

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Writers Don't Write for the Drawer: An Introduction to the Essays of Isaac Bashevis Singer</i>	1

THE LITERARY ARTS

The Satan of Our Time	19
Journalism and Literature	20
Why Literary Censorship Is Harmful	25
Who Needs Literature?	32
Old Truths and New Clichés	43
Storytelling and Literature	53
Literature for Children and Adults	64

YIDDISH AND JEWISH LIFE

The Kabbalah and Modern Times	77
The Ten Commandments and Modern Critics	90
The Spirit of Judaism	99

viii CONTENTS

Yiddish, the Language of Exile	108
Yiddish Theater Lives, Despite the Past	119
Yiddish and Jewishness	129

PERSONAL WRITINGS AND PHILOSOPHY

A Trip to the Circus	147
Why I Write As I Do: The Philosophy and Definition of a Jewish Writer	154
A Personal Concept of Religion	168
A Story about a Collection of Stories	176
The Making of a First Book	179
To the True Protester	194
<i>Singer the Editor: An Afterword on the Editorial Process</i>	195
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	207
<i>Notes</i>	211
<i>Bibliography</i>	223
<i>Index</i>	227

Writers Don't Write for the Drawer

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAYS OF ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

Isaac Bashevis Singer has long been acknowledged as a master storyteller. But his critical writings have been largely passed over. One underlying reason is the sheer volume of Singer's output. Starting in 1939, when he became a regular contributor to the Yiddish daily *Forverts*, he produced an incredible amount of text. He published his work under at least three pseudonyms, any number of which might appear in a single issue—sometimes on a single page—in a variety of genres: stories, novels, memoirs, essays, literary sketches, satires, dialogues, travel pieces, reviews, and even a popular media digest.

In the early 1960s, as his popularity grew, Singer's Yiddish-language production was increasingly accompanied by efforts to translate, edit, and adapt his work for English-speaking audiences. By then, he had accumulated untranslated material from nearly forty years of writing, and was still producing new material, including some of the works for which he would be best known. He also began to appear as a lecturer, traveling to universities, synagogues, community centers, and retreats all across the United States, giving talks on everything from literature, to Kabbalah, to his own concept of religion. It was, as Singer told *Harper's* in 1965, "a lot of work for a man of sixty." Indeed, it

seemed the literary and intellectual factory that became Isaac Bashevis Singer never stopped for breath.

Yet the amount that a given person can write is always limited—and not only by the number of days they are destined to live on the planet. Singer's creative process, which came to include a practice of writing, translating, and editing, was limited by how much English-language text he could prepare—especially since he often did the translations himself with a collaborator, or, less often, supervised and corrected translations made by others. He was also limited by the number of books his publisher could consider, print, advertise, and distribute at any given moment—in part because of the risk of saturating the market with his works. All these issues may seem superfluous where the noble issues of art and literature are concerned. But they are quite relevant in considering Singer, whose full career as a writer is traced only when taking into account all of his publications in the Yiddish press, and whose book publications—whether in Yiddish or in English, the two languages in which he worked with equal authority—reveal only a partial view of his artistic output.

This partialness becomes especially clear when considering Singer's essays. The way that these essays were written, translated, edited, and, in some cases, presented to audiences, reflects the central role they played in Singer's literary life. Many of them first appeared under the pseudonym Yitskhok Varshavski—Isaac from Warsaw, which Yiddish readers could have recognized as Yitskhok Bashevis, since he openly cited the real titles of his best-known works—and some under his other pseudonym, D. Segal. Yet after being translated, edited, and rewritten in English, they all appeared under the name Isaac Bashevis Singer. The final manuscripts left behind, as well as drafts used to prepare them, provide some of the clearest views into

Singer as a literary artist—one who is able not only to produce fiction that captivated readers, but also to discuss the aesthetic, spiritual, and moral vision undergirding all of his writing. The essays also reflect the ideas that drove his literary production. In this, they are an embodiment of his accomplishment twice over.

Singer was a writer. But he was also an intellectual. You can hear this in voice recordings, less so in English than in Yiddish, where all traces of sentimentality and schtick fall away. In Yiddish, Singer doesn't have a Yiddish accent. He doesn't sound like someone's grandfather—or great-grandfather—as he sometimes does in English. He sounds like a writer whose mind is constantly working and whose critical eye penetrates beyond everyday illusions into what drives human nature, no less than to what lifts the human spirit. The closest Singer got to leaving a record of this voice in English was when he presented ideas about art and literature, Yiddish and Jewish culture, and his personal experience and philosophy—all of which are at the center of these essays.

Bringing this material together requires a particular kind of attention. The fact that many of these works were not prepared for final publication by their author means that a myriad of editorial decisions have to be made along the way. This is especially true when, looking for the Yiddish material used to prepare the English-language essays, we see that Singer sometimes translated, edited, and incorporated materials from a number of articles, some of them published years apart. Many of these essays synthesize years of reflection on various topics and considerable editing and revising during the translation, creating final versions in English that no longer reflect any existing Yiddish original. Later, as Singer becomes more practiced, he brings this synthesis directly into the original versions, so that, at some point, some essays *do* appear as direct translations of the Yiddish. In yet other

cases, none of the original Yiddish material has been found, so that all we have are several corrected English-language drafts.

The challenge for an editor collecting these essays is to treat each work on its own terms, to take into account its specific provenance, and yet to give the volume coherence as a whole—all this while adhering to the author's own articulated artistic vision. As such, this collection is itself a *synthetic* work, in that it aims to bring together essays published or presented in a variety of venues, but also to create a single, cohesive volume. Since this editorial effort is itself grounded in both historical and literary concerns, it seems prudent to set out two of the central circumstances that have guided this work: first, Singer's own aborted efforts to publish a collection of essays, and second, the complex translation and editing process that some of these essays underwent.

Singer's earliest English-language publication in the United States, an epic historical novel titled *The Family Moskat* (1950) and published by Alfred A. Knopf, was a misadventure in translation, editing, and marketing that ended with the publisher's losing interest in his future works.* Singer's next publisher, Noonday, was founded by Cecil Hemley—a writer, editor, and translator whose wife, Elaine Gottlieb, also translated Singer's work. Noonday published three of his books—*Satan in Goray* (1955), *Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories* (1957), and *The Magician of Lublin* (1960)—before being acquired by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (FSG), which published *The Spinoza of Market Street and Other*

* Singer's translator, A. H. Gross, died before completing the translation, and Singer undertook the rest of the work with Gross's daughter, Nancy Gross, as well as Maurice Samuel and Lyon Mearson. For a history of Singer's experiences with Knopf, see Paul Kresh, *Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Magician of West 86th Street: A Biography* (New York: Dial Press, 1979), 184, and the Knopf papers at the Harry Ransom Papers Center, including the increasingly acrimonious relationship between Singer and his editor.

Stories (1961) and *The Slave* (1962). By 1963, FSG had acquired Singer's second large historical epic, published in English in two parts as *The Manor* and *The Estate*, which Gottlieb was then translating. In June, a memo from Roger Straus to Robert Giroux and others described what Straus called the "Singer editorial story." With this major translation effort in the works, FSG was planning a three-book deal: a first-person novel, likely *A Ship to America*, which Singer was publishing that year in Yiddish; a memoir collection, which later appeared as *In My Father's Court*; and an untitled collection of essays. Straus describes the collection as pulling from "a wealth of essays, nonfiction, prepared over the past thirty years and never translated, but from which Isaac Singer will someday wish to select a volume. These essays are on philosophy, literature, and include some lectures." In August 1963, Singer again mentions this idea in his own letter to Straus, but appears to hedge against the possibility. "I would like to call your attention," Singer writes, "to the fact that a collection of essays is still a remote possibility, since very few of them were translated until now." The next year instead saw Singer's third collection, *Short Friday and Other Stories* (1964), while all discussion of either the first-person novel or the essay collection ended.

In his letter, Straus had referred to Singer's essays written over the previous thirty years, suggesting that, regardless of the possibilities discussed, Singer considered including his two Warsaw-era essays—"Verter oder bilder" (Words or Images) and "Tsu der frage vegn dikhtung un politik" (Toward the Question of Poetics and Politics)—written well before his 1935 arrival in New York.* At this point, it seems, both Singer and his publishers

* Singer, "Verter oder bilder" (Words or Images), *Literarische Bleter*, August 26, 1927, 663–65; "Tsu der frage vegn dikhtung un politik" (Toward the Question of Poetics and Politics), *Globus* 1, no. 3 (Sept. 1932): 39–49.

considered building his career according to the European intellectual tradition, as an author who produced both literary and philosophical writings.* But it seems that, as his understanding of the cultural landscape around him grew, Singer changed course, building his path to critical recognition through the role of an old fashioned storyteller with a devilish streak. His commercial success coincided with his shedding of the intellectual aspect of his public persona, and his cultivation of a new image, that of a translated old-world transplant. In reality, he was a modern writer, well versed in the various streams of world literature, and working between two languages—composing and publishing first in Yiddish, and translating himself into English with the help of collaborators and editors.

The years between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s saw an increasingly hectic schedule of writing and translating—especially upon the publication of *Zlateh the Goat* (1966), his first collection for children, after which he produced seventeen more children’s books—and more traveling for lectures. Singer’s personal philosophy was funneled into stories, interviews, and, after receiving the 1978 Nobel Prize for Literature, a book titled *Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer* (1985), coauthored with Richard Burgin, who recorded and organized Singer’s ideas. The next mention of Singer’s essays appears in a proposal, submitted by his secretary Dvora Menashe Telushkin in the fall of 1986, to collect his untranslated essays. The proposal re-

* For detailed histories of Singer’s years as a writer in Warsaw, as well as his first two years in America, see David Stromberg, “‘Your Papers for a Tourist Visa’: A Literary-Biographical Consideration of Isaac Bashevis Singer in Warsaw, 1923–1935,” in *The European Journal of Jewish Studies* 15.2 (2021): 256–84; and “‘Don’t Be Hopeless, Kid’: A Literary-Biographical Consideration of Isaac Bashevis Singer’s First Years in New York, 1935–1937,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 40.2 (2021): 109–39.

fers to “over . . . 800 essays” that appeared “under three pseudonyms . . . in Yiddish newspapers in Poland and in the United States,” and concludes that “the only reason these works have not been previously translated is that they had been forgotten, and relegated to the archives of a few libraries and Yiddish research organizations.”* Roger Straus appears to refer to this proposal in a letter to Singer dated July 1987, saying he would speak to Singer when they next met about a book called *First Steps in Literature*, which appears to correspond to the first volume of the proposal. There is also a mention, in an unsigned handwritten memo from July 1987, of a manuscript titled *Broken Tablets*, possibly referring to the third volume, which is also mentioned in a memo from May 1988 describing it as an English-language “collection of nonfiction and articles.” None of these efforts appears to have ever materialized—very likely because both Telushkin’s proposal and Straus’s letter are dated from around the time that Singer began to suffer the onset of dementia.

Israel Zamir, Singer’s only child, records in his memoir of his father that, in 1986, “the last year his mind was still clear,” Singer “was still making abundant plans” that included writing “a popular children’s book about the chronicles of philosophy throughout the world.”† Lester Goran, Singer’s last literary collaborator, recalls in his own memoir about working with the aging Yiddish author that this period was especially difficult. He mentions

* Telushkin proposes a three-volume collection, selected with Professor Chone Shmeruk of the Hebrew University, the first volume titled *Early Stories, 1924–49*, the second titled *From the Old and New Home*, a memoir published by Singer in the *Forverts* in 1963–65 as *Fun der alter un nayer heym*, and the third titled *Literary Meetings, Essays, and Critiques, 1939–1949*.

† Israel Zamir, *Journey to My Father: Isaac Bashevis Singer*, trans. Barbara Harshav (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995), 231.

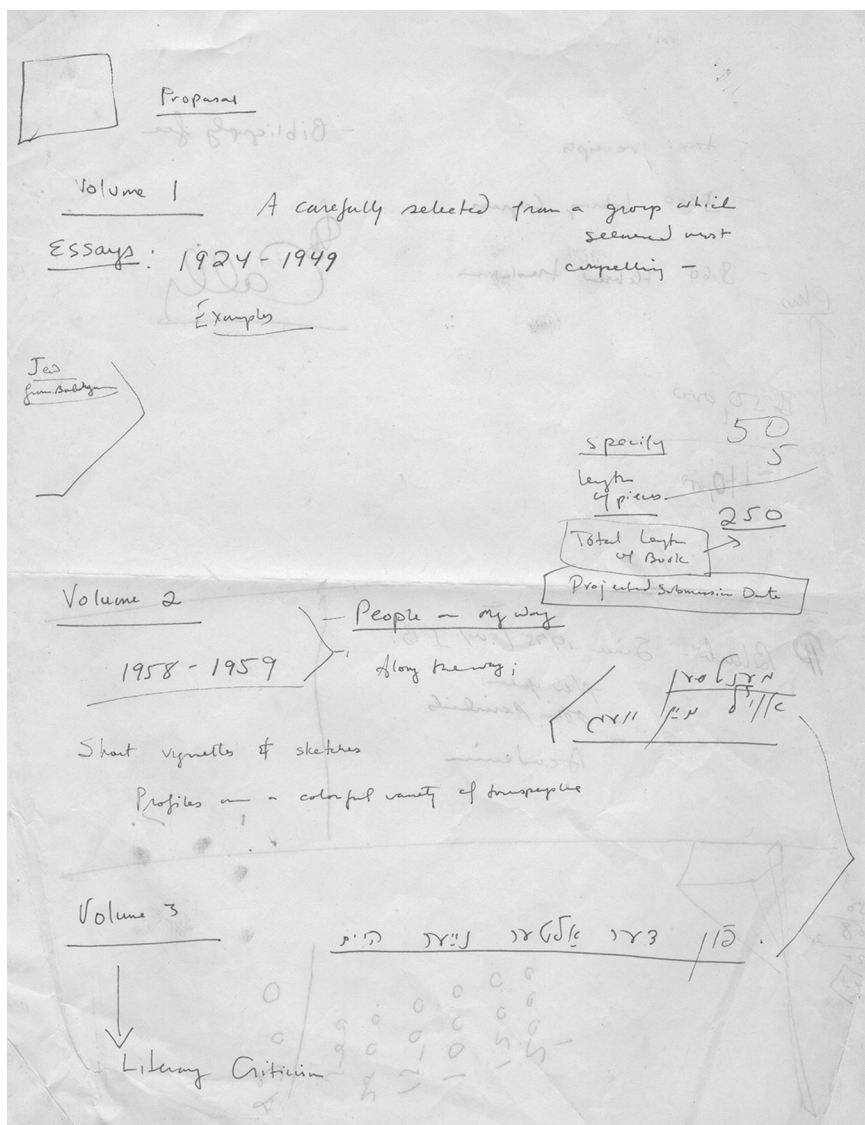


FIGURE 1. A draft proposal for a three-volume collection of Singer's nonfiction in Dvorah Menashe Telushkin's handwriting. Dvorah Telushkin Collection of Isaac Bashevis Singer Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Singer's fantasies about their writing a "master work" that would make them both wealthy. "Singer told me one morning the time had come for the two of us to finally write a great book together," writes Goran. "The book was to probe the depths of what he truly believed. . . . His genuine philosophies would be revealed. . . . It would be a work that would change people's minds about him."* Singer was serious enough about this work, Goran reports, to involve the former regional manager of Doubleday, Gordon Weel, in trying to sell the proposed book to publishers, some of which expressed interest. The book even acquired a working title: *God's Fugitives*. In April 1987, over breakfast, Singer told to Goran they would start writing the book that instant. Intending to hand him a pencil, Singer instead handed him a fork. When Goran pointed this out, Singer said he was losing his mind, and handed Goran another pencil—this time in the form of a butter knife. When Goran finally procured a pencil from a waitress, Singer began to tell him the same life story he had told countless times. As Goran writes, "*God's Fugitives* was the last gasp of the impossible."[†] And Singer's final plans for a nonfiction collection dissipated yet again.

While he was alive, Singer's American career was dominated by both literary principles and publishing pragmatics. When opportunities presented themselves, he pursued them, prioritizing those that were most realizable. In rare cases did he insist on publishing a work that was deemed unmarketable by his literary consultants, as was the case with *The Penitent* (1983), the translation of which was completed ten years before it was published—and which only appeared once Singer had secured

* Lester Goran, *The Bright Streets of Surfside: The Memoir of a Friendship with Isaac Bashevis Singer* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 139.

[†] Goran, *The Bright Streets of Surfside*, 152.

the Nobel Prize.* But his vision for a literary career did not always overlap with his publisher's plans. In some cases, he invested time and money in translating his works, only to have his agent or publisher suggest setting the manuscript aside.

This did not slow Singer down: between 1955 and 1988, he published ten novels, eleven short story collections, and four autobiographical works, as well as eighteen books for children. But his public activity revealed only part of the work that he was producing in English. In his archive lie numerous novels, stories, and memoirs, many of them corrected in his own hand, all of which he deemed publishable, but which were set aside for practical reasons. And among those carefully wrought materials, a mini-corpus of essays is revealed: a collection of material implicitly prepared by Singer, piece by piece, through his choice for which works to translate. These essays, along with other unpublished work, accumulated in Singer's "chaos room"—the walk-in closet where he kept manuscripts, clippings, notebooks, certificates, diplomas, awards, letters, and many other documents and objects connected with his literary and personal life.

Singer knew his work would be left undone when he passed away. His son recalls, during the last visit when his mind was clear, Singer going into the chaos room and saying, "Oh, my God, I've got to live another hundred years to edit the stories, translate them into English, and publish them"—and he did produce enough material to translate, edit, and publish books for several more decades.† In 1993, two years after his death,

* For a discussion of this novel's publication history in Yiddish and English, see David Stromberg, *Narrative Faith: Dostoevsky, Camus, and Singer* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2018).

† Zamir, *Journey to My Father*, 231–32.

these materials were all acquired by the Harry Ransom Center, and the essays were sent, along with everything in the chaos room, to Austin, Texas, where they were catalogued with the help of the late Yiddish scholar Joseph Sherman. I arrived at Singer's archive on the trail of an unpublished Yiddish booklet titled "Rebellion and Prayer, or The True Protester," which he says in *The New York Times* was written during the Holocaust.* Sitting in Jerusalem and scouring the online finding aid, I discovered that the most similarly titled entry, "To the True Protester," was an English-language poem—written on the back of a letter from his German publisher dated August 13, 1980—which now closes this collection. I eventually made it to the archive itself, and there, scattered among his papers, found his translated but uncollected essays. Straus had written, in his 1963 memo, that Singer would "someday wish to select a volume" of essays from his critical writings. His choice of which works to translate reflects this selection.

Singer's essays found their main audience on the lecture circuit. And while he solicited translators and collaborators—paid and unpaid, credited and uncredited—to help render first drafts in English, he did all of the editing and revising himself. Singer was a seasoned translator, having brought authors such as Thomas Mann, Knut Hamsun, and Erich Maria Remarque into Yiddish. And though he never openly admitted to translating himself into English, he addressed the issue at a 1964 lecture on literary

* Richard Burgin and Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer*, p. 52. For a discussion of Singer's reference to this essay in his author's note to *The Penitent*, where he also engages in a philosophical dialogue with his character's stated positions, see David Stromberg, "Rebellion and Creativity: Contextualizing Isaac Bashevis Singer's 'Author's Note' to *The Penitent*," *In geveb*, June 2016.

method. In response to a question about translation, he responds, “I used to have translators, but now I do a lot of the translation myself. I translate word by word, and I have a collaborator who helps me organize the sentences so that they should sound more English. Because in my case I know the words, but I don’t know the construction of the English sentence so well as a man who was born here.”* Still, even this admission is partial because, as the draft essays demonstrate, his literary efforts involved much more than translation. Singer’s authorial hand is evident on the typescripts, not only in the ideas expressed, but also in the editorial cuts and corrections he made. Once he had working drafts, he took out his pen and, in his own hand, began to pick the essays apart—cutting, rewriting, and sometimes restructuring them directly in English.

Like much of Singer’s writing, his long-form essays appeared as installments, each marked as a continuation of an earlier one. But, unlike his fiction or memoir work, the installments sometimes appeared weeks apart, and the essays lacked the plot element to ground their content from one installment to the next. This made it challenging for readers, especially anyone who did not follow the *Forverts* regularly, to connect the pieces and understand their conceptual breadth or scope. Published as they were, these pieces were perceived—by both general readers and Yiddish critics—as throwaways used to fill up a weekly quota of text. Even those who followed Singer’s work closely, including Yiddish scholars, tended to consider anything not published

* Singer, lecture on literary method, January 29, 1964 (sound recording, 7” sound reel, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

under the Bashevis pseudonym to have lesser literary quality.* And as David Neal Miller has suggested, Yiddish scholars are often tempted “to regard Segal as a less conscientious Varshavski, much as Singer has characterized Varshavski as a less conscientious Bashevis”—not least because Singer perpetuated these distinctions.[†] But what Miller says of Segal holds for Varshavski as well: “the opposite is true.”[‡] Singer deployed these pseudonyms strategically: they allowed him to treat a variety of topics under different guises, and, perhaps more importantly, to publish prolifically without having his name appear all over the paper. Most importantly—and this relates to his essays no less than to his works of fiction and memoir—Singer had recourse to all the Yiddish writing that he produced under each of these names as potential material for translating, editing, and rewriting in English, always publishing this material as Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Singer rarely produced material he did not intend to publish. Indeed, the second installment of “Who Needs Literature?” was originally titled “Writers Don’t Write ‘for the Drawer’”—a conviction he bore out to the end of his life. Singer did not write for the drawer, and the fact that his essayistic work was an important facet of his oeuvre is further evinced by his placement of some of these works, from the early 1960s until almost the end of his life, in a variety of newspapers, journals, magazines,

* This tendency has extended into criticism of Singer’s work in later decades, as, for example, when Jan Schwarz writes that “Singer’s best work was published under the name Yitskhok Bashevis in Yiddish journals and newspapers” (*Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture after the Holocaust*. [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015], 231).

[†] David Neal Miller, *Fear of Fiction: Narrative Strategies in the Works of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 58.

[‡] *Ibid.*

pamphlets, and anthologies. And though, during his lifetime, he constantly gave interviews in which he summarized many of his ideas, no source expresses them as directly as his essays.* That he did not have the chance to collect them into a single volume means only that the work was left for others to complete.

In many cases, the Yiddish publication history of these essays, appearing in the *Forverts* under various pseudonyms, undermined their significance within Singer's corpus. The only essays to receive critical attention during his lifetime were those published in Yiddish literary journals, but they were no more or less central to his development as an author—or to the theoretical framework driving his literary production—than what appeared in the newspaper. Singer's emphasis on translating his own writing, for example, was grounded in the concepts and methods of a modern author working in the context of world literature. Yet members of the Yiddish literary community rarely acknowledged the deliberateness of these efforts. This left many of them ambivalent about his position as the unofficial spokesperson of Yiddish literature in America—a circumstance so prominent it was parodied by Cynthia Ozick in "Envy; or, Yiddish in America" (1969).[†] In addition, with his English-language publications focused on fiction, he and his publisher continued to cultivate his image as an old fashioned storyteller rather than a modernist writer with intellectual leanings like Albert Camus or Vladimir Nabokov, promoting his persona as a worldly sage. Finally, while

* For a collection of Singer's interviews, see Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Conversations* (1992).

[†] For discussions of Ozick's story, and its place in American literary history, see Leah Garrett, "Cynthia Ozick's 'Envy': A Reconsideration," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 24 (2005): 60–81 and Kathryn Hellerstein, "The Envy of Yiddish: Cynthia Ozick as Translator," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 31, no. 1 (2012): 24–47.

several critics working in American literary studies discussed the philosophical themes driving his work in the early 1960s, most had no access to Yiddish, leaving his critical ideas beyond the scope of material they could consider in their research.* The scholarly trajectory set out in the 1960s has stuck for decades—and, to this day, few critics deal seriously with Singer's essayistic writings.

Despite his authorial persona being increasingly bound to his image as a storyteller, and the prospects of releasing an essay collection being repeatedly put off for the sake of more fiction, Singer never abandoned his intellectual pursuits. After receiving the 1978 Nobel Prize in Literature, he gained new authority as a writer on the world stage and was invited to lecture with increasing frequency. In this context, he returned to a number of his core essays, many of which were written in the 1960s, translating and revising them for new audiences. In the spring of 1979, for example, he was invited by the Gallatin Division of New York University to speak in a lecture series titled "The Writer at Work," and turned to an essay on the nature of divinity and religion first published in 1966—a moving reflection on the nature of faith in modern times titled "A Personal Concept of Religion"—which he now translated and rewrote in English. Two versions of the essay appeared in English in Singer's lifetime, the first in excerpts from the NYU lecture in *The New York Times* under the title "What Is God to Do—Discuss His Book with Every Reader?" and the second as a pamphlet, published by the University of Southern Louisiana as the 1980 Flora Levy Lecture in the Humanities. But unless someone happened to have read section A, page 29, of *The New York Times* Friday edition, or to have been in Lafayette on the night of his lecture, it

* See especially the articles collected in *Critical Views of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (1969).

is unlike they would have noticed this essay—which not only has value as a window onto Singer’s intellectual foundation as a literary figure, but also serves as a testament of faith for anyone struggling to find meaning in the modern world.

Singer never had the opportunity to publish a volume of nonfiction writing during his lifetime. But the essays he translated offer readers insight into the issues that preoccupied him as an author—and how his personal beliefs regarding the world’s societies and cultures directly informed the development of his public persona. And while he never fully integrated his intellectual concerns into his popular image as a storyteller, his essays bring to light the web of artistic convictions and Jewish traditions at the base of his fiction. They also offer an unobstructed view onto his attitudes toward, among many other topics, sexuality, vegetarianism, the supernatural, and the unique spirit of Yiddish.

Above all, as a collection, *Old Truths and New Clichés* lays bare Singer’s belief in literature’s ability to portray those moments when what we think we know collides with what is beyond our understanding.

INDEX

- abstract art, 50
- Acosta, Uriel, 107
- Adam, 67, 88, 183
- Adler, Alfred, 46, 192
- Adler, Celia, 124
- Adler, Jacob, 124
- Adler, Julius, 124
- Adler, Luther, 124
- Adler, Stella, 124
- advertising, 59
- Agudas Yisroel, 106–7
- Akdamut*, 163, 170
- Aleichem, Sholem, 125, 137, 191, 204
- Alexander II, Tsar, 123
- Alfred A. Knopf, 4
- Andreyev, Leonid, 21
- animals, 86, 143, 173
- Ansky, S., *The Dybbuk*, 126
- Anti-Defamation League, 97
- antisemitism, 95–97, 104, 115, 191, 192
- Aramaic, 116, 130
- Aristotle, 44, 54–55, 87
- Aryeh de Modena, Rabbi, 85
- Asch, Sholem, *God of Vengeance*, 125
- Ashkenazi Jews, 114, 116, 132
- assimilation: Enlightenment encouragement of, 103, 112, 133–34; literature and, 132, 133, 157; natural inclination toward, 103; Polish Jewry and, 184; resistance to, 103–5; Yiddish spurned by advocates of, 126; Zionism and, 133–34
- Augustine, Saint, 142
- authors: anger of, 49; faith of, 48–49, 127, 201; originality of, 45, 51–52, 69; readers' relationship to, 39–40; relationship of, to God, 41, 42, 48–49, 73; relationship of, to money, 59; role of, in writing fiction, 22, 193; talent of, 40–42, 68–69; unique viewpoints of, 55–56
- Axenfeld, Israel, *The First Jewish Recruit*, 122
- Baal Shem Tov, 79, 80, 142, 147, 190
- Balfour Declaration, 113
- Balzac, Honoré de, 27, 139
- beauty, 40, 42, 50, 72–73, 84, 166, 170
- Beliefs and Opinions*, 78
- Ben-Ami, Jacob, 124
- Bergelson, Dovid, 137
- Bible: animals in, 86; character and behavior of heroes of, 109–10; Hebrew language of, 28; history of the Jews as portrayed in, 111; interpretations of, 77–78; Kabbalah based on, 87; Sabbatai Zevi and, 188; Singer's experience of, 190; as source of literature, 44

- Big Apple Circus, 152
 Big Bang, 151
 Bilgoray, Poland, 155, 157, 159, 190
 Bimko, Fischel, 124
 Block, Jacob "Jack," 46
 Blok, Alexander, 160
 Bolshevism, 47
Book of Creation, The, 183
 boredom, 23, 38, 39, 46, 50, 67, 71
 Broder Singers, 123
 Bukharin, Nikolai, 115
 Buloff, Joseph, 127
 Burgin, Richard, 6
 Burstein, Pesach, 127
 Burstyn, Mike, 127
 Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 69, 101
- Cahan, Abe, 28, 124, 126
 Camus, Albert, 14
 Carl Hanser Verlag, 194n
 case histories, 46
 censorship, 25–31, 25n, 46
 Chagall, Marc, 125
 Chaim, Chofetz, *Desirer of Life*, 28
 chaos room, 10–11
 Chekhov, Anton, 21, 38, 62
 children: emotions of, 64–67; literature
 for, 6, 7, 67–68, 70–73; moralistic/
 ideological literature aimed at, 71–72;
 psychology of, 66–68, 70–71
 Christianity: and the character and
 behavior of Old Testament figures,
 110; failure of, 111; Judaism vs., 112;
 Tolstoy and, 48, 61
 clichés: danger of, for literature, 35–36,
 38, 48–49; for expression of emotion,
 65; as old truths, 49; in Soviet litera-
 ture, 160; in the theater, 120
 clothing and personal appearance:
 formation of identity or community
 through, 99–100, 102–7; as language,
 100–2
 Commentaries, 108, 110
 communism, 53, 71, 91–92, 105, 126, 160
 Conservative Judaism, 99, 105
 conversion, 104
 cosmopolitanism, 49–50, 143
 Cossacks, 184
 creation and creativity: artistic, 20–21,
 33, 38, 40, 57–58, 162–66, 170; exis-
 tential significance of, 162–66; God
 and, 80–84, 86, 88, 162–64, 166, 168n,
 170–75, 181–82; suffering linked to,
 162, 166, 172–73, 184
 Crooks, William, 161
 culture, corruption of, 72–73
- Daniel, book of, 184
 Darwin, Charles, 79, 89, 155
 death, 42, 164, 172, 175
 devil. *See* Satan
 Diaspora, 106, 107, 108, 116. *See also* exile
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor, 20–21, 27, 41, 44, 62,
 101, 157, 159; *The Brothers Karamazov*,
 22, 56; *Crime and Punishment*, 22, 46,
 56, 114
 Doubleday, 9
 doubt, 73, 81, 117. *See also* faith; religion;
 skepticism
 Doyle, Arthur Conan, 156
Duties of the Hearts, 78
 Dymov, Osip, 125
- Earth, kabbalistic conception of, 81–83,
 85–86, 88
 Edison, Thomas, 44, 137
 editing, 24, 195–201
 Einstein, Albert, 88
 Elimelech, Rabbi, 138
 Emancipation of the Jews, 104

- Emden, Rabbi Jacob, 85, 190–91
- emotions: display of, 65, 67; linguistic expression of, 65–67; particularity of, 66–67; significance of, 64–65; in Spinoza's philosophy, 66, 84, 121, 166
- English language: Singer's voice recordings in, 3; translations into, 1–2, 6; writings in, 2
- Enlightenment. *See* Jewish Enlightenment
- entertainment, as art's purpose, 38–39, 42, 48, 50–52
- Esau, 109
- eternal questions, 41, 42, 49, 61–62, 79, 156
- Ettinger, Shloime, *Serkele*, 122
- Euchel, Isaac, *Reb Henoch*, 122
- Eve, 67, 182–83
- evil, 82, 86–87, 157, 182
- excommunication, 104
- exile: attitudes toward, 108–11, 116–18, 134, 136; Jewish advances resulting from, 110–11, 180; Jewish community formation in, 102, 107; Jewish experience of, 117–18, 129–30, 180; Kabbalah's conception of, 182; statehood vs., 112–13; as universal experience, 117, 137; Yiddish as language of, 115. *See also* Diaspora
- Exodus, book of, 179–80
- Eybeschütz, Rabbi Jonathan, 190–91
- faith: children as models of, 73; in modern times, 15–16, 117, 143; reformulation of, to include all creatures, 143, 173; Singer's childhood experience of, 77–78, 154–55, 190–92; Singer's personal, 161–64, 168–75, 194n; Singer's questioning of, 78–79; worldly Jews and, 104; writers and, 48–49, 127, 201. *See also* doubt; religion
- Farrar, Straus and Giroux (FSG), 4–5
- Faulkner, William, 140
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 201
- First World War, 156
- Flammarion, Camille, 156, 161
- Flaubert, Gustave, 44, 62, 158; *Madame Bovary*, 32, 93; *Salammô*, 21
- folklore, 49, 51
- Forel, Auguste-Henri, 46
- Forverts* (*Jewish Daily Forward*; newspaper), 1, 12, 14, 19, 20, 28, 124, 195–97
- Frank, Jacob, 85, 190
- free choice/will, 82, 128, 173–74, 182
- Freud, Sigmund, 27, 46, 47, 69, 88, 93, 180, 192
- Fuchs, A. M., 135, 137
- Fuchs, Leo, 127
- Gandhi, Mohandas, 80, 100, 101, 142
- Gemara, 78, 184, 186, 188
- Genesis, book of, 72, 183, 190
- Genghis Khan, 80
- Gersten, Berta, 124
- ghettos: confinement to, 102; talents of residents of, 109; Yiddish literature and, 138–40; Yiddish theater and, 120, 126
- ghost stories, 19
- Giroux, Robert, 5
- Gnosticism, 87, 184, 188
- God: artists' relationship to, 41, 42, 48–49, 73; children's belief in, 70; and creation, 80–84, 86, 88, 162–64, 166, 168n, 170–75, 181–82; creation of individuals by, 57; criticisms of, 164, 171–72; feminine aspect of, 84, 166, 170, 182, 186; Jews' relationship to, 102; kabbalistic conception of, 79–84, 88, 162–64, 166, 170, 181–83, 185–86, 190; monotheistic conception

- God (*continued*)
of, 179–80; philosophical conceptions of,
168–69; religious conceptions of,
169; Singer's conception of, 19, 77–78,
151, 161–62, 168n, 169–75; Spinoza's
conception of, 66, 79–80, 83, 163,
169. *See also* religion
- Godner, Israel, 123
- Goebbels, Joseph, 47
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von,
123, 158
- Gogol, Nikolai, 44, 157
- Goldfaden, Abraham, 123, 125
- Goldman, Emma, 69
- Goldwater, Barry, 96
- Goran, Lester, 7, 9
- Gordin, Jacob, 123
- Gottlieb, Elaine, 4–5
- Gottlob, Abraham Ber, *The Scarf*, 122
- Granovsky, Aleksandr, 125
- Greenberg, Uri Zvi, 159
- Greene, Graham, 55
- Gross, A. H., 4n
- Gross, Nancy, 4n
- Guide for the Perplexed, The*, 78, 156
- Gurney, Edmund, 156
- Halakhah*, 185–87
- Halpern, Dina, 127
- Hamsun, Knut, 11, 159, 204; *Pan*, 178;
Victoria, 178
- Hannukah, 122, 127
- harmony, 42, 44, 50, 86, 170
- Harper's* (magazine), 1
- Harry Ransom Center, University of
Texas, 11
- Hasidism: critics of, 149; decline of, 112;
and Kabbalah, 87; and Polish Jewry,
112; principles of, 106–7; revival of,
142; Sabbatai Zevi and, 189; Singer
and, 110; in Williamsburg, New York,
99–100; and Yiddish, 116, 132, 138
- Haskalah*. *See* Jewish Enlightenment
- Hebrew language: gender in, 186;
historical use of, 28, 113–14; in Israel,
114–15, 134; literature in, 113–14,
116–17; revival of, 114–15, 118, 130;
Singer's experience with, 158–59;
Yiddish compared to, 115–16, 131–32;
Zionism and, 126
- Hebrew literature: Enlightenment's
influence on, 157; politics and, 47;
worldly concerns of, 116–17, 132–33,
157; Yiddish literature compared to,
132–33, 135; Zionism and, 134
- heder*, Singer's attendance at, 110, 148,
156, 163
- hedonism, 89, 165, 189–90
- Hegel, G.W.F., 82, 88, 169
- Heine, Heinrich, 158
- Hemingway, Ernest, 140
- Hemley, Cecil, 4
- hippies, 100
- Hirschbein, Peretz, 124
- historical novels, 21
- history, as generalization, 58
- Hitler, Adolf, 63, 71, 73, 80, 118, 126, 127,
193; *Mein Kampf*, 96
- Holocaust, 11, 80
- Homer: *Iliad*, 44, 48; *Odyssey*, 44, 48
- Hosea, 86
- humanism, 19, 45, 161
- human nature, kabbalistic conception
of, 86, 88, 89, 163–64, 175, 182, 190
- Hume, David, 78, 158, 161; *Treatise on
Human Understanding*, 78
- Ibn Ezra, Rabbi, 78
- information, literary role of, 21, 23–24,
35, 47

- Ishmael, 109
- isms, 40, 54
- Israel: degrees of religiosity in, 105–7;
exile in relation to, 116; Hebrew
language in, 114–15, 134
- Israel of Rishon, Rabbi, 138
- Izvestia* (newspaper), 30
- Jesus, 112
- Jewish Daily Forward*. See *Forverts*
- Jewish Enlightenment: assimilation
encouraged by, 103, 112, 133–34;
literature influenced by, 122, 157;
Sabbatai Zevi and, 189; Singer's
experience of, 155; Yiddish language
and, 132; Zionism and, 133–34
- Jewish Publication Society, 203
- Jews and Judaism: Christianity vs., 112;
community formation through
customs and regulations, 102–7;
emancipation of, 104; exceptional
nature of, 129–30, 136; identity
(Jewishness) of, 130–31, 136–37;
Kabbalah and, 87; languages spoken
by, 129–31; literary portrayal of the
spirit of, 139–40; maximum vs.
minimum expressions of, 104–7,
131–33; mystical roots of, 180–81;
pious, 87, 99–100, 105–9; and politics,
113; spirit of, 118, 127; and the theater,
121–22; worldly, 104–5. See also anti-
semitism
- journalism, 20–24, 33
- Joyce, James, 44, 69; *Finnegan's Wake*, 51
- Judaism. See Jews and Judaism
- Jung, Carl, 46, 192
- Kabbalah: commentaries on, 79; con-
ception of Earth in, 81–83, 85–86, 88;
conception of God in, 79–84, 88,
162–64, 166, 170, 181–83, 185–86;
conception of humanity in, 86, 88, 89,
175, 182, 190; conception of morality
in, 81–83; critics of, 85; God in philoso-
phy of, 190; in the Holy Land, 184;
language of, 116, 131; love and sexual-
ity in, 84–85, 165, 182, 186–87; meaning
of the name, 181; modernity and,
77, 87–89; mysticism of, 181; oral
transmission of, 180; Sabbatai Zevi
and, 185; Singer's experience of, 78–80,
89, 149, 151, 156, 161, 162, 165, 190
- Kacyzne, Alter, 125
- Kafka, Franz, 44, 69, 204
- Kaganovsky, Efraim, 135
- Kaminska, Esther Rachel, 123
- Kaminska, Ida, 123
- Kant, Immanuel, 62, 78, 158; *Prolegom-
ena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 78
- Kerensky, Alexander, 113, 157
- Kessler, David, 124
- Khmelnitsky, Bohdan, 184, 190
- Kletzkin, Boris, 176–78
- klezmer music, 123
- Kobrin, Leon, 124
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, 46
- Kressyn, Miriam, 127
- Krochmalna Street, Warsaw, 55, 79, 109,
114, 148, 190
- Kuzari*, The, 78, 156
- language: expression of emotions in,
65–67; gender in, 201–2; global growth
of, 136, 141–42; historical uses of, by
the Jewish people, 129–31; literary
use of, 37; moral considerations for,
25–31, 72; multilingualism, 131; of
personal appearance, 99–107; poor
usage of, 69, 70. See also English
language; Yiddish language

- Lateiner, Joseph, 123
- Lawrence, D. H., *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 93
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 88
- Leivick, H., 125
- Lenin, Vladimir, 49, 63, 69, 92, 115
- Leninism, 73, 130
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 123
- Levinsohn, I. B., *The Deceitful World*, 122
- Leviticus, book of, 102
- liberalism, 73
- Libin, Zalmon, 124
- Lipshitz, Paula, 151–52
- Liptzin, Keni, 124
- Literarische Bleter* (journal), 159
- literary criticism: formal preoccupations of, 40; misguidedness of, 36, 67; pernicious influence of psychology on, 22, 33, 36; Singer's practice of, 204; Singer's spoofs of, 90–91, 94–98; superfluity of, 22, 33, 38
- literature: artificial production of, 32–33; censorship of, 25–31, 25n, 46; character as basis of, 35–37, 46–47, 57; children's, 6, 7, 67–68, 70–73; essence of, 34–40, 47, 54–55; experimentation in, 40; individuality/particularity as basis of, 35–39, 46–47, 57–60; international awareness of, 142; Jewish spirit awaits expression in, 139–40; journalism compared to, 20–24, 33; national nature of, 49–51, 116–17, 133; and nature, 43–45; orientation toward the future as mistake in, 53–54, 62; psychology in relation to, 22, 35, 45–46; purpose of, 32–42, 52; real life compared to, 32; role of information in, 21, 23–24, 35, 47; science compared to, 22–23, 37, 39, 47; sexuality in, 26–28; storytelling as purpose of, 36, 39, 48, 50, 53–60; subjectivity in, 44–45; teaching not the proper concern of, 37, 39, 45, 48, 53–54; topics of, 59–61. *See also* modern literature
- Lodge, Oliver, 156, 161
- London, Jack, *The Call of the Wild*, 158
- love: in the Bible, 187; in the Kabbalah, 84–85, 165; religious suspicions of, 149; Singer's conception of, 170; Singer's youthful experience of, 149–52; as topic of literature, 59–60, 68, 150; in Yiddish theater, 120
- Luria, Rabbi Isaac, 79, 80–81, 87, 161, 162, 165, 181, 184–85
- Lux, Lillian, 127
- Lysenko, Trofim, 41
- magic, 147–51, 179–80, 190. *See also* mysticism
- Malthus, Thomas Robert, 89
- Manger, Itzik, 135
- Mann, Thomas, 11
- Markish, Peretz, 125, 159–60
- Marx, Karl, 47, 63, 82, 92, 115
- Marxism, 73
- masses: not the proper concern of literature, 41, 60, 62, 71; political concerns with, 63
- Maupassant, Guy de, 21, 27, 38, 62, 158
- Mayakovsky, Vladimir, 160
- Mearson, Lyon, 4n
- Menaheem from Vitebsk, Rabbi, 138
- Messiah: coming of, 84, 87, 164, 180; Jesus not, 112; pan-Jewishness and, 111; pious Jews and, 107, 109; Sabbatai Zevi and, 186–89; suffering as sign of coming of, 184
- Midrash, 83, 87, 108, 162, 188
- Midwood, Barton, 204

- Mikhoels, Solomon, 125
 Miller, David Neal, 13
 Miller, Henry, *Tropic of Cancer*, 28
 miracles, 78, 87, 147–48, 155. *See also*
 magic; mysticism
 Mishnah, 78, 184, 188, 190
 Misnagdim, 189
 Mizrachi, 106
 modernity: faith in times of, 15–16, 117,
 143; Kabbalah and, 77, 87; skepticism
 as characteristic of, 77–79
 modern literature: amnesia of, regarding
 literature's essence, 33–34, 47, 53,
 62–63; children's literature compared
 to, 70–73; clichés as threat to, 35–36,
 48–49; commercial concerns of, 24,
 34, 35, 68; didactic aims of, 47–48,
 53; journalism compared to, 23–24,
 33; originality as preoccupation of,
 45, 69; psychological preoccupations
 of, 23–24, 34, 45–46; reconceptual-
 ization of literature by, 34, 46–47, 68;
 scientific ambitions of, 47; shock
 effects sought by, 25, 27, 29, 46–47, 69;
 Singer and, 6, 14; Singer's criticisms
 of, 23–24, 34, 45–50, 62–63, 68–70;
 storytelling spurned by, 40, 50, 68;
 subjectivity in, 44–45
 Mogulesco, Sigmund, 124
 Molière, 119
 monotheism, 179–80
 morality: children and, 71–73; kabbal-
 istic conception of, 81–83, 85–87;
 language use and, 25–31, 72; literature
 and, 72; Spinoza and, 80
 Moses, Robert, 96
 Moshe de León, Rabbi, 87, 116, 180
 Moshe of Cordova, Rabbi, 79, 161
 Moskowitz, Ira: *The Hasidim*, 99n;
 illustrations to *Satan in Goray*, 179n
 Mussolini, Benito, 118
 Myers, Frederic, 156
 mysticism, 71, 87, 102, 161, 179–81, 183,
 189. *See also* magic; miracles
 Nabokov, Vladimir, 14
 Nahman of Bratslav, Rabbi, 142, 147
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 96
 nationalism. *See* Zionism
 nature: art's relationship to, 43–45;
 Spinoza's God equated with, 80,
 169–70
 Naturei Karta, 106
 New Testament, 188
 Newton, Isaac, 44
New York Times (newspaper), 11, 15
 New York University, 15
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 88, 139, 158
 Nixon, Richard, 69
 Nobel Prize for Literature, 6, 10, 15,
 147n
 Noonday, 4
 Nordau, Max, 155

 obscenity, 25–31, 85. *See also*
 pornography
 October (Bolshevik) Revolution, 60,
 113, 125, 157, 160. *See also* Russian
 Revolution
 Opatoshu, Joseph, 159
 originality, 45, 51–52, 69
 Orthodox Judaism, 100
 Orwell, George, 1984, 54
 Ozick, Cynthia, "Envy; or: Yiddish in
 America," 14

 painting, 50
 Panarion Conference, 203
 Peretz, I. L., 125, 204
 Perle, Joseph, 135

- personal appearance. *See* clothing and personal appearance
- Philo of Alexandria, 184
- philosophy: and eternal questions, 41, 42, 49, 61–62, 79, 156; Kabbalah's encompassing of, 87–88; Singer's critique of contemporary, 42; Singer's engagement with, 79, 158, 161–65
- Picon, Molly, 124
- Pinski, David, 124
- Plato, 87, 184
- plot: disregard for, 27; as essential to literature, 40; form in relation to, 40; in literature vs. in real life, 32
- Plotinus, 87
- Pluto, 184
- Poe, Edgar Allan, 21, 41, 158
- poetry, 33, 44
- pogroms, 113, 157, 190
- Polish Jewry, 112, 135, 160, 183–84
- politics: art in relation to, 38, 41, 47; attitude of exiled Jews toward, 113; masses as concern of, 63; Yiddish culture and, 115
- pornography, 37, 46, 68, 69, 85. *See also* obscenity
- Prager, Jacob, 125
- Pravda* (newspaper), 30
- Prokosch, Frederic, 204
- proportion, 39–40, 50
- Protocols of Zion, 95
- psychical research, 143–44, 175
- psychology: emotions as described in, 66; generalization as basis of, 60; literature in relation to, 22, 35, 45–46; and sexuality, 27; Singer's spoof of, 93–94
- publishing, 24, 34, 68, 176–78
- Purim, 122, 127
- Pushkin, Alexander, 69
- Ravitch, Melech, 159
- readers: attitudes, interests, and responses of, 22–23, 39; authors' relationship to, 39–40
- realism, 40
- reason and rationalism: emotion in relation to, 66, 84; espoused by Singer's brother, 155–57; Judaism not a religion of, 180; Singer's questioning of, 155–58, 160–61; Spinoza and, 44, 66, 84, 155
- Reform Judaism, 99, 105
- Reinhardt, Max, 125
- Reisen, Abraham, 137
- religion: art compared to, 42; authors and, 61; Kabbalah and, 77–89; Ten Commandments and, 90–98, 173. *See also* Christianity; doubt; faith; God; Jews and Judaism; Singer, Isaac Bashevis: religious attitudes of
- Remarque, Erich Maria, 11
- Rexite, Seymour, 127
- Rhine, J. B., 156
- Richter, Conrad, 204
- Russian Revolution, 30, 60, 101, 113. *See also* October (Bolshevik) Revolution
- Sackler, Harry, 125
- Samuel, book of, 180
- Samuel, Maurice, 4n
- Satan, 19, 48–49, 82, 83, 86, 159, 185
- Satz, Ludwig, 124
- Schildkraut, Joseph, 124
- Schildkraut, Rudolph, 124
- Schiller, Friedrich, 123
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, 62, 88, 158; *The World as Will and Idea*, 161
- Schulz, Bruno, 204
- Schwartz, Maurice, 124, 125

- science: in Aristotelian tradition, 44;
audience not a concern for, 22–23,
39; generalization as basis of, 37;
literature's attempts to become, 47;
and nature, 44, 45; Singer's concep-
tion of God in relation to, 171
- Scooler, Zvee, 127
- sexuality: ambivalent nature of, 183;
kabbalistic conception of, 84–85,
182, 186–87; knowledge equated
with, 182; in literature, 26–28, 46;
psychology and, 27; Sabbatai Zevi
and, 186–87, 189; in the Talmud, 29
- Sforim, Mendele Moykher, 125, 137
- Shakespeare, William, 48, 119, 123
- Shekhinah* (feminine aspect of God),
84, 166, 170, 182, 186
- Sherman, Joseph, 11
- Shimon bar Yohai, Rabbi, 87
- Shosha (neighbor), 147n, 149–52, 190
- shtetl*, as subject of Yiddish literature,
115, 120, 137–39, 191
- sin, 187–88
- Singer, I. J. (Joshua), 126, 135, 148, 151,
155–57, 159–62, 192–93, 204; *The
Brothers Ashkenazi*, 155, 192; “Pearls,”
159; *Yoshe Kalb*, 125
- Singer, Isaac Bashevis: archive of, 11;
aunt of, 204; brothers of, 125, 126,
148, 151, 155–57, 159–62, 192–93, 204;
childhood of, 109–10, 112–13, 122,
147–58, 163, 190–92; child of, 7, 10,
19; critical reception of, 14–15, 176,
192; essays of, 2–16; father of, 77, 109,
113–14, 121–22, 147–49, 151, 154–56,
160, 190; grandfathers of, 77, 148, 155,
190; health of, 7, 9; as intellectual, 3,
6; lectures by, 1, 11–12, 15–16; as
literary critic, 204; mental struggles
of, 158, 192; and modernism, 6, 14;
mother of, 148, 151, 155, 190; Nobel
Prize received by, 6, 10, 15, 147n;
philosophical interests of, 79; pseud-
onyms of, 1, 2, 7, 13, 14, 25n, 99n, 196,
197, 203; publication attempts for
collection of essays, 4–9; religious
attitudes of, 19, 77–79, 89, 107, 110,
112, 117, 151, 161–64, 168–75, 190–92;
storyteller image of, 1, 6, 14–16, 176;
voice recordings by, 3; as a writer,
1–2, 10, 20, 113–14, 152, 154–55, 162–67,
176–78, 191–92, 195–205
- Singer, Isaac Bashevis, works: *Broken
Tablets* (proposal), 7; children's
books, 6, 7; *Conversations with Isaac
Bashevis Singer*, 6; *The Estate*, 5; *The
Family Moskat*, 4, 20; *First Steps in
Literature* (proposal), 7; *Gifts*, 203;
Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories, 4,
177; *God's Fugitives* (proposal), 9;
“The Jew of Babylon,” 155; “The
Kabbalah and Modern Times,”
202–3; “A Letter to Mama,” 63n;
Love and Exile, 194n; *The Magician
of Lublin*, 4, 147n; *The Manor*, 5,
20; “Matones,” 203; *In My Father's
Court*, 5; “My Personal Conception of
Religion,” 168n; *Neshome-ekspeditsyes
(Soul Expeditions)* [*Shosha*], 147n;
The Penitent, 9, 194n; “A Personal
Concept of Religion or, Religion
without Dogma,” 15, 197–202; “Rebel-
lion and Prayer, or The True Protester,”
11; *Satan in Goray*, 4, 19, 165, 179n,
191–92; *A Ship to America*, 5; *Short
Friday and Other Stories*, 5; “Shoshe,
di gril un der lantukh” (Shosha, the
Cricket, and the Lantuch) [later as
“Shosha”], 147n; *The Slave*, 5, 166–67;
“The Spinoza of Market Street,” 158;

- Singer, Isaac Bashevis, works
 (continued)
The Spinoza of Market Street and Other Stories, 4–5; “To the True Protester,” 11; “Tsu der frage vegn dikhtung un politik” (Toward the Question of Poetics and Politics), 5; “Verter oder bilder” (Words or Images), 5; “What Is God to Do—Discuss His Book with Every Reader?,” 15; “Who Needs Literature?,” 13, 196–97; “Why I Write As I Do: The Philosophy and Definition of a Jewish Writer,” 202–3; *Zlateh the Goat*, 6
- skepticism, 77–79, 87–89, 161. *See also* doubt
- Skulnik, Menashe, 124
- socialism, 47, 53, 126
- sociology, 22, 34, 36, 46, 49, 60, 68
- Sodom, 72
- Sofer, Rabbi Moshe, 105–6
- Solomon, King, 143
- Song of Songs, 110, 187
- soul, 143–44, 182, 189
- Soviet Union: children’s literature in, 71; literature in, 53–54, 60; moderation of ideology in, 30; persecution of Jewish writers in, 28, 125; treatment of the Jews in, 115, 130; Yiddish theater in, 125. *See also* Russian Revolution
- Spinoza, Baruch, 69, 87; determinism of, 173; emotions in the philosophy of, 66, 84, 121, 166; *Ethics*, 66, 78, 121, 158; God in philosophy of, 66, 79–80, 83, 163, 169–70; hedonism of, 165; Jews’ relations with, 107; philosophical system of, 88, 158; rationalism of, 44, 84, 155; Singer’s reading of, 78, 158, 165, 201; universalism of, 62
- Stalin, Joseph, 28, 54, 63, 71, 73, 80, 115, 118, 125, 159
- Steinbeck, John, 140
- storytelling: children’s love of, 67; individuality/particularity as basis of, 58; as purpose of art, 36, 39, 48, 50, 53–60; Singer’s reputation for, 1, 6, 14–16, 176
- Straus, Roger, 5, 7, 11
- Strindberg, August, 49, 62, 119
- Stuchkov, Nahum, *Thesaurus of Yiddish*, 135
- suffering: art’s refusal to accept, 41, 42; creativity linked to, 162, 166, 172–73, 184; free choice linked to, 82, 182; God in relation to, 172–73, 182; of the Jews, 141, 182
- suicide, 158
- Sutzkever, Abraham, 135
- symbolism, 37–38, 68
- Szatmar Hasidim, 106–7
- talent, 40–42, 68–69
- Talmud, 29, 77, 79, 84, 86, 87, 99, 103, 108, 110, 115–16, 122, 130, 132, 158, 180, 183, 185, 187, 190
- Telushkin, Dvora Menashe, 6–8, 7n
- Ten Commandments, 90–98, 161, 173–74
- Theodosius II, Emperor, 122
- Thomashefsky, Bessie, 124
- Thomashefsky, Boris, 124–25
- Tolstoy, Leo, 21, 44, 48, 61–62, 100–102, 157, 159; *Anna Karenina*, 32, 46, 56, 61–62, 93, 114; *War and Peace*, 21, 35, 46, 58–62, 114
- Torah, 99, 102, 106, 109, 174, 181, 182, 184, 187
- Toynbee, Arnold, 97
- translation: collaboration on, 2, 6, 11–12, 195; into English, 1–2, 6, 11–12;

- Singer's efforts in, 2, 3, 6, 11–12, 14, 177, 195, 196n, 203; translators of Singer, 4–5, 4n; from Yiddish, 1, 6, 195
- Trunk, J. J., 135
- truth: art's expression of, 39, 42; expression of, in language, 30; kabbalistic conception of, 89; modern attitude toward, 77; scientific expression of, 39
- tsimtsum* (God's self-diminishment for the sake of creation), 81, 162, 181–82
- Turgenev, Ivan, 159
- ugliness, 29, 30, 40, 50, 72–73
- University of Michigan, 203
- University of Southern Louisiana, 15
- Van Gogh, Vincent, 41
- Varshavski, Yitskhok (pseudonym of Singer), 2
- vegetarianism, 143
- Vilna Gaon, 190
- Vital, Rabbi Chaim, 80, 181
- Wayne College, 203
- Weel, Gordon, 9
- Whitman, Walt, 21
- Wiesenfeld, Muni (later Paul Muni), 124
- Wilhelm, Kaiser, 101
- Williams, Tennessee, 140
- Wolfsohn, Aaron, *Frivolousness and Bigotry*, 122
- women: biblical conception of, 183; Halakhic conception of, 186; kabbalistic conception of, 165–66, 186; personal appearance of, 101; Singer's spoof of feminist, 97. See also *Shekhinah*
- worldly Jews, 104–5
- writers. See authors
- Yiddish Art Theater, 125
- Yiddish culture: character of, 114, 137; politics and, 115; richness of, 118
- Yiddish language: associated with exile, 115; attitudes toward, 126; character and uses of, 114–18, 135; decline of, 126, 134–37; Hebrew compared to, 115–16, 131–32; Kabbalah and, 116, 131; Singer's use of, 113–14, 117, 159; Singer's voice recordings in, 3; spirit of Judaism in, 118, 127, 136–37; subjects of, 137–39; translations from, 1, 6, 195; translations into, 11, 115, 157–58; writings in, 1, 2, 6
- Yiddish literature: Enlightenment's influence on, 157; Hebrew literature compared to, 132–33, 135; history of, 132; love as topic of, 120, 150; politics and, 47; provincial character of, 137–40; *shtetl* as subject of, 115, 120, 137–39, 191; Singer's comments on, 135–44; Singer's place in, 14, 192; spirit of Judaism in, 118, 127, 140; worldly concerns of, 132–33, 140, 157; Zionism and, 134
- Yiddish theater: adaptation of European classics for, 123; didactic function of, 124; Enlightenment's influence on, 122; essential topic of, 120; features of, 119; history of, 122–26; persistence of, 127; Singer and, 126–27; sources of works for, 126; in the Soviet Union, 125; spiritual basis of, 127–28; and traditional Jewish attitude toward the theater, 121–22; typical characters in, 120; typical endings of, 121
- Yiddish Writers' Club, Warsaw, 176
- Young, Clara, 124

238 INDEX

- Zamir, Israel, 7, 10
- Zeitlin, Aaron, 125, 135, 204
- Zevi, Sabbatai, 85, 165, 179n, 184–91
- Zhitnitsky, I., 135
- Zionism: Enlightenment and, 133–34;
 exile from perspective of, 108; Jewish
 critics of, 105; literature and, 47, 53,
 134; Polish Jewry and, 160; Sabbatai
 Zevi and, 189; secular nature of, 112–13;
 Singer and, 112; worldly Jews and, 104;
 and Yiddish culture, 126, 132, 134
- Zohar*, 80, 86, 87, 108, 116, 130, 180–84,
 190
- Zola, Emile, 21, 27, 139