Yiddish literature did not exclude the occult together, belief in spirits and demons was always regarded as superstition and as a symptom of backwardness.

In the traditional Hasidic background to which Singer belonged, the dividing line between the natural and the supernatural was very thin. Thus we find Singer's world featuring the co-existence as well as interaction of human beings and dybbuks or demons on the same plane. It happens in the writer's personal life too. Singer tells us of literary dybbuks who prevent him time and again from writing even though the idea for a story is already in his mind. It is his opinion that the Devil and his agents have only one aim in view: that of destroying the greatest gift of God to man, the unique gift that distinguishes him from animals on the one hand and angels on the other. Only man is free to fluctuate between good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, reasons and emotion. Even our limited free choice makes life worth living. The evil ones keep on tempting us with promises of pleasure, power and riches, and advance various theories
or ideas supported by false logic. Their main argument is that as man has become self-sufficient he does not need God; and since God has become self-absorbed, He no longer needs us. In Singer's novels and stories dybbuks are often seen entering human beings, thus introducing the supernatural world into the natural one, and upsetting its balance in the process. *Satan in Goray* offers a striking example of such interference.

Singer not only recognises the presence of demons besides real men and women, but also sees demons in certain human beings:

In a way demons express the human subconscious. But to me the demons also symbolize a life without any faith altogether. I call people who have decided that there is no God- that the world is nothing more than a physical or chemical accident and all men have to do is find as many pleasures as they can - I call such people demons.

As more and more people start doing the work of demons, the latter are unemployed in the modern age. Ben Siegel Comments:

... primarily his demonology enables Singer to expose the demons driving us all. His devils and imps symbolize those erratic, wayward, and diabolic impulses that detour men from their father's piety and morality.

Yet, in spite of all his strength, Satan cannot win because, "If evil should triumph over everything, here again creation
would cease, because if the link is broken, God's experiment is gone.\textsuperscript{14}

As asked whether he himself believes in the supernatural, Singer replied:

Absolutely. The reason why it always comes up is because it is always on my mind. I don't know if I should call myself a mystic, but I feel always that we are surrounded by powers, by mysterious powers, which play a great part in everything we are doing.\textsuperscript{15}

Singer was brought up in the highly conservative cultural tradition of East European Jewry. In his Nobel Lectures he observes that what the great religions preached, the Yiddish speaking people of the ghettos practised in their day to day life. The same sentiment is echoed in his \textit{Love and Exile}. The Hebrew word 'Hasid' means a pious man. As Martin Buber observes:

Hasidism is a mysticism which hallows community and everyday life rather than withdraws from it " for man cannot love God in truth without loving the World.\textsuperscript{16}

Hasidism teaches man to serve God with his whole life, and to show love to all creatures. Singer practised this in real life by turning vegetarian.

Singer has strong faith in the Torah. He believes that if all the rules made by human beings except the Ten Commandments are destroyed, these will still provide
sufficient guidance for humanity for the coming ten thousand yeas. But he rejects the idea that God had dictated the Torah to Moses on Mt Sinai. He thinks that it is man-made. Unlike his father, Singer did not believe that Jews would get back their promised land in God's good time, only when the Almighty would wish it. Both Joshua and Isaac challenged the truth of this age-old belief of the Jews since it was based not on fact but only on the teachings of the holy books:

How long should we wait for the Messiah when we have waited for him two thousand years and he did not come? We may wait another two thousand years and he still will not come. And what proof is there really that the Almighty revealed Himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai? The Christians have their books and the Mohammedans their old books; and if we say that their books are not true how do we know that our own are? 

On the other hand, he agreed with his mother's view that it was one thing to believe in God and another to believe in man. Since customs were man-made he had no faith in them.

Singer's attitude of protest, or 'ethic of protest' as he calls it, is a reflection of the spirit of ancient Biblical figures like Abraham, Job and Moses who challenged God because of their intense and, to them, unjustified suffering. The oppression of Jews all over the world, the repeated acts of violence against them, culminating in the Nazi holocaust, led Singer to believe that a God who could
allow such atrocities against His children could not be praised as a merciful God. He could be called a 'wise God' but not a 'good God'. He further adds: "My kind of religion would be a protest against this malice which we see in nature, like letting, let's say, six million Jews be killed by a bunch of maniacs". He expresses an ambivalent attitude towards God: "I said to myself: 'I believe in God, I fear Him, yet I cannot love Him .... Nor can I deny God as the materialists do'.

Like Aaron Greidinger, the fictional narrator of Shosha, Issac Bashevis Singer himself may be said to have been "brought up on three dead languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish (some consider the last not a language at all) and in a culture that developed in Babylon: the Talmud". For his own writing he chose one of these 'dead' languages, Yiddish, in spite of its uncertain future. Singer started his career as a Yiddish writer while he was still in Poland. In this he was inspired by his elder brother Israel Joshua, the writer of The Brothers Askenazi. In the dedication page of The Family Moskat, and also in Lost in America, Singer writes that his brother was not only the older brother but a spiritual father and master as well. The other works of I.J. Singer include Yoshe Kalb, East of Eden, The Family Carnovsky and Of a World that is No More. On coming to America in 1935, Singer found himself unable to write, as he had become dispossessed of country and language. Subsequently
he continued writing in Yiddish and brought to life the murdered community which he had known in his youth.

In his fiction Singer presented the life of Polish Jews from the Seventeenth century onwards, with recollections of the pogroms, massacres, communal hatred and atrocities directed against the Jews, leading up to the terrible genocide engineered by Hitler in the present century. Yiddish was the language of the East European Jews brutally eliminated in the Nazi holocaust. It flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and possessed a rich literary tradition. Its development was truncated by the destruction of the Yiddish-speaking heartland and its population in the early 1940's. Today Yiddish is struggling for survival as its use is limited to only some groups of Jews in the U.S.A. The language and literature persists chiefly in the works of Singer. In his Nobel Lecture Singer sums up the sad decline of the language:

The high honour bestowed upon me by the Swedish Academy is also a recognition of the Yiddish language - a language of exile, without a land, without frontiers, not supported by any government, a language which possesses no word for weapons, ammunitions, military exercises, war tactics, a language that was despised by both gentiles and emancipated Jews. Singer enumerates the reasons behind his choice of
Yiddish in his lecture at the Stockholm University on December 10, 1978. In a humorous manner Singer says that since he liked to write ghost stories, it was quite natural for him to choose a dying language as his medium of expression: "... nothing fits a ghost better than a dying language. The deader the language, the more alive is the ghost. Ghosts love Yiddish, they all speak it." Moreover, when the Messiah finally comes on the Day of resurrection, millions of Yiddish-speaking corpses will rise from their graves. Then their first demand will be for new Yiddish books to read; hence the necessity for writing in Yiddish. Citing the example of the Hebrew language, Singer expresses his optimism regarding the future of Yiddish. If Hebrew, which had remained neglected as a dead language for two thousand years could become alive suddenly, then there is every chance that Yiddish will be revived in the same way. Thus he is justified in writing in Yiddish. He goes on to add: "There is still another reason why I write in Yiddish, and this is because Yiddish is the only language I know well." 24

Singer feels that his works do not lose in the process of translation because while working on the translation he works on the book itself:

... working on the translation and working on the book itself go together, because when it is being translated, I see some of the defects and I work on them—so in a
way the English translation is sometimes almost a second original.

Although in his essays and letters Singer sometimes admits that the future of Yiddish appears 'very black', he still insists that the language is like the Jews themselves— who "die all the time yet go on living". Singer is pleased to be read in English because of the 'very real' audience rather than the near-imaginary Yiddish one. To him translation is an endless process, with every work posing a unique problem. He feels that although good translation is possible, it involves hard work for the writer, the translator, and the editor. A good translation, according to Singer, is never finished. It becomes as dear to him as the original.

Most of Singer's stories are set in Polish cities or villages. His characters are familiar with orthodox Jewish books, rituals and holidays. The integrated and coherent life of ghetto and small town Jews is recreated in all its detail. Of his own writing Singer remarks:

I hope that when people a hundred years from now ask "What happened to the Polish Jews in the twentieth century that is now so far away?", someone will answer, "If you read Isaac Singer you may find some clue".

Yet Singer cannot be labelled just a provincial writer. Irving Malin points out that Singer "manages to transform his 'special case' so that it becomes pertinent and universal". Ben Siegel observes:

East Europe's Jewish world becomes a familiar,
continuing culture and its complete structure of beliefs, customs and loyalties understandable commonplaces. Distance, time, and cultural change are bridged without forced reverie or nostalgia .... The modern reader, non-Jew and Jew, finds himself responding to that strange, departed clime and becoming intensely involved with Singer's embattled little people who now seem very much like all men everywhere.

In recognition of this fact, the National Institute of Arts and Letters elected Singer to membership in 1964. He is the only member to write Yiddish, or for that matter, in any foreign language. The Swedish Academy, in its Nobel Prize Citation says that the Nobel prize for Literature was awarded to Singer for his "passioned narrative art which, with roots in a Polish-Jewish cultural tradition, brings universal human conditions to life".

While choosing to write in Yiddish, Singer broke away from the Yiddish tradition. He rejected the sentimentality of the Yiddish classicists like Shalom Aleichem, Scholem Asch, Abraham Reisen, Mendele Mocher Sforim, I.L.Peretz etc. He found themes and writing 'sentimental, primitive, petty'. These writers portrayed the shtetl as a sacred place packed with saints. In spite of the influence of the enlightenment and the changes taking place in the general tradition of the European novel, they remained strongly attached to the old Jewish traditions and customs. Particularly since the 1940's, after the Nazi holocaust, Yiddish writers have chiefly attempted to project before the readers an idealistic
Picture of the 'Shtetl' culture which has been cruelly destroyed.

Singer was highly critical of this unrealistic picture of Jewish life presented by his literary colleagues and predecessors. Yiddish literature reminded him of his father's courtroom where 'almost everything was forbidden'. He remarks: "We know ourselves that if our parents and grand-parents would have been all saints, then where did the evil come into our hearts"? He also discarded the oft-repeated theme of the rich man's exploitation of the poor, and the mishandling of the Jews by the anti-Semites, as these appeared banal to him. Because of his search for other images of Jewish life, the Jewish writer felt that he had betrayed the cause from a literary point of view, that he did not belong to the tradition of Jewish writing. Singer is of the opinion that a real writer creates his own tradition:

When I began to write, the critics always complained that I was not writing in the Yiddish tradition and I told them, "where is it written that a writer must write in a tradition? A real writer should create his own tradition, his own style." He says in a different context: "This whole business of a literary milieu is dubious .... Mostly it is a bad writer who needs to be all the time among other writers, who is always with a pack of writers".

In spite of his emphasis on an independent literary style, Singer is not completely cut off from the Jewish
literary tradition. As Alfred Kazin points out:

Singer shares the orthodox point of view without its belief, and he meticulously describes without sentimentalizing any Jew whatever, a way of life which was murdered with the millions who lived it."35.

He is rooted in his tradition while professing to be revolutionary:

"A writer must have roots. The deeper a writer's roots, the greater his capacity for achievement .... Every artist must have an address". But if a writer must have roots in his environment, he "must not be entirely of it ... he must at the same time be an insider and an outsider. The true artist is simultaneously a child of his people and its stepchild"—a member of the family yet "profoundly alien" from it."36.

Singer's modernism is part of the development of world literature from the 40's up to the 70's. Because of his blending of Judaism with an irrational universe where the Devil plays an important role, Yiddish readers often view him with uneasiness, and even suspicion. Irving Howe comments:

"... to the extent that Singer shares in the modernist outlook he will be regarded with distrust by Yiddish readers brought up on such 'spokesmen' as Peretz, Abraham Reisen and H.Leivick"."37.

Singer's works have been regarded as immoral and
worthless because of their realistic portrayal of the darker aspects of East European Jewish life, like the description of thieves, pimps and prostitutes. Several Jewish critics have attacked his "tales of 'horror and eroticism', his distasteful blend of 'superstition and shoddy mysticism', and his 'pandering' to non-Jewish tastes"\(^{38}\).

The strange relationship between the sexes occupies an important place in Singer's novels and short stories. Quite early in life he had begun to be fascinated by this peculiar relationship. He speaks of his father's courtroom where people came for advice:

I was amazed to hear the strong complaints of the couples who asked for a divorce or to end an engagement or who just came to open their hearts to my father and my mother. Men and women craved happiness together, but instead they indulged in silly quarrels, spiteful accusations, various lies, and acts of treachery. Each wanted to be stronger than the other and often to belittle and denigrate the other\(^{39}\).

As he grew older, he became aware of the love-hate relationship between man and woman. He knew that anything was possible between a man and woman: "Love turned to hate overnight. Hate flared up again into love. Powerful affection sometimes went hand in hand with shameless betrayal"\(^{40}\). He observes:
I had made up my mind a long time ago that the creative powers of literature lie not in the forced originality produced by variations of style and word machinations but in the countless situations life keeps creating, especially in the queer complications between man and woman. For the writer, they are potential treasures that could never be exhausted, while all innovations in language have become clichés. In spite of his religious upbringing and bashfulness, Singer had relationship with several women in his early youth, sometimes more than one at a time. He believed that an artist should conform to human nature, at least in his descriptions, even though the outcome appeared wild, unjust, or insane. Similar situations are presented in his fiction where a hero can love a number of women simultaneously. Examples of this are Yasha Mazur in The Magician of Lublin, and Herman Broder in Enemies: A Love Story. Even before writing such a novel, Singer had frequently fantasized about it. He considered monogamy a 'law established by legislators, not by nature'; and sees nothing wrong with the Oriental practice of polygamy. The mutual attraction between the sexes does not depend on any man-made law, or even on man's own rational choice. Moreover, a person's sexual relationship with others reveals his or her character in its true colours as the human being is seen without the veneer of civilization. So, for Singer, presentation of love in literature necessarily includes sex. He believes that the idea of
sex also exists in heaven. He had learnt it by reading the Cabala books in his childhood: "Not only God and the Divine presence but all the male and female saints in the heavens loved one another ... even in heaven the principle of male and female prevailed". Later on he observes:

Like the Cabalists I believe that the principle of male and female exists not only in the lower worlds but in the higher ones as well. The universal world of creation, like the novel of an earthy writer, is finally a love story.

Like love, marriage plays an important role in Singer's fiction. Morris Golden points out that the wedding is the most recurrent festival, with the exception of holidays, in the life of the 'shtetl'. It is "the pervasive symbol for an attempted miracle". Singer or multiple weddings are central to the development of his novels. For example, *The Manor* begins with the wedding of Calman Jacoby's eldest daughter, comes to a climax with his own disastrous second marriage, and ends with his spiritual 'marriage' to traditional Judaism. Rechele's marriage marks an important step in the downfall of Goray. The success or failure of marriage remains a recurrent motif in Singer. While some characters respect marriage as a bond made in heaven, others reject the institution of marriage altogether,
with the argument that it is against human nature for anyone to remain bound to one particular person for life.

Singer's novels have a strong autobiographical background: "All my books are about me. They are myself. The events in my stories are not always what did happen but always what might have happened". Like Singer, Asa Hashel Bennet, the hero of *The Family Moskat*, is the son of a rabbi in a provincial town reminiscent of Bilgoray. Asa resembles Isaac in his physical description as well as in his dreams, his inquisitiveness and his relationship with women. Todros, the watchmaker Singer knew in his youth, is presented as Jekuthiel in *The Family Moskat*, and in *Rabbi Jochanan of The Manor* we find a reflection of Singer's pious young brother Moishe.

The women in Singer's family possessed great strength of character. His paternal grandmother Temerl, and her mother Hinde-Esther before her had supported their husbands financially. This was not an unusual phenomenon in the Polish Jewish life of the time. The Jewish women not only looked after the family and ran the household, but also often supported their husbands who spent all their time studying the Torah:

"Rather than complain", Isaac recalls, "our grandmothers praised God for providing them with husbands who were scholars". It was only when Isaac's grandmother could
no longer support her husband that Reb Samuel agreed
to enter the rabbinate.47
Singer's mother Bathsheba was no exception. Although, according to Joshua's account, she was no better at housework than at cooking, when the family was short of funds in Leoncin, she made yeast and sold it to help support the family. In spite of her resentment towards life and all its troubles, she was a devoted wife and mother. She endured her life of hardship and privation without complaint, even going without food during the war, and never lost her faith in God. At the same time, she was deeply concerned over different problems of her time. Singer calls her an 'ardent feminist' or a 'suffragist'. She had great faith in the constructive role of women. She thought that only women could put an end to the cruelties of war. They could do so by uniting and putting pressure on their husbands to give up warmongering.

Hinde-Esther, Isac's only sister, was completely different. She was good-looking, high-strung and hyperactive. As opposed to her mother's steady and practical bent of mind, Hinde-Esther was mercurial and emotional, even unstable. While her mother tended to understatement things, the daughter was given to exaggerating almost every happening in her life. Quite naturally, there were frequent quarrels between the two. Like her brothers, Hinde-Esther had tried her hand at writing, but in spite of some talent, could not become successful mainly due to her emotional instability. Issac feels that she inherited her affectionate nature, her
unstable temperament and eccentricities from the Hasidic side of the family. He observes: "Had she lived in another era, she might have become a female saint .... Hasid in skirts." Her personality provided Singer the model for Rechele in Satan in Goray.

In his novels Singer portrays women who, like his own grandmother and mother, remain devoted wives and mothers. In spite of adversities, their strong faith in God and human values brings them contentment and peace in life. It is they who observe the laws and rituals in daily life, maintain kosher kitchens and bring their children up on the principles laid down by Judaism. Undaunted by their life in a strange land, they help to preserve their traditions and customs. Zelda, Jochebed and Esther belong to this category. Even Wanda, a pagan, is converted by her great love for Jacob, into a devoted Jewish wife, and even a saint. On the other hand, a careless and selfish wife like Clara proves to be the undoing of a family. With her scant respect for tradition, and blind imitation of the western culture, she pollutes the atmosphere of the family, helps in its disintegration, and brings down disgrace upon it.

Singer's personal experience of women helped him to portray woman characters who indulge in free love. Dreaming of a respectable family life, they are still prepared to form relationships without the sanctity of marriage. Their desire for immediate pleasure makes them blind to the social and
moral values. As a result, they lead a life of deceit and dissatisfaction. Yasha Mazur's mistresses and Masha in *Enemies : A Love Story* are example of this type.

Orthodox Jewish society assigned an inferior position to women. The ideal role for a pious woman was that of an obedient wife in life so that after death she could become her husband's footstool in heaven. Singer's story 'Yentl' is a fable about a Polish rabbi's daughter who says that she has "the soul of a man and the body of a woman". Because of her strong desire to acquire knowledge she disguises herself as a boy so that she can enter a yeshiva. When the story first appeared in Yiddish, many readers protested, because according to Talmudic law, it is a sin for a girl to disguise herself as a man. Explaining Yentl's desire to become a man, Singer points out that Jewish women have often wished that they were men, because of the restrictions imposed on women by Judaism. A woman was not allowed to study the Torah. A number of commandments apply only to men. There is even a benediction which the Orthodox say everyday, in which they thank God for creating them men and not women. Frederick R.Karl points out:

In a larger sense, all of Singer's fictions are family novels, in which the man is the Father of the Race, the women a grieving, sacrificial soul, or a straying creature who must be rejected ... 49

The socio-economic changes in the present century could
not but leave their mark on women. The women characters in Singer are no exception. Because of their secular education, many women become dissatisfied with their lot and more conscious of their rights. Many of them like Zina and Mirale join the ranks of the socialist revolutionaries and aim at changing the existing order. Besides these, there are innumerable minor characters from different walks of life who help in weaving the intricate design of Singer's novels.
NOTES:


5. Kresh, p.35.

6. Kresh, p.36.


18. *Love and Exile*, P.44.


20. *Love and Exile*, P.44-


23. Kresh, P.418.

24. Kresh, P.418.


29. Siegel, P.8.
30. Love and Exile, P.85.
31. Love and Exile, P.36.
32. Resenblatt and Koppel, P.25
38. Siegel, P.10.
40. Love and Exile, P.302.
41. Love and Exile, P.303.
42. Love and Exile, P.95.
43. Love and Exile, P.11.
46. Kresh, P. 178.
47. Kresh, P. 17
48. Kresh, P. 43