



The Author-Narrator in Yitskhok

Bashevis Zinger's Short Fiction

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Introduction

In an essay honoring the memory of Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger, Dan Miron marked his death as a “half-reconciled farewell to a rich and vital literary tradition” and the author himself as the “last of the great Yiddish story-tellers”.¹ Assuming that Zinger’s death has indeed sealed the canon of Yiddish fiction, it is necessary to ask to what extent he was aware of this meaningful position or acknowledged it in his own creative work, not only by embracing an elegiac tone in his writing but also by relating directly to the image of the Yiddish author. This question can serve as a tool to characterize one of the final, reflexive stages of Yiddish literary modernism, as well as to understand Zinger as a Yiddish author who was, perhaps reluctantly, committed to playing his role as the final link in the chain that began with Mendele Moykher Sforim, Y. L. Peretz and Sholem Aleykhem.

In this work, I will examine Zinger’s artistic strategies in handling this special role by reviewing and analyzing a recurring pattern in his short fiction, namely, his use of a Yiddish author as the first-person narrator. I chose to focus on his short stories rather than novels in which this type of narrator appears,² firstly because Zinger’s short fiction is commonly referred to as his most important contribution to Yiddish literature,³ and secondly because only in the short stories is a pattern clearly recognizable – and not merely a pattern, but in fact a major phenomenon. The “author-narrator stories”, as I will refer to them here, began to appear in 1960 and were

¹ Dan Miron, “Passivity and Narration: The Spell of Bashevis Singer”, in: Grace Farrell (ed.), *Critical Essays on Isaac Bashevis Singer*, New York, 1996, p. 149. This essay was originally published in Hebrew in the Israeli press shortly after Zinger’s death in: 1991 באוגוסט, 2 ידיעות אחרונות, (This bibliographical information can be found in the Hebrew reprinted version of the article: פרופ' דן מירון, "סבילות וסיפר: לקסמו של בשביס-זינגר", בתוך: ה"ל, הספרייה העברית: פרופ' דן מירון, תל אביב, 2005, עמ' 50 (מעורבת: 2005-1980).

² I am referring mainly to the novels *Neshome-ekspeditsyes* (1974; English version: *Shosha*, 1978) and *Farloyrene noshomes* (1981-1982; *Meshugah*, 1994), in which the narrator is also the main character and the narrative handles his development as a Yiddish author, but also to the novel *Der bal-Tshuve* (1973; *The Penitent*, 1983), in which the author-narrator’s primary role is to frame a story of another character as he listens to his speech.

³ Jan Schwarz, *Survivors and Exiles: Yiddish Culture After the Holocaust*, Detroit, 2015, p. 232

published regularly until the final stages of his career over two decades later. As I gathered from reviewing the entire corpus of his short stories by using their three-volume Library of America edition (hereafter “LOA”) in English translation, which was published in honor of Zinger’s centennial in 2004,⁴ adding two extra stories published in English in the *New Yorker* magazine after the release of this compilation and three more stories mentioned in an article by Chone Shmeruk⁵ – I can conclude that the author-narrator stories make up over thirty percent of the overall short stories published during his career in America in either Yiddish or English (mostly in both languages), or to be more precise, at least 73 author-narrator stories out of a total of at least 203 stories.⁶

The striking prominence of the author-narrator phenomenon within Zinger’s large corpus of short stories calls for systematic research which has not yet been conducted, despite the fact that Zinger’s work has received much scholarly attention. I propose to undertake this research in my thesis with an intention not only to describe, as comprehensively as possible, these publications and the image of the Yiddish author that they evoke, but also to analyze the literary strategies and devices which emerge from the recurring structure of a Yiddish author-protagonist narrating a chain of events that occurred to himself, or appearing as a narratee and thus framing the narrative of another character in the story.

⁴ Isaac Bashevis Singer, *the Collected Stories* (The Library of America Edition), 3 volumes, New York, 2004 (Here: LOA)

⁵ Chone Shmeruk, “Monologue as Narrative Strategy in the Short Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer”, in: David Neal Miller (ed.), *Recovering the Canon: Essays on Isaac Bashevis Singer*, Leiden, 1986, p. 113; A previous version of this article was published in Yiddish as an introduction to the volume *Der shpigl un andere dertseylungen: חנא שמערק, "די פילגעשטעלטקייט פון יצחק באשעוויסעס מאנאלאגישע פארמען"*, איבערגעזעצט פון העברעיש: אברהם נאָווערשטערן, אין: יצחק באשעוויס-זינגער, *דער שפיגל אין אנדערע דערציילונגען*, ירושלים, 1975, ז'ז-ז'ל.

⁶ I limit this statement only to stories published in America and not include his early stories, which were published in Poland. However, it is important to mention that since the larger and most prolific part of Zinger’s literary career enveloped in America, it is a remarkable phenomenon also within Zinger’s oeuvre at large. The total sum of 203 is most likely lower than the real number of his stories published in America, since many haven’t been published in English and therefore unclear without a full database of publications in *Forverts* or at least access to all *Forverts* issues published in Zinger’s lifetime. Therefore also the list of author-narrator stories I present here in Appendix A is representative, but probably not exhaustive.

In order to limit the scope of my research I will not analyze every story in the author-narrator corpus, but rather identify and discuss major trends, and provide examples which emerge from a close reading of a selection of the most interesting stories.

Researching Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger's work usually raises several methodological difficulties. First, the distinction between original text and translation: Zinger requested that the English versions of his writings will be considered a "second original"⁷ – as a basis for translations into languages other than English, for example – and it is necessary to consider this request also when interpreting his work. As I selected the texts to be analyzed in this research, I realized that there was no way to conduct a comprehensive study on Zinger without dealing with a double corpus, i.e. the same texts in both their Yiddish and English versions. However, since I am working within the disciplinary context of Yiddish Studies, I will nevertheless concentrate more on the Yiddish texts than on the English ones, and discuss the English versions only if they contain notable elements that do not appear in their Yiddish equivalents.

I was not able to locate the Yiddish versions of some of the author-narrator stories I found in the LOA edition, whether because, to my knowledge, they were never published in Yiddish by Zinger and exist only as manuscripts in his archive at the Harry Ransom Center,⁸ or because their Yiddish versions are nowhere to be found at all. Although most Yiddish sources were easily traceable using Roberta Saltzman's bibliography of Zinger's work⁹ (and also cited in the notes to the LOA edition), several are to be found in *Forverts* issues that are not accessible to me here in Israel. I do not consider the lack of these few sources to be a serious limitation, as the stories I

⁷ Anita Norich, "Translation and Transgression", in: Hugh Denman (ed.), *Isaac Bashevis Singer: His Work and His World*, Leiden, 2002, p. 87

⁸ <http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingAid.cfm?eadid=00354>

⁹ Roberta Saltzman, *Isaac Bashevis Singer: a bibliography of his works in Yiddish and English, 1960-1991*, Lanham, 2002

chose for close reading are sufficiently representative of the phenomenon in question. In any case, I included complete, numbered bibliographical information on each of the stories in **Appendix A**. When referring to them I will mention only their serial number in the appendix in order to avoid an excessive amount of footnotes.

Quotes from Yiddish texts will appear in the Yiddish alphabet according to YIVO orthography, whereas names, titles, words and expressions appearing separately will be provided in YIVO transliteration.

Finally, I am choosing to refer to the author by his last name in YIVO transliteration, and neither by his pen name (Bashevis), his last name in English (Singer), nor the synthetic name comprising both (Bashevis Singer), as customary in most studies on him. I prefer the transliteration Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger instead of his English name as an ongoing indication that I am handling his work from the perspective of Yiddish Studies. I chose Zinger rather than Bashevis – the name by which he is commonly referred to among Yiddish speakers – in order to differentiate the author as a whole from his pseudonym Bashevis, as I will in the third and final chapter.

In the first chapter I will provide historical background on Zinger's life and literary development as well as on the state of Yiddish culture in America after the Holocaust. I will discuss the relationship of Zinger's readership to the Yiddish language, which was a central factor in determining the trajectory of his writing and publishing career, and is also reflected thematically in his author-narrator stories. In this chapter I will also describe the few studies that have already dealt with some of Zinger's author-narrator stories, and explain the literary theories which will inform my systematic review and analysis of this corpus.

In the second chapter I will further locate the author-narrator stories within Zinger's entire body of work, and identify prominent patterns and motifs in these stories. I will also briefly characterize their language in Yiddish and in English.

In the third chapter, I will interpret the stories using structural narratological analysis. My final analysis will introduce the notion of the implied corpus and examine Zinger's author-narrator stories as meta-poetic reflections on Yiddish literature and his own role within it, not only as the harbinger of its putative demise, but also as a direct heir of its founding classic authors.

Many people and institutions have helped me immensely during the years I spent as an MA student of Yiddish literature and during the actual writing of this thesis. I would like to thank my thesis instructor, Prof. David G. Roskies, for our productive and encouraging dialogue and for being the catalyst for a deep acquaintance with Zinger's work; the Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Beth Sholem Aleichem and the National Authority for Yiddish Culture, for making the period of researching and writing financially possible; Reyze Turner, for scanning at the New York Public Library some of the material that was inaccessible to me in Israel, and for answering questions about the English language; Prof. Avraham Novershtern, for supplying not only a personal example and guidance, but also a network of scholars and students to draw inspiration from and consult with; Debi Mezan, for promptly assisting in times of bureaucratic crisis; Prof. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, for listening to my not yet developed ideas on narrative fiction; and last but not least, I would like to thank Jonathan M. Barzilai for helping with mathematical questions too complicated for a humanities student, and for expressing infinite patience, support and appreciation in the long process of writing the thesis and in the longer process of postponing the writing of the thesis.

Chapter 1: Historical Background, Methodology and Literary Theories

Although no systematic research on Zinger's author-narrator (henceforth: AN) stories has been conducted, several works have already touched upon this subject from various points of view. I will mention them here briefly in order to illustrate the volume of material to be covered in this thesis and the need for a broader perspective on it.

1.1 Previous Works Referring to the Author-Narrator Phenomenon

The most comprehensive and focused study of the AN phenomenon and device in Yitkhok Bashevis Zinger's writings was elaborated in a 1985 article by Janet Hadda,¹⁰ who later became one of Zinger's biographers.¹¹ Hadda's work focused only on the English versions of several AN stories and analyzed them from a psychodynamic perspective.¹² She concludes that the AN is a specific vehicle Zinger uses in his short stories in order to reconcile his desires to stay connected to his own Eastern European past on the one hand, and find an escape from it in his American present on the other hand.¹³

Other studies referring to this subject mentioned the AN only within the framework of a different kind of discussion on Zinger's work. Chone Shmeruk, in the article "Monologue as Narrative Strategy in the Short Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer"¹⁴ focused on the Yiddish versions of the AN stories, and more specifically, the ones which were published in book form, though he mentioned several others published only in the Yiddish press. Here the author-narrator stories

¹⁰ Janet Hadda, "The Double Life of Isaac Bashevis Singer", *Prooftexts* 5, no. 2 (1985), pp. 165-181

¹¹ Janet Hadda, *Isaac Bashevis Singer: A Life*, New York, 1997

¹² Hadda 1985, p. 166

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 177

¹⁴ Shmeruk 1986

appear as one of several recurring monologue techniques, and analyzed using terms such as “epic situation”, “framing” and “dramatization”. Shmeruk’s 1975 article could not yet encompass the magnitude of the AN phenomenon in Zinger’s short fiction, nor its inner variety, but it is a first step toward a systematic narratological study of it.

In his book on Zinger *Fear of Fiction*, David Neal Miller considered briefly the short story “Hanka” (no. 44 in Appendix A) as an example for a recurring narrative situation in which a narrator carrying identifiable autobiographical characteristics appears in a story containing also details which contradict “publicly-known facts about Singer’s person and oeuvre”.¹⁵ This notion of the AN stories as generating ambiguity as to their relation to extra-literary facts is part of Miller’s broader analysis of Zinger’s work as blurring the distinction between reportage and fiction.

David G. Roskies brought Zinger’s narrators as an example to what he calls “creative betrayal” in his 1995 book *A Bridge of Longing*, and discussed two AN stories from the 1960s (“Aleyn”, no. 2, and “Di kafeterye”, no. 14) primarily as a later development of the demonic narrators, who started appearing in his fiction during WWII.¹⁶ Jan Schwartz discussed “Di kafeterye” as well in a short essay, while focusing on its supernatural qualities.¹⁷ In his recent monumental book of essays about Yiddish literature in America Avrom Novershtern dedicated a section to depictions of the Yiddish author in the New World, in which he also discussed Zinger’s writing.¹⁸ However,

¹⁵ David Neal Miller, *Fear of Fiction: Narrative Strategies in the Works of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, Albany, NY, 1985, p. 94

¹⁶ David G. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1995, pp. 302-304

¹⁷ Jan Schwarz, "'Death Is the Only Messiah': Three Supernatural Stories by Yitskhok Bashevis", in: Seth L. Wolitz (ed.), *The Hidden Isaac Bashevis Singer*, Austin, 2001, pp. 107-116

¹⁸ אברהם נוברשטרן, כאן גר העם היהודי: ספרות יידיש בארצות הברית, ירושלים, 2015, עמ' 178-197

he focused on the two novels *Neshome Ekspeditsyes* and *Farloyrene Neshomes*, and not on the recurrence of this theme in Zinger's short fiction.

The most recent contribution to the discussion on Zinger's AN figure is David Stromberg's article published in 2016 and based on his doctoral thesis,¹⁹ in which he investigates Zinger's philosophical worldview through the distinction between different narrative levels in the novel *Der bal-Tshuve*. Stromberg refers to both Yiddish and English versions, as both include a narrative frame in which the author-narrator encounters a character named Joseph Shapiro and listens to his story of penitence, but only the English version includes also an author's note by Isaac Bashevis Singer at the end. Stromberg considers this author's note to the English version not only a paratext, but also an additional narrative level.

As I could gather from these studies on Zinger, there is still a need for a comprehensive mapping of the AN stories. In the next chapters I will map them as fully as possible using thematic and structural description, followed by an analysis of their meaning as a unique and characteristic phenomenon in postwar Yiddish literature. This endeavor first requires placing the stories and their author in their historical context.

1.2 Historical Background: the Yiddish Author in America

Yitkhok Bashevis Zinger's death was not only the end of a long and prolific literary career, but also a symbolic event in the history of Yiddish culture in America, in which Zinger was the last

¹⁹ David Stromberg, "Rebellion and Creativity: Contextualizing Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Author's Note" to *The Penitent*", *In geveb* (June 2016). <https://ingeveb.org/articles/rebellion-and-creativity-isaac-bashevis-singer> (Retrieved October 10, 2017). See also: David Stromberg, *Narrative Faith: Structural Complexity and Moral Vision in Dostoevsky, Camus, and Singer*, PhD Thesis, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012-2013.

major Yiddish American prose writer. In the field of Yiddish studies, however, Zinger is remembered ambivalently as an author who earned Yiddish literature unimaginable reputation and success among non-Yiddish readers, but who also is considered to have possibly accelerated its decline by favoring the English versions of his work. Zinger's success as a Yiddish author in America at a time of Yiddish language and culture's decline calls for an examination of the historical circumstances of each of these processes. These will embed both the Yiddish AN figure in Zinger's stories as well as Zinger's self-perception as a Yiddish author in their underlying extra-literary reality.

Three historical factors had a major impact on the fate of Yiddish in the United States of America: (1) The practical cessation of immigration from Eastern Europe following the Immigration Act of 1924; (2) the rapid and successful integration of Jewish immigrants and their offspring into American society; (3) The annihilation of Eastern European Jewry by the Nazis during WWII. These factors have contributed to the weakened position of Yiddish, not only as opposed to the role of English in the immigrants' lives, but also in comparison to other immigrant languages in America.²⁰

Yitkhok Bashevis Zinger spent the majority of his life in the USA while American Jewry experienced the impact of these three factors to its fullest degree. The changes that the Jewish American community underwent were substantial in Zinger's literary career, although most of his creative education, drive and inspiration stemmed from his childhood and early adulthood in Poland, where was born in 1904 to an orthodox Jewish family.²¹ He spent his childhood and

²⁰ Joshua A. Fishman, *Yiddish: Turning to Life*, New York 1991 [the chapter "Yiddish in America" is reprinted from a 1965 essay], p. 95

²¹ Hadda 1997, p. 17

youth in the town of Bilgoray and in Warsaw.²² 1925 was the year of his literary debut as a Yiddish author,²³ and within a decade he achieved enough material success and critical acclaim to allow him to immigrate to America and settle in New York City as a permanent contributor to the *Forverts*, the Yiddish daily newspaper. In fact, he was following his famous older brother's footsteps, the author Y. Y. Zinger, who had already settled there to work for the *Forverts*, and who later engineered his little brother's immigration.²⁴

Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger received his visa nearly a decade after immigration to the US was restricted. Despite being a latecomer, he was a rather privileged immigrant thanks to his older brother's success. Therefore, although 1924 marked the beginning of "a prolonged period of unease for Jews in the United States",²⁵ in the long run Zinger was not badly affected by the Immigration Act of 1924. Perhaps it even worked to his advantage in achieving occupational stability, since the number of his possible competitors was not increasing as rapidly as in the period of mass immigration.

To an outside viewer it seems as if Zinger had all the sufficient pre-conditions to quickly integrate in the local Jewish intellectual community as a Yiddish American author, since he wrote for a mass circulated newspaper holding a mainstream political position, which was identified with the New York-based Jewish labor movement.²⁶ However, his first decade in the US was full of hardships. He reported being underpaid by *Forverts* and feeling out of place whenever he arrived there to submit his articles.²⁷ In addition, for the next decade he experienced

²² Ibid., pp. 54-55

²³ Ibid., p. 61

²⁴ Ibid., p. 78

²⁵ Eli Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses to Modernism: New Voices in America and Eastern Europe*, New York 1994, p. 110

²⁶ Ibid., p. 132

²⁷ Hadda 1997, pp. 84-85

a creative crisis and did not write any fiction. The origin for this crisis was mostly a difficulty to incorporate the new immediate surroundings and its language into his Yiddish prose, as he described in his 1943 essay titled “Problems of Yiddish Prose in America”: “Yiddish literature is a product of the ghetto with all its virtues and faults, and it can never leave the ghetto”.²⁸

In his first years in America Zinger hadn’t imagined ever to be translated into English, and considered this kind of success something only his older brother is capable of achieving.²⁹ This reality changed radically in 1945, after the unexpected death of Y. Y. Zinger the previous year, as Yitskhok marked his return to the literary world with *Di familye mushkat*,³⁰ a historical family saga deeply informed by autobiographical elements. This was also his first work published in English translation, in 1950.³¹ Despite insisting on shortening the novel and inserting changes in the translation to make it more accessible to non-Jewish readers, the American publisher Alfred A. Knopf perceived the translation of this work as an act of preserving and commemoration for a world that had ceased to exist.³² Here it is necessary to place the translation of *Di familye mushkat* in the broader context of Yiddish literature in America as part of a “growing amount of [Yiddish to English] translation in the fifties and sixties”, as described by the renowned editor and scholar Irving Howe in *World of Our Fathers*, his comprehensive recounting of Jewish lives in America. It is also important to note Howe’s reservation in this matter: “yet no one could suppose that this brought about a genuine revival of Yiddish literature”.³³

²⁸ "צחק באשעוויס, "פראָבלעמען פֿון דער ייִדישער פּראָזע אין אַמעריקע", סבֿיבֿה 2 (1943), ז' 9; Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Problems of Yiddish Prose in America (1943)", trans. by Robert H. Wolf, *Prooftexts* 9, no. 1 (1989), p. 10.

²⁹ Hadda 1997, p. 88

³⁰ Serialized in *Forverts*, November 17, 1945-May 1, 1948

³¹ Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Family Moskat*, translation by A. H. Gross and Nancy Gross, New York, 1950

³² Jan Schwarz, "“Nothing But a Bundle of Paper”: Isaac Bashevis Singer’s Literary Career in America", in: Marion Aptroot et. al (eds.), *Leket: Yiddish Studies Today*, Düsseldorf 2012, p. 193

³³ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: the Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*, London 1976, p. 452

The English translation of *Di familye mushkat* was not a commercial success, but soon Zinger realized the immense potential of being translated into English, and this realization continually propelled the rest of his career even at a time of no “genuine revival of Yiddish literature”. 1953 is often regarded as his breakthrough year in terms of work published in English translation, made possible by Saul Bellow’s rendering of the 1945 story “Gimpl Tam” (Gimpel the Fool). Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, who were highly intent on including it in their pioneering anthology *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories* (Cleveland and New York 1953), convinced the successful Jewish American author Saul Bellow to translate the story. Since Bellow was reluctant to devote much time to the work, Greenberg read the story aloud to him while he typed the English translation on the spot.³⁴ The story was then published in the May-June 1953 issue of the journal *Partisan Review*³⁵ and later in the anthology edited by Howe and Greenberg.

The same method of a translation, which incorporated typing based on oral transmittance, was later used by Zinger himself. His was a form of self-translation, or, in the words of his publisher Roger Straus, “super-editing”.³⁶ Zinger worked with various translators, mostly women who did not know Yiddish. As they were sitting together in his living room, he would dictate the English translation while reading from his published texts in *Forverts* and the translator would type the English version with few corrections.³⁷ Zinger may as well have worked on his self-translations on his own and sent them to an editor afterwards. But the reason he insisted on having a female translator present was the feeling of prestige or simply pleasure he wished to achieve by

³⁴ Hadda 1997, p. 130

³⁵ Isaac Bashevis Singer, “Gimpel the Fool”, trans. by Saul Bellow, *Partisan Review* 20, no. 3 (May-June 1953), pp. 300-313. Available online: <http://hgar-srv3.bu.edu/collections/partisan-review/search/detail?id=284025> (Retrieved October 11, 2017).

³⁶ Jonathan Rosen, “The Fabulist: How I. B. Singer translated himself into American literature”, *The New Yorker*, June 7, 2004: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/06/07/the-fabulist> (Retrieved October 11, 2017).

³⁷ Florence Noiville, *Isaac B. Singer: A Life*, translated from the French by Catherine Temerson, New York, 2006, pp. 106-108; Ruth Whitman, “Translating with Isaac Bashevis Singer”, in: Irving Malin, *Critical Views of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, New York, 1969, p. 46

surrounding himself with young women,³⁸ as well creating a public persona of a writer adored by women.³⁹ Although this information on Zinger is often regarded as salacious gossip irrelevant to academic discussion, I believe it is important to include it here as an example of how Zinger ~~strived~~ strived to fictionalize his own public image while simultaneously inserting his public image into his fiction.

Another reason for using mainly female translators who did not know Yiddish was Zinger's fear of being overshadowed by his translator (hence his reluctance to commission more translations from Saul Bellow or even to express any gratitude towards him, although "Gimpel the Fool" was his first text that was well accepted in English).⁴⁰

In 1974 Zinger won his second National Book Award for the short story collection *A Crown of Feathers*. This award meant not only an acknowledgement of his work in English translation, but also acceptance as an American writer: "I am glad to get this award testifying to the fact that I am considered an American writer, even though I write in Yiddish",⁴¹ he said in his acceptance speech. According to Zinger's biographer Janet Hadda, this statement proves that "Yitskhok Bashevis had lost the competition with Isaac Bashevis Singer".⁴² However, when he received the Nobel Prize four years later and earned the ultimate acknowledgement as an international author, he opened his acceptance speech⁴³ with a passage in Yiddish and thus evoked Yitskhok Bashevis in front of a non-Yiddish speaking audience.

³⁸ Noiville, p. 105

³⁹ This view was expressed by several former translators interviewed in the documentary film "The Muses of Isaac Bashevis Singer" (2014), directed by Shaul Betser and Asaf Galay. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4298366/> (Retrieved October 11, 2017).

⁴⁰ Noiville, p. 93; Hadda 1997, pp. 130-131

⁴¹ Quoted in: Ibid., p. 163

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ <http://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=1517> (Retrieved October 12, 2017).

One can interpret this late gesture, coming from an author who never sought to promote Yiddish culture for its own sake, as Zinger's way of pleasing the Swedish Academy, who in fact rewarded him for being anything ~~other than~~ ^{but} international. This became clear in the announcement of the 1978 winner of the Nobel Prize for literature: "[Zinger's work describes] the world and life of Eastern European Jewry [...]. Its language was Yiddish – the language of the simple people".⁴⁴ Anita Norich analyzed Zinger's choice to speak Yiddish at the event of receiving the Nobel Prize as his tongue-in-cheek way to accept the view of Yiddish as parochial and therefore worthy of being mocked, and simultaneously as an elaborate joke on the Swedish Academy's ignorance, demonstrating that although they are "too refined for such a folksy language" ~~who~~ ^{which} was never spoken at the Nobel Prize event, it is nonetheless incomprehensible to them. By reversing the joke to a different subject, Zinger ~~put Yiddish in its place~~ ^{elevated} as a "newly canonized language [...] of modern literature".⁴⁵

Oddly enough, the ultimate approval of Yiddish as a legitimate modern language came only after the prolific creation in this language had almost ceased to exist. This may seem like a paradox, though it can be explained otherwise: the rise in the status of Yiddish had probably occurred not in spite of the dwindling number of its active speakers, but rather as a result of its rapid decline.

This shift manifested itself within Zinger's readership as well, and the Holocaust was the main event that separated ~~between~~ the periods of anonymity and success in his career: before the 1950s he had readers only in Yiddish, and was well accepted as a young author but not nearly as esteemed as his older brother; After the Holocaust the number of his belletristic writings published in Yiddish and translated into English increased tremendously, and he became very

⁴⁴ Quoted in: Hadda 1997, p. 164

⁴⁵ Anita Norich, *Writing in Tongues: Translating Yiddish in the Twentieth Century*, Seattle, 2013, p. 55

known and honored among his readers in English, like almost no other Yiddish author before him. Thus, Zinger's overall prestige as a Yiddish writer increased throughout his career, but mostly as a Yiddish writer translated to English.

In order to understand his different reception in the two ~~different~~ languages, one must consider the *two kinds of addressees* and the change they went through, inspired by the influence of the three main events in the history of American Jewry.⁴⁶ In general, the Yiddish addressee feels a sense of familiarity when reading Zinger's work. This reader has background in Jewish religion and customs and a basic knowledge in classic Hebrew, and although his taste in literature is rather traditional, he is enriched with Slavic cultures and languages. As opposed to the Yiddish reader, the English addressee of Zinger's writing will observe Yiddish culture as exotic, even if he himself is of Jewish origin^f. Too many particular elements of Eastern European Jewish lives will alienate him from the text and would require explanation in the form of footnotes.⁴⁷

Joshua (Shikl) Fishman's socio-linguistic studies on American Jewry show that the difference between the two addressees is a generational one: in particular his 1965 study on contemporary individual and family patterns in Yiddish secular circles shows that the first generation of immigrants may speak English outside as well as at home, but still consumes Yiddish culture and supports it.⁴⁸ Although the demographic data Fishman examined proved an increase of over two million in the Jewish population in the US between 1920 and 1960 (and in spite of immigration restrictions, still many of them were foreign born), the percentage of Yiddish speakers dropped immensely.⁴⁹ The second generation he mentions roughly overlaps ^{with} the children of immigrants

⁴⁶ See p. 11 in this chapter

⁴⁷ Monica Adamczyk-Garbowska, "I.B. Singer's works in Yiddish and English: the Language and the Addressee", in: Hugh Denman (ed.), *Isaac Bashevis Singer: His Work and His World*, Leiden, 2002, pp. 18-19

⁴⁸ Fishman, 1991 [1965], p. 122

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130 (Table 7)

who arrived before WWI. Those clung “to Yiddish attitudinally more than behaviorally since it represents the Jewishness they know best”.⁵⁰ Hence, favoring Yiddish is not a sufficient reason to actively consume Yiddish literature and culture, even though the second generation can understand and speak the language. The third generation “never experienced a natural Yiddish environment”, and therefore cannot use it actively although they can reach a substantial level of understanding it.⁵¹

The positive change in the attitude towards Yiddish was documented in the 1960s mostly among the second generation, then middle aged. After WWII this group changed its view of Yiddish as an “ugly” and “grammarless” language and began to view it “more positively and nostalgically”. Among the Jews of the third generation, the increase in general esteem of Yiddish is reflected in “less emotion” but even “greater respect” they express towards the language.⁵² In a further study Fishman explained the continuation of this shift as a result of the growing interest in ethnicity in the late 1960s, which led to inserting Yiddish as an academic subject in American universities.⁵³

According to Fishman’s findings of studies conducted in Zinger’s most active decades (the 1960s and the 1970s), his readers in English translation were most likely Jews of the second and third generation, who had some connection to Yiddish culture but would not consume it directly. This characterization of his audience may explain the fact that so many AN stories were translated into English, many of them not long after their first publication in Yiddish. These readers were not only interested in literature translated from Yiddish, but also in reading about Yiddish culture itself in form of fiction. Some of the AN stories even portray characters of young

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 124

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 125

⁵² Ibid., p.143

⁵³ שיקל פישמאן, "די סאציאלאָגיע פֿון ייִדיש אין אַמעריקע: 1960-1970 און ווייטער", די גאַלדענע קייט 75 (1972), ז' 124

Jews who learn Yiddish so they can read Yiddish literature, for example “Ir zun” (no. 38; 1972; Her Son, 1973) and “Der sod” (no. 63; 1983, The Secret, 1985).

The historical event that mostly propelled the rise in the status of Yiddish was the Holocaust, not only because the annihilation of the creators and consumers of mass Yiddish culture turned it into an exclusive and therefore prestigious field, but also because it gave the use of Yiddish a symbolic meaning of commemoration. Jeffrey Shandler coined the term “postvernacularity” to describe a mode of using Yiddish in the post-Holocaust era, driven exactly by this new symbolic meaning of the language. In the postvernacular mode, “having an affective or ideological relationship with Yiddish without having command of the language” is becoming more primary than the instrumental mode of using Yiddish for everyday communication.⁵⁴ Furthermore, “the symbolic value of Yiddish in its postvernacular mode also *requires* translating”.⁵⁵

In light of Shandler’s concept, it is essential to ask what role did Zinger’s stories about a Yiddish author writing after Yiddish ceased to be employed by the majority of secular Jewish Americans, as well as their translations to English, play in the postvernacular Yiddish culture: Could the AN stories be of interest had they not been written in a time of concern for to future of Yiddish? ~~Had~~ they been written at all? Could they stand on their own even if they had been written originally in English, or did they become popular because of the increasing symbolic value they had as being translated *specifically from Yiddish*?

According to the historian of American Jewry Eli Lederhendler, Yiddish literature after the Holocaust, especially in English translation, could function mainly commemoratively:

⁵⁴ Jeffrey Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture*, Berkeley, 2006, p. 4

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94 (my emphasis)

those who read these works [written after the Holocaust and translated from Yiddish] in English translation – as they became increasingly available in the 1960s and afterward – took it almost for granted that even prewar works, or postwar writing set in the prewar world, were primarily documents of *preservation* rather than inventive creations in their own right. The use, in other words, of Yiddish literature for American Jewish readers, lay in its ‘pastness’ rather than any other artistic quality.⁵⁶

The same “pastness” may have been found in Zinger’s writing as well, claims Lederhendler, but Zinger refused to let his writing embody this role, and instead he problematized the image of the Jewish past and the need to reach catharsis by evoking it. Instead, “in reaching beyond the commemorative function of his art, he alienated some readers and fellow writers [...] but he opened up an avenue of discourse that he thought more universal”.⁵⁷

The alienation some of Zinger’s readers may have felt, most likely those who could still read his work in Yiddish, can be explained as a result of a general discomfort regarding any translation from Yiddish. Anita Norich defined the problem of translation that “becomes, potentially, a form of obliteration”: “Translation from Yiddish can feel like a capitulation to history. It implies that these texts will no longer be read by anyone in their original”. Therefore, translation can become a form of betrayal in Yiddish.⁵⁸ Perhaps this was the view of Yiddishists, as Jonathan Rosen referred to Zinger’s colleagues at the *Forverts* in an article published in the *New Yorker* magazine in celebration of Zinger’s centenary: “In their view, Bashevis [...] wasn’t really a Yiddish writer at all, just an Anglicizing panderer who, through cunning and longevity, had snookered an ignorant American readership into believing that his concocted shtetl stories were

⁵⁶ Eli Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970*, Syracuse, 2001, pp. 69-70

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 75

⁵⁸ Norich, 2013, p. 43

the real thing”.⁵⁹ As opposed to the “Yiddishists”, in that same article Rosen expresses his own positive view of Zinger as an American author, or more accurately, “a Yiddish master who became one of the great American writers of the twentieth century”.⁶⁰

Although being accepted as an American writer was indeed an achievement in Zinger’s view as well, it is also possible that he maintained his “loyalty” to Yiddish precisely by means of his English translation, as Norich argues:

The arbiters of cultural politics demand that translators be faithful to the Yiddish originals if they are to avoid taking part in the obliteration of the culture they purport to know; translators, in turn, suggest that their work will turn the historical tide, not only preserving Yiddish culture, but helping it proliferate.⁶¹

Following a similar logic, Zinger’s French biographer Florence Noiville considered his intense involvement in the translation of his own work “a form of ultimate fidelity”.⁶²

In terms of fidelity to Yiddish, not only questions of translation arise, but also other aspects of literary life are relevant. The connection between the Yiddish author and his audience in the first half of the twentieth century was close, direct and intimate:

The reader was quick to respond to thematic allusions, the writer felt a strong responsibility to the needs of his reader [...]. They lived in the same tenements, worked in the same shops. At least in its early decades, immigrant Yiddish culture was an organic culture, without avant-garde estrangement or aristocratic pretense,

⁵⁹ Rosen 2004; For more information on negative views on Zinger and the resentments towards him among American Jews and Yiddishists in particular, see: Schwarz 2015, p. 211; Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking*, Stanford, 2010, p. 182; see especially: Yankev Glatshetyn, “Singer’s Literary Reputation”, in: David Neal Miller (ed.), *Recovering the Canon: Essays on Isaac Bashevis Singer*, Leiden, 1986, pp. 145-148.

⁶⁰ Rosen 2004

⁶¹ Norich 2013, p. 43

⁶² Noiville, p. 100

wrote Howe.⁶³ This changed already before Yiddish culture ceased to be a mass culture, as the golden era of the proletarian Yiddish writers had passed, and literary groups such as “Di yunge” and “in zikh” began to form.

Zinger was active long after this period of transition, but his specific living circumstances, namely his residence in NYC, allowed him to maintain a rather intimate connection with his readers in Yiddish. In the decades after WWII this was an environment still strongly characterized with a strong sense of “Jewishness”.⁶⁴ “Whether one identified with some vague Jewishness-at-large or participated more actively in the production or consumption of Jewish culture, New York seemed to make this possible”,⁶⁵ wrote Eli Lederhendler in his study of New York Jews in the decades 1950-1970. The variety NYC offered the consumer of Yiddish culture was still relevant in Zinger’s most prolific years, including theater, lectures, book publishers, magazines and newspapers.

Zinger explicitly expressed his connection to this Jewish environment: “I have to live in New York. To a degree, it reminds me of Warsaw, mainly, I suppose, on account of the many Jews. I see my people here. Here there are still Jews who speak my language and even if they don’t speak it, their parents did, and thus they know a little”.⁶⁶ This quote appears in a conversation with Zinger from 1975, proving that even at this late period in Yiddish cultural history, he could recognize in NYC a resemblance to the center of Yiddish literary life he inhabited in his home land. In the same conversation Zinger referred to his personal connection with his readers: they often send him letters in response to his publications in *Forverts*, call his home number, come by

⁶³ Howe, pp. 440-441

⁶⁴ Lederhendler 2001, p. 64

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 65

⁶⁶ Isaac Bashevis Singer, “The Yiddish Writer and His Audience”, in: Bernard Rosenberg and Ernest Goldstein, *Creators and Disturbers: Reminiscences of Jewish Intellectuals in New York*, New York, 1982, p. 29

the thousands to his lectures and approach him afterwards with warm responses.⁶⁷ And finally, although in the first years of Zinger's career in America he stated that it is impossible to write prose about Jewish lives there in Yiddish, he nevertheless *did write about it* since the late 1950s,⁶⁸ and most extensively in his AN stories. By incorporating in his stories a character of a Yiddish author very similar to himself, he did not only express his strong connection with his Yiddish readers, but also immortalized this late form of Yiddish literary life in the form of fiction.

What characterized these stories, except for depicting a major part of Zinger's biography? In order to understand the artistic meaning of these stories in Yiddish and in English beyond their historical and cultural context, I will use literary theories concerning the structure of fiction.

1.3 Literary Theories

Implementing narratological theories in the field of Yiddish Studies is by no means a novelty: in the 1970s Dan Miron used them as a framework for his inquiry of Yiddish literature in the nineteenth century in the now classic book *A Traveler Disguised*;⁶⁹ Chone Shmeruk as well used theories of narrative fiction such as Wayne C Booth's,⁷⁰ precisely in his abovementioned essay on Zinger's monologues as a narrative strategy.⁷¹ Although these theories may be considered out of fashion and irrelevant in today's post-poststructuralist era, I believe they can still serve literary scholars, at least as an initial approach to a corpus that has never been systematically researched.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32, 36

⁶⁸ The first example is the serialized novel *Shotns ibern hadson* (1957-1958; *Shadows on the Hudson*, 1997).

⁶⁹ Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century*, Syracuse NY, 1996 [1973]

⁷⁰ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago and London, 1961

⁷¹ Shmeruk 1986 (for the original 1975 version of the essay in Yiddish, see fn. 5 in the introduction)

Furthermore, these theories were developed and popularized in the same decades in which Zinger has published his author-narrator stories, and therefore may be the least anachronistic theoretical approach to their literary analysis.

In this section I will focus on narratological terms concerning voice and narrative levels, defining and differentiating between the real author, the implied author, the narrator, the narratee (if there is one in the story), the implied reader and the real reader. I will use an assortment of definitions from different scholars which I selected based on their relevance to stories narrated in the first person, and explain only the terms which I found helpful for analyzing the structure of the AN stories. The basic scheme I use in order to refer to the different participants in the act of narrative communication is the one Seymour Chatman illustrated in his 1978 book *Story and Discourse*:⁷²

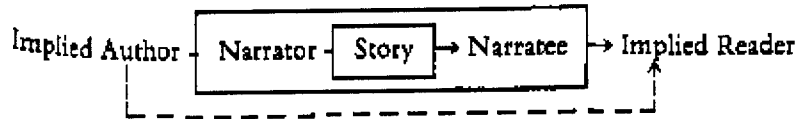


Illustration no. 1: The Participants in the Narrative Communication

The *implied author* is a term Wayne C. Booth coined to describe an implied image of the *real author* constructed by the reader of a specific text. This construct is always separate from the real author and functions as his “second self”.⁷³ The term *narrator* does not require explanation. However, it is important to distinguish carefully between the narrator and the implied author. Booth speaks of *dramatized* and *undramatized* narrators to illustrate the distinction between, on the one hand, any narrator that refers to himself as “I” and therefore indicates even the most

⁷² Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1978, p. 151

⁷³ Booth, pp. 70-71

minimal representation of the act of narration, and, on the other hand, a narrator that appears transparent and therefore creates the illusion of unmediated speech. According to Booth, in any narrative that does not introduce its narrator clearly, the narrator is undramatized and therefore considered identical to the implied author.⁷⁴

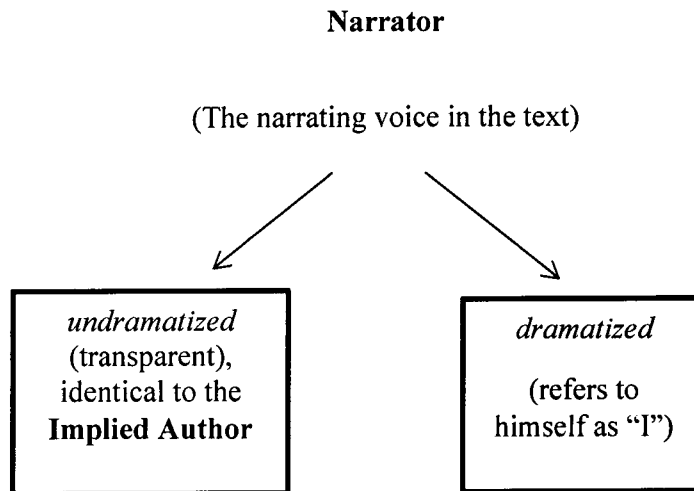
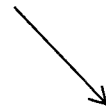


Illustration No. 2: The Authorial Participants in the Narrative Communication

The similarities of the real author, the implied author and the (dramatized) narrator (who is a character of a Yiddish author) in Zinger's AN stories may lead to a one-dimensional reading of this corpus as nothing more than autobiographical. In fact, as I will show in the next chapters of this work, the ambiguity that emerges from these stories calls precisely for a careful structural analysis in order to reveal their complexities.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 151-152

Narrator



*dramatized as a
Yiddish author, and
therefore may be
mistaken as the
Implied Author*

Illustration No. 3: The Author-Narrator in Zinger's Stories

In general, the narrator's relation to the story, which is placed at the core of the narrative-communication situation (see Illustration No. 1), is a function of the difference between *fabula* and *sujet*. These two terms, originating in Russian Formalism, were defined by Chatman as "the sum total of events to be related in the narrative" (*fabula*) and "the story as actually told by linking the events together" (*sujet*).⁷⁵

Both implied author (as an undramatized narrator) and the dramatized narrator are capable of arranging the *fabula* in a particular *sujet*, while corresponding to the different *narrative levels* in the text. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, based on concepts and terms previously developed by Gérard Genette, laid out the primary distinctions between narrative levels: the outmost level is the one that is not part of any story and only concerned with the narration of the story itself,⁷⁶ which Genette refers to as the *extradiegetic* level,⁷⁷ i.e. the level external to the *diegesis*.⁷⁸ The level directly subordinate to the *extradiegetic* level is the *diegetic*, or *intradiegetic* level, in which the

⁷⁵ Chatman, pp. 19-20. There are more detailed terminologies describing events and their sequence in narrative fiction, but since those are outside the scope of this research, this basic binary model will suffice here.

⁷⁶ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London and New York, 1992 [1982], p. 91

⁷⁷ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, Ithaca, NY, 1980 [1972], p. 228

⁷⁸ The term *diegesis* refers both to the (fictional) world in which the narrated events occur and to the act of narrating itself (as opposed to showing or enacting) (Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Aldershot, 1988, p. 20).

events themselves occur.⁷⁹ If the characters within the diegesis participate in an act of narration themselves, their narration constitutes a second degree narrative, hence a *hypodiegetic* level.⁸⁰ It is also possible to recognize a *hypo-hypodiegetic* level in a story, and so on in infinite regress.⁸¹ In many of Zinger's AN stories, the characters who encounter the protagonist add a hypodiegetic level as they tell him about extraordinary events that occurred to them or others.⁸²

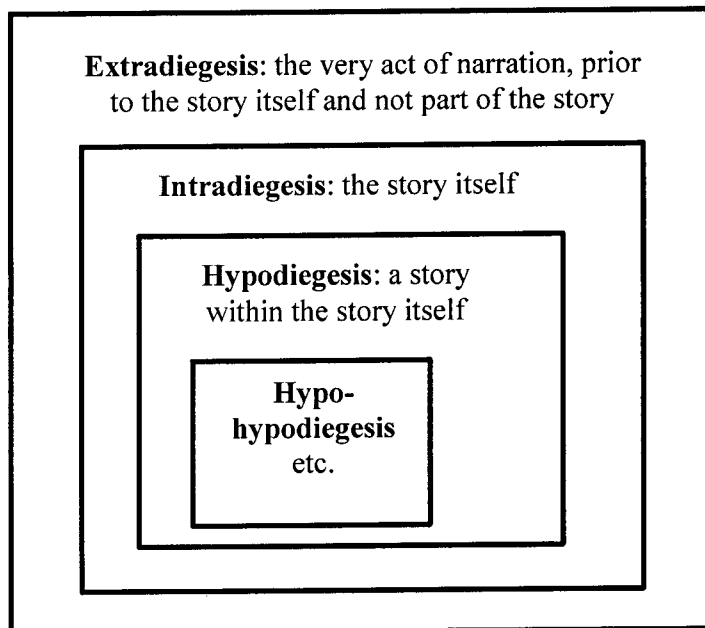


Illustration No. 4: Narrative Levels

Rimmon-Kenan details the different functions hypodiegetic narratives may have in relation to the narratives in which they are embedded: the *actional function* comes into play whenever the very act of hypodiegetic narration is significant as an event in the higher, intradiegetic level; the *explicative function* provides background or reason for the events narrated at the intradiegetic

⁷⁹ Rimmon-Kenan, p. 91

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 91-92

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 91

⁸² Shmeruk grouped these stories as "confessional" (Shmeruk 1986, p. 113)

level; the *thematic function* forms an analogous relationship between the intradiegetic and the hypodiegetic narrative levels.⁸³

The aforementioned narrative levels can also be applied to the narrators themselves, and thus describe their relation to the diegesis and their role in the arrangement of *fabula* and *sujet*. Furthermore, to indicate their extent of participation in the story, one can apply the term *heterodiegetic* for a narrator who does not participate in the story he narrates, and the term *homodiegetic* for a narrator who takes any part in the events narrated by him.⁸⁴

The same distinctions regarding the narrator also apply to the narratee, “the agent addressed by the narrator”,⁸⁵ whether the narratee is dramatized in any way as a character or merely by being implied as a part of a narrative situation. Often the narratee-character is used by the implied author as a device to inform the real reader how to perform as the *implied reader*.⁸⁶ Just as the implied author, the implied reader is always present⁸⁷ as a construct the real author maintains as he is orienting the text towards him and his competence as a reader. As for the real reader, the construct of the implied reader he encounters within the text further shapes his readerly competence.⁸⁸ The interplay of the implied author and the implied reader will unfold here in relation to Zinger’s work and its audiences, and also thematically, as two constructs informing the characterization of the author and his readers in the AN stories.

⁸³ Rimmon-Kenan, p. 92

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 95

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 104

⁸⁶ Chatman, p. 150

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Rimmon-Kenan, pp. 117-118

Chapter 2: General Description of the Author-Narrator Stories

2. 1 Defining the Author-Narrator Corpus

An AN story by Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger can be identified when it meets the following criteria:

(1) It is told in the first person. As mentioned, in narratological terms this means that the narrator is dramatized and refers to an “I”; (2) The first-person narrator can be identified as a Yiddish author living in America, either simply by stating his occupation or by implying it in various ways, e.g. mentioning the presence of manuscripts or regular communication with newspapers, publishers and readers. The degree of implication can be very minimal. The most extreme example of implying that the narrator is also a Yiddish author is the story “Der zun” (no. 3 in **Appendix A**; 1961; *The Son*, 1962),⁸⁹ in which the reader can infer – based only on publicly known biographic details on the implied author, mentioned also regarding the narrator – that the implied author and the narrator are merged. However, not every story in which biographical details from the implied author’s life coincide with such details on the narrator can be defined as an AN story (for example, the story “Gest in a vinter-nakht”),⁹⁰ and certainly not any of the autobiographical texts, which were never defined by Zinger as fiction. The reason for this division is that the non-AN stories which are nonetheless embedded in an autobiographical setting are not written from the point of view of an American Yiddish author, hence the implied author is constructed slightly differently.

⁸⁹ For each story I will mention, the following details will appear in brackets: reference to the number of the story in Appendix A, where I included all bibliographical information of both Yiddish and English versions; year of first publication in Yiddish; Title in English and year of first publication in English. When referring to the same story more than once, I will only mention its Appendix number in brackets.

⁹⁰ 1969 ,22 ,21 ,15 ,14 , פֿעברואַר, פֿאַרווערטס,

2.2 The Emergence of the Author-Narrator Figure

Writing fiction in the first person was in fact a late development in Zinger's artistic trajectory. "Zaydlus der ershter", published in 1943, was his first attempt at placing a dramatized narrator at the first, extradiegetic or intradiegetic, narrative level. These first attempts were interwoven with a series of stories told by a non-human narrator, titled "Dos gedlenkbukh fun yeytser-hore".⁹¹ Since this original embarking on a common narrative strategy, Zinger has preferred the first-person narrative, or the "monologue form" in Shmeruk's words,⁹² up until the final stages of his literary career. Thus, although the first person unmistakably characterized Zinger's late work, it is important to remember that this was not an obvious choice for him, but a conscious one, as was the choice of a human narrator.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, writing fiction that takes place in America was also not an obvious choice for Zinger. However, the AN stories began appearing shortly after he first inserted his American reality into his fiction.⁹³ The first story in the AN corpus that I could trace was "Dos feygele" (no. 1; 1960; *The Bird*, 1964), in which the intradiegetic and homodiegetic narrator is surprised by a small bird, a parakeet perhaps, that enters his NYC apartment. Only after his neighbor arrives at his apartment to look for her bird, he discloses the fact that he is a Yiddish author. This fact is also the closing segment of the story, in which the AN discovers that the neighbor is his avid reader:

איך בין א יידישער שרייבער – זאג איך, דערשטוינט פֿון די אייגענע ווערטער. כ'האָב מיך נאָך קיין מאָל נישט באַצייכנט מיט דעם דאָזיקן באַרימערישן טיטל. זי הייבט אויף דעם בליק.

⁹¹ Shmeruk 1986, p. 104

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 104

⁹³ See p. 23 here

- וואס איז איינער נאָמען?

כ'זאָג איר דעם נאָמען.

עפעס אין איר פנים ענדערט זיך.

⁹⁴(p. 125) - כ'ווייס, כ'קאָן אייך. כ'לייען אַלץ וואָס איר שרײַבט. דאָס איז ווירקלעך אַ מאָדנער צופאַל!

As the story ends shortly after this dialogue, the reader lacks any information on the AN's occupation and oeuvre, except that he is a NYC Yiddish writer such as the implied author Yitskhok Bashevis. Unlike Zinger himself in 1960, the AN is not yet accustomed to the title "Yiddish author". This discomfort is not apparent in any of the later stories. Even in stories in which the AN tells in retrospect about his days as a young Yiddish author in Warsaw (see, for example, "Der tants", no. 32; 1970; The Dance, 1971) he maintains the perspective of an established writer narrating in hindsight instead of embracing the beginner's perspective.

The second story in the AN corpus is "Aleyn" (no. 2; 1960; Alone, 1962),⁹⁵ in which the narrator does not appear predominantly as an author, but since the story is set in an exterritorial environment, details on his daily life are hardly mentioned at all. Only the reference to scattered manuscripts (p. 175 in the book edition) in the narrator's Miami Beach hotel room during a storm is an indication of his occupation. Otherwise the story does not involve any meta-poetic references, and the reader will most likely regard the narrator as an author figure because he is

⁹⁴ When quoting from the AN stories I will not use footnotes, but rather page numbers in brackets. Unless noted otherwise, these will refer to the Yiddish version that appears first on the table in Appendix A. The references to the page numbers in Yiddish will not appear when quoting from *Forverts*, as *Forverts* page numbers not included in the bibliographical information in Appendix A (See: Notes to Appendix A, p. 85 here).

⁹⁵ The first two stories were initially published in the same year and in literary journals, therefore I looked closely at the dates of their publication: since "Aleyn" (no. 2) was printed in the November issue of *Svive* in 1960, I can conclude that it was published after "Dos feygele" (no. 1), which was published in the second 1960 issue of the tri-monthly journal *Di goldene keyt*. I am not certain that the order of publication is very significant when it involves texts published in the same year. It is possible that the order of writing was reversed, and that the order of publication did not match it for various extra-literary circumstances.

unnamed and does not disclose any details on himself that conflict with those known about the implied author. The third story is the abovementioned “Der zun” (no. 3).

All further AN stories are easily traceable as such from their very beginning, and often involve a predominant meta-poetic dimension, whether because their plot is deeply connected the act of writing, other writers and figures from the literary scene, or because of straightforward meta-poetic comments expressed by the AN and often by his readers as well.

2.3 The Different Publication Circumstances in Yiddish and in English

As one can learn from the information gathered in Appendix A, most AN stories appeared first in *Forverts* or in the Yiddish literary journals *Di tsukunft* and *Die goldene keyt*. Afterwards they were published in their English version in a magazine (most frequently in *The New Yorker*, but also in many Jewish oriented American magazines such as *Commentary*), which then followed a publication in one of the short story collections in English translation. As Zinger’s career as an American Yiddish author progressed, the time period between the Yiddish and English publications grew shorter.⁹⁶ The AN stories published since 1985 (no. 68 ff.) were printed only in their English version (except for “The Missing Line” (no. 72), which is based on part of a non-fiction series published in the *Forverts*).⁹⁷

Several stories mentioned in Appendix A were never translated into English (“Dos farloyrene vayb”, no. 7, 1965; “Der hoykher”, no. 13, 1967; “Di emese gelibte”, no. 22, 1969). As I mentioned in the introduction, there may be more AN stories in the *Forverts*, but tracing them will require a more comprehensive bibliographical research and access to materials currently not available in Israel. Two stories were translated in Zinger’s lifetime, but published in *The New*

⁹⁶ Ilan Stavans, “Note on the Texts”, in: LOA vol. 1, p. 779

⁹⁷ For more information on this case see pp. 54-57 in Chapter 3

Yorker magazine only posthumously thanks to the work of David Stromberg. “Iyev” (no. 31; 1970; Job, 2012) was only partly translated into English, and Stromberg had translated the story himself based on fragments found in Zinger’s archive;⁹⁸ “Die temes” (no. 6; 1965; Inventions, 2015)⁹⁹ was translated fully in Zinger’s lifetime, but not published until Stromberg had recovered the typescript from the archive and brought it to publication. It is not clear whether these two translations were rejected by book publishers and editors of literary magazines or whether Zinger himself has decided to leave them unpublished. In either case, it is likely that the fact that both of these stories deal with Communism played a part in the decision not to publish them in English during the Cold War.

Only four AN stories were reprinted in Yiddish in book form: “Aley’n” (no. 2), “Di kafeterye” (no. 14; 1968; *The Cafeteria*, 1968), “Af a shif” (no. 28; printed in book form with the title “a fensterl in toyer”; 1970; *A Peephole in the Gate*, 1971) and “Iyev” (no. 31).¹⁰⁰ This was due simply to the overall small number of Zinger’s Yiddish publications in book form: only four volumes of his short stories were published in Yiddish, whereas his English story collections amount to 13, not including five more volumes of children’s stories. As to why the AN stories in particular did not make up a high percentage of the Yiddish stories published in book form as opposed to their prominence in the English publications, it is possible that Zinger did not try to popularize the vast majority of the AN stories in Yiddish precisely because he was aware of his negative reception among Yiddish critics and was reluctant to overly state his care for his literary persona in his fiction as well.

⁹⁸ See Stromberg’s Translator’s Note in *The New Yorker*, August 13, 2012: <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/job> (Retrieved October 27, 2017).

⁹⁹ See Stromberg’s conversation on the story with *The New Yorker* fiction editor: Deborah Treisman, “This Week in Fiction: Isaac Bashevis Singer”, *The New Yorker*, January 19, 2015: <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fiction-this-week-isaac-bashevis-singer-2015-01-26> (Retrieved October 27, 2017).

¹⁰⁰ In the short story collections: *מעשיית*, יצחק באשעוויס, 1963; *ניו-יאָרק*, 1971; *דער שפיגל אין אַנדערע דערציילונגען*, ירושלים, 1975; *פֿון הינטערן אייזן*, תל-אָבֿיבֿ, 1971; יצחק באשעוויס-זינגער, *דער שפיגל אין אַנדערע דערציילונגען*, ירושלים, 1975.

A large variety of translators is signed on the English versions of the AN stories, thus it seems that Zinger did not consider their particular style and structure to be fitting one specific translator or another. The translator whose name most commonly appears at the end of these stories is his nephew Joseph Singer, except for the author himself, who is either signed on the stories as a co-translator or as a single translator.¹⁰¹ Few translations are uncredited.

In the author's notes to the story collections in English, signed Isaac Bashevis Singer or I. B. S., Zinger often refers to his large degree of involvement in the translation process. He first mentions his role as a co-translator briefly in the author's note to *The Séance and Other Stories* (1968).¹⁰² In later collections Zinger increasingly states his part in the English translations. In the author's note to *A Crown of Feathers and Other Stories* (1973) he takes credit as the main translator of his work into English, while developing his view of these translations as a "second original": "Most of them [the stories printed in this volume] were translated by me with the help of my co-translators. Since in the process of translation I do quite a lot of editing and revising, I do not exaggerate when I say that English has become my 'second original language', paradoxical as these words may sound".¹⁰³ Over a decade later, Zinger's author's note to *The Image and Other Stories* (1985) indicates his perception of the English translations as practically the final versions of his work in Yiddish: "The English translation is especially important to me because translations into other languages are based on the English text. In a way, this is right because, in the process of translation, I make many corrections".¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, in the same author's note he discusses the importance of his connection to the Jewish past at length, not

¹⁰¹ Zinger appears as a single translator once in a translation from 1974 ("Di avanture", no. 34; 1971; *The Adventure*, 1974). Otherwise this phenomenon occurred only in translations published in the 1980s.

¹⁰² I. B. S., "Author's Note" (for *The Séance and Other Stories*), in: LOA vol. 1, p. 534 [1968]

¹⁰³ I. B. S., "Author's Note" (for *A Crown of Feathers and Other Stories*), in: LOA vol. 2, p. 271 [1973]

¹⁰⁴ I. B. S., "Author's Note" (for *The Image and Other Stories*), in: LOA vol. 3, p. 292 [1985]

failing to mention his rootedness in the Yiddish language as well: “A writer should never abandon his mother tongue and its treasure of idioms”.¹⁰⁵

As to the differences between the two versions of the AN stories, I did not find any essential structural changes when comparing the Yiddish versions to their English translations, and the layering of narrative levels remained the same. Only few of the changes in minor details are worth mentioning with regards to the AN phenomenon, as I will do later on.

The last difference in publication circumstances I will discuss here is with regard to Zinger’s pseudonyms. While the AN stories appear under different pen names in Yiddish – 22 under the name Yitskhok Bashevis, 19 under Yitskhok Varshavski and 23 under the synthetic name Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger – in English they are all unified under the name Isaac Bashevis Singer. Zinger admitted that while he initially used the pseudonym Varshavski for his less polished work, there was no essential distinction between his work published under the name Varshavski and his work published under Bashevis.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, and although the question whether Bashevis and Varshavski were pseudonyms in the full sense of the word is debatable, I believe that his choice never to publish under his real name Yitskhok Zinger – even long after he became known regardless of his brother Y. Y. Zinger – is significant to the discussion on the young Zinger’s authorial persona, which I will pursue in the next chapter.

As to the general characterization of the AN stories, there is no correlation between their themes or structure and the specific pseudonym Zinger used for their publication in Yiddish. More than anything, the different pseudonyms are indications of different stages in Zinger’s career: Yitskhok Bashevis appears from the early 1960s until the mid-1970s, Varshavski appears

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 291

¹⁰⁶ Shmeruk 1986, p. 108

alongside Bashevis in the short but extremely productive time period between the late 1960s and early 1970s and Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger is a product of his success in English translation, appearing in his Yiddish publications as early as 1966¹⁰⁷ and almost exclusively since 1974. In the *Forverts* publications one often finds an additional copyright notice in English: either under the Yiddish pseudonym Varshavski (where it says, for example in the story “Di bord” (no. 30) “copyright 1970”) or under the synthetic Yiddish name Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger (where it says, for example in the story “Der matematiker” (no. 47), “Copyright Isaac Bashevis Singer”). This certification is perhaps a signal for future publishers in English, as well as an indication that at least for the AN stories, it was well known that Varshavski is the same author as the widely translated Bashevis.

2.4 Thematic Characteristics

2.4.1 Time and Place

As mentioned above, in each of the AN stories the point of view of a Yiddish author living in America is either clearly stated or implied. In both cases, the essential fabula can be set either within the AN’s contemporary reality or in his past as a young Yiddish author in Warsaw. The former group consists of his current residence in the USA (usually in NYC. See, for example: “Shkheynim”, no. 39; 1972; Neighbors, 1972), the meeting places of the Yiddish speaking community (primarily Café Royal, as in “Die emese gelibte”, no. 22) or his many trips and lecture tours he takes as a world renowned Yiddish author to countries such as Argentina and Israel (“Hanka”, no. 44; 1974; Hanka, 1974); Another subset of stories places Warsaw in the

¹⁰⁷ See: “Die parti” (no. 12; 1966; There are No Coincidences, 1979)

1920s and 1930s as a city of rich Yiddish culture, though not enough to provide its various artists and *kultur-tuers* with a sufficient income. Most AN stories taking place in Warsaw is the Yiddish Writers' Club as the plot's home base, with its multitudes of eccentric figures. Some of these are real persons Zinger had known in his lifetime.¹⁰⁸

Often the Warsaw AN stories have an epilogue set more or less in the present time of the AN's perspective, usually referring to what was lost as a result of the annihilation of Polish Jewry. In these epilogues the time and space difference becomes irrelevant, as the AN comments that the memories of the Old World are kept vividly in his mind, as if they were still taking place right before his eyes. "Dos hayker!" (no. 45; 1974; Two Markets, 1975) begins as a story from the AN's days as a *cheyder-yingl* in Warsaw about a remarkable figure from the market in Krochmalna street; in the epilogue, many years later the AN visits a market in Tel Aviv with his Hebrew translator,¹⁰⁹ and for a moment he is almost certain that it is the same Warsaw market: איך בין סני אויף דער קראַכמאַלנע גאַס, סני אין ארץ-ישראל. Perhaps the presence of the translator is key here, as a symbol for the ability to inhabit two cultures at the same time.

In the same way, the AN stories set outside of Eastern Europe, from the 1940s onward but mostly from the 1960s, always refer to the AN's and his Yiddish readership's past. This additional layer of time and space is usually added by means of hypodiegetic narration of one of the characters who encounter the AN. These are often his readers, who just like him, immigrated to the USA from Poland and tell him about their past (See, for example: "Der sod"; no. 63; 1983; The Secret, 1985); they could also be certain people the AN knew back in Warsaw ("A por", no. 43; 1973; A Pair, 1973).

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 3 here, pp. 54-57.

¹⁰⁹ In the English version he mentions her name, Meirav Bashan (LOA vol. 2, p. 750), but this name does not match any of the names signed on Zinger's published Hebrew translations.

The common theme for both groups of AN stories – the current ones set in North and South America or in Israel – is Yiddish speaking communities. Zinger had explicitly discussed his choice of characters in his author's note for *Passions and other Stories*:

I deal with unique characters in unique circumstances, a group of people who are still a riddle to the world and often to themselves – the Jews of Eastern Europe, specifically the Yiddish-speaking Jews who perished in Poland and those who emigrated to the U.S.A. [...] While I hope and pray for the redemption and the resurrection, I dare to say that, for me, these people are all living right now. In literature, as in our dreams, death does not exist.¹¹⁰

Thus, in his stories in general and in the AN stories in particular, Zinger seeks to eliminate the confines of time and place, even those imposed by man's mortality. Aside from simply bringing stories from the past into his writing, he also defies the distinction between the living and the dead by means of supernatural elements.

2.4.2 Supernatural Elements

The AN stories often bring together the living and the dead using not only the mentioning of ghosts and other occultist phenomena, but also an ambiguous perception of reality that precedes any supernatural occurrence. Often the AN displays grave, all-encompassing doubt within his own stream of consciousness, and thus sets the ground for an ambiguously supernatural occurrence. Such occurrences may not seem as realistic, had they been described by a narrator with a firm sense of reality. This technique appears already since the first AN story, "Dos feygele" (no. 1). The bird which enters his apartment, bring with it an unusual series of unrealistic assumptions to the AN's mind: אפֿשר ברענגט דער פֿויגל מיר אַ גרוס פֿון אַ וועזן, וואָס קאָן זיך אַנדערש נישט באַהעפֿטן מיט יענע וואָס וואַנדערן אַרום אויף דער ערד? דאָס רעשטל ניקטערקייט, וואָס איך פֿאַרמאָג

¹¹⁰ I. B. S., "Author's Note" (for *Passions and other Stories*), in: LOA vol. 2, p. 563 [1975]

ווען איך גיי אַרום, איז איצט אויסגערונען. ס'קערט זיך אום דער גלויבן אין שדים, שרעטלעך, לאפּיטוטן, לאַנטיכער, ווען איך גיי אַרום, איז איצט אויסגערונען. ס'קערט זיך אום דער גלויבן אין שדים, שרעטלעך, לאפּיטוטן, לאַנטיכער, (p. 121). These assumptions anticipate the story's ending, as the neighbor, a black-eyed woman, knocks on his door and announces that she is the owner of the bird. In the final paragraph the AN notices the date on the calendar lying on his table, and realizes that the date is the death anniversary of a black-eyed woman he knew a long time ago (p. 125). Although the reader receives no clear answers as to the neighbor's true identity and is left pondering whether she is a ghost, the ambiguousness of the situation is sufficient for creating an uncanny atmosphere and thus informing the interpretation of the whole story beyond the limits of realism.

A similar uncanniness dominates "Hanka" (no. 44). As the story progresses, Hanka, the AN's half-cousin who hid in an alcove in Warsaw throughout the war and later settled in Buenos Aires, describes herself only half-metaphorically as a living dead: יאָ, כ'בין געלעגן אין קבר און אַז (p. 80). The AN comments that he had already heard many refugees repeat Hanka's deeply pessimistic words: יענע וואָס זענען געשטאַנען ביי דער שוועל פֿון טויט, בלייבן טויטע. איך בין אויך אַ טויטע, דעריבער - - (p. 86). The AN, on his part, implies a certain doubt regarding Hanka's flesh and blood existence, as she suddenly appears and disappears in his hotel room, or in a lecture hall where he is invited to speak. These events coincide with the AN's general lack of trust in his surrounding reality, which culminates in panic as he continues his lecture tour in Argentina: וואָס וואָלט געווען ווען ס'ווייזט זיך אַרויס אַז מײַן ריזע קיין אַרגענטינע איז פֿאַקטיש געווען אַ ריזע אויף יענער וועלט? (p. 83). Moreover, the AN, such as Zinger himself,¹¹¹ deals with occultist themes in his own literary work: one of his lectures held there is titled "ליטעראַטור און דאָס איבערנאַטירליכע" (p. 82), and in another event, even though he

¹¹¹ Also, unlike most AN stories, in "Hanka" the narrator mentions his name, which is Yitskhok in the Yiddish version (pp. 76, 85) and Isaac in the English version (LOA vol. 2, p. 580).

reads out a humorous sketch unrelated to mysticism, the audience relentlessly brings up these subjects, which apparently the AN is known for: יענע נאכט האָבן די רײכע יידן אין מאַר-דעל-פּלאַטאַ (p. 88). אַרויסגעוויזן אַן אומגעוויינטלעכן אינטערעס צו טעלעפּאַטיע, דיבוקים, פּאַרגעפּילן, גילגולים

Zinger promoted his notion of the supernatural also in his meta-poetic essays. In an essay published in the first years of the AN stories and signed by Bashevis – perhaps in order to imply that Zinger intended this text to be a manifesto for his own writing as well – he rejects pure realism, since in his view, it often leads to uninspiring prose: דער רעאַליזם וואָס האָט געזאַלט באַרייכערן די ליטעראַטור, האָט זי אין אַ זין פּאַראַרעמט דערמיט וואָס ער האָט באַשטימט באַלד פֿון אָנהייב אַז דאָס ¹¹² Yet in fact, Zinger does not reject realism entirely, but calls for a new kind of realism, one that would not stick exclusively to naturalism, and instead incorporate the more mysterious parts of reality: – אויב עס דאַרף אַנטשטיין אַ נײַער רעאַליזם – אָדער רופֿט אים ווי איר ווילט – דאַרף ער גיין אין דער ריכטונג פֿון דער צײַטונג-כראַניק, פֿון די ביזאַרע פֿאַלן וואָס ווערן געגעבן אין די ווערק פֿון פּסיכיאַטריע, פּסיכאָאַנאַליז, סעקסאַלאָגיע, קרימינאָלאָגיע, אַקולטיזם. צו קאַנען מאַכן דערצײלן די סאַמע אויסטערלישע פּאַקטן, מוז דער שרײַבער מאַכן אַ סוף צו דעם מעטאָד פֿון נאַטוראַליסטישן אונטערבעטעכץ און פֿון רעאַליסטישן התנצלות המחבר. ער מוז אָפּטאָן פֿון זיך דעם ווילדן פּחד פֿאַר מעלאַדראַמע און דער אמת איז אַז אַ שרײַבער ¹¹³ Furthermore, he sees his vision of this “fantastic realism” as more truthful, more realistic than any realism that ignores the mystic nature of reality: דער אמת איז אַז אַ שרײַבער ¹¹⁴ וואָס אַנטלויפֿט פֿון דעם איראַציאָנאַלן אַנטלויפֿט פֿון רעאַליזם אין ריכטיקן זין פֿון וואָרט

י. באַשעוויס, "ווען דער רעאַליזם פּאַרשטעלט דעם וועג צום אמת (אַ פּאַר באַמערקונגען וועגן דעם גורל פֿון 'איזמען' אין דער ליטעראַטור)", סביבה 3 (1961), ז' 6

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 7

¹¹⁴ Ibid. (my emphasis). See also Zinger's personal account of the supernatural element as a dominant presence in his life since early age, also published at the same time of the AN stories' emergence: "אַ פּאַר ווערטער", יצחק באַשעוויס, "אַ פּאַר ווערטער", וועגן זיך (פֿון אַ רעדע), סביבה 6 (1962), זז' 12-21.

Aside from the fact that most AN stories involve some extent of occultism, they often consist of a meta-poetic discussion about the supernatural elements in Zinger's prose as well. I will discuss this point extensively later in this chapter, as I will explain the concept of the *implied corpus*.

2.4.3 The Fate of the European Jews

In the author's note to the English translation of his novel *Enemies: A Love Story* Zinger remarks bitterly: "Although I did not have the privilege of going through the Hitler holocaust, I have lived for years in New York with refugees from this ordeal".¹¹⁵ Accordingly, in the AN stories the AN never brings stories of living as a Jew under the Nazi occupation other than when they are framed as another character's hypodiegesis. The AN in this case is only a listener these characters can confide in as a fellow Jew, but who has not had the same experience as they did, since he left Eastern Europe earlier. Nevertheless, these hypodiegetic narratives rarely amount to a detailed experience such as Hanka's in the aforementioned story (no. 44). More often, the characters point out their inability to speak about these experiences, as Maks Flederbusch in "Di parti" (no. 54; 1976; A Party in Miami Beach, 1979) not only summarizes his story of survival as indescribable in literature, but also implies that there are already enough published stories of these real experiences, which exist outside the realm of literature: אין אזא צושטאנד טוען זיך אויס די נשמות, און א נאקעטע נשמה האט נאך קיינער נישט באשריבן. [...] גיין, קיין שום גאון וואלט דאס נישט געקאנט באשרייבן.

יא, מעמווארן. אבער ווער דארף זיי? ס'זענען דא הונדערטער אזוינע ביכער, געשריבן פון איינפאכע מענטשן, נישט קיין שרייבער.

¹¹⁵ I.B.S., "Author's Note", in: idem, *Enemies: a Love Story*, New York, 1972, page unnumbered

In each of the AN stories there is at least one mention of the fate of the European Jews, not only as Hitler's victims but also Stalin's (see, for example, "Die eytse", no. 59; 1981; Advice, 1981, in which the poet Skharye Lentshner sets to the Soviet Union only to be liquidated there with the rest of the Yiddish writers).

The Holocaust is a central event in the AN stories even when it is by no means a part of its fabula; it is rather an event that had a great impact on the AN and his surrounding's world view, so much that it is impossible to think of reality the same way one has thought of it before. This crucial change is often connected to the aforementioned irrational nature of reality according to Zinger (or specifically Bashevis), and the AN tends to mention Hitler and the annihilation of the European Jews whenever he fails to make sense of reality. Even a relatively rational experience such as waiting for his Israeli son who comes for a visit in New York, induces a failed attempt to make sense of the Holocaust: כ'האָב מיר אָפּגעגעבן אַ רעכענונג אז אין דעם גאַנצן תּוהו-וּבּוהו הערשן פרעציזע געזעצן. [...] ערגעץ ווי אין די גריבער אין פּוילן וואָלגערן זיך נאָך קופּעס אַש פֿון די פֿאַרברענטע. אין דײַטשלאַנד ליגן איצט די געוועזענע נאַציס אין די בעטן, יעדער מיט זײַן צעטל מאָרדן, פּײַניקונגען, גאַנצע און האַלבע ("Der zun", no. 3, p. 314 in the book edition).

Following this logic, or more accurately, following the attempt to settle between logic and real events that defy logic, it is not surprising that the historic suffering of the Jews often finds its way into the AN stories by means of the supernatural elements. In "Bruder zshuk" (no. 4; 1965; Brother Beetle, 1979) the AN goes through another ambiguously supernatural experience on the roof of a Tel Aviv apartment building, and in the heavy heat and surrounding dirt he is trying to make sense of the State of Israel as a further punishment for the Jews who had not been annihilated in WWII. His friend Ester from Warsaw, who now lives in Israel, mentions earlier in

the story that the concept of life on earth as punishment for sins committed in a different sphere is something she had read in the AN's fiction. Ester also identifies with this concept: כ'האָב פֿון צײַט צו צײַט געלייענט דיניע זאָכן, כ'האָב גאַרנישט פֿאַרגעסן. כ'האָב אַלע מאָל וועגן דיר געטראַכט, אַפֿילו ווען כ'בין געלעגן אין דזשאַמבול¹¹⁶ און געזען דעם טױט. דו שרײַבסט ערגעץ, אַז זינדיקן זינדיקט מען אויף אַנדערע וועלטן און דאָ איז ס'גיהנום. בײַ דיר איז דאָס אַפֿשר אַ שרײַבעריש חנ'דל, אָבער ס'איז דער אמת.

The most discussed example for an AN story incorporating the Holocaust and the supernatural is „Di kafeterye“ (no. 14). The story opens with the AN's description of a Broadway cafeteria, which serves as a meeting place for the *landslayt* of the former Yiddish cultural republic in Eastern Europe. Many of them are also his readers. From the beginning of the story, it appears that the atmosphere of the cafeteria and the daily lives of its frequent guests are immersed in death. This is true also for Ester,¹¹⁷ one of the AN's readers. She tells him איר זענט מײַן שרײַבער! and that she had read his work already in Poland and later in the פֿעמפֿס (p. 46 in the book edition). Her experiences in WWII determine her current condition, and much like Hanka (in “Hanka”, no. 44), she describes herself as a living dead. The fact that the AN incorporates occultism into his work is why she can confide in him regarding a true supernatural experience she had: as she passed by the cafeteria at night, she saw Hitler inside, surrounded by men in white robes and swastika armbands. This event had happened the same night the cafeteria burned down, and it is unclear, especially given the macabre nature of the story since its very beginning, whether it was merely a dream or indeed a supernatural event. The AN cannot offer his reader – neither the fictional Ester, nor Zinger's implied reader – any solution, and the question about the

¹¹⁶ Zinger's mother Basheva and his brother Moyshe died in Jambul, Kazakhstan, after escaping or being evacuated (See: Treisman, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fiction-this-week-isaac-bashevis-singer-2015-01-26>).

¹¹⁷ Ester is a recurring name in the AN stories, as several others, such as Sonye, Moris and Menashe. It is possible that Zinger used those in order to create a certain type of a recurring character. However, investigating this assumption is outside the scope of this research.

nature of this event remains unanswered at the end of the story. Moreover, the ending of the story opens further questions: Time passes, and the AN hears that Ester had committed suicide, but he is not entirely certain that the man who told him this spoke of the same Ester. Afterwards the AN thinks he may have seen Ester on the street, but this may be another woman, or a ghost. He concludes: יא, מתים דרייען זיך אַרום אויף בראַדוויי (p. 71).

This statement ends the story in an ambiguous note: it is unclear whether the AN implies that Broadway, the area where the cafeteria once stood, is literally some kind of purgatory, or if he simply means that the sufferings of these Jewish immigrants consumes their current lives so much that they can be considered as living dead. Jan Schwarz interpreted “Die kafeterye” as a highly pessimistic story about the Jewish immigrants’ lives as fully immersed in death, and about Yiddish literature’s dying readership. In this scheme, the AN’s “literary production becomes part of the same vicious circle of passivity, forgetfulness, and death that characterizes his Yiddish readers in the world”, as he turns his encounter with Ester into literary material.¹¹⁸ Unlike Schwarz, I believe it is necessary to view the historical and cultural context of the story not only in light of its supernatural elements – which mostly intensify its macabre reading – but also its interaction with the meta-poetic level of the story. I will discuss this aspect in the next chapter, in the context of the *implied corpus*.

2.4.4 Love and Sex

The prominence of romantic affairs in prose is not exclusive to Zinger’s writing, but rather some of its uniquely erotic turns had led to his salient (and often negative) reputation among Yiddish literati. Some critics were outraged by the explicitness of his fiction, which was considered even

¹¹⁸ Schwarz 2001, p. 114

pornographic at the time, and deemed it unfitting neither as appropriate reading material for the Yiddish readership, nor as a reliable description of Jewish life: ווי אזוי קען מען עס מסביר זײַן אזא מין קראַנקהאַפֿטיקייט אין דער ייִדישער ליטעראַטור און מענטשן זאָלן נאָך רעדן וועגן דעם ווי אַ שאַפֿונג פֿון אַ קינסטלערישן מענטשן? דאָס איז דאָך טאַקע באַמת טראַכטונגען און געדאַנקען ניט נאָר פֿון שדים, נאָר אויך פֿון די קען מען עס איבערזעצן.¹¹⁹ This critique, published by Yosl Kohn in 1962, was titled ערגסטע פּערזענלעכע אויף ייִדיש, which indicates how foreign this kind of fiction appeared within Yiddish literature. This rejection of the Bashevis-Varshavski prose¹²⁰ was one of the main reasons for his rejection as a serious Yiddish author by other prominent Yiddish literati. Even before Zinger became widely popular among English readers, it seemed that he was often excluded from Yiddishist circles not for pandering for a non-Jewish audience, but for conceptual and artistic differences, most likely connected to the subject of sexuality in his work as well.¹²¹

Zinger's controversy with other Yiddish authors and critics was not reflected directly in the AN's character, but rather within meta-poetic statements within the AN stories, which can be interpreted as implied answers to his harsh critics. Perhaps for this reason Zinger attempted to distance the figure of the AN from the implied author immediately connected to him, or simply express his counter-criticism through the speech of other characters. For example, "The Interview" (no. 62; 1983; unavailable in Yiddish) follows the young AN's encounter in prewar Warsaw with a poet named Machla Krumbein, who published a book of erotic poems titled *The Naked Truth*. She tells the AN she knows that the Yiddish Writers' Club would not accept her for

¹¹⁹ י. ק. [יאָסל קאָהן], "קען מען עס איבערזעצן אויף ייִדיש", *אינדזער דור* 2 (מאַרץ-אַפּריל 1962), ז' 32.¹¹⁹ See also a critique printed almost two decades later on one of the English story collections, still condemning the issue of sexuality in his work: אליהו שולמאַן, "גייע זאַמלונג דערציילונגען אויף ענגליש פֿון י. באַשעוויס זינגער", *פּאַרווערטס*, דעצעמבער 2, 1979, ז' 6, 15.

¹²⁰ Elyezer Kuperman expressed another negative critique of Zinger's prose on similar grounds, and referred to him as Bashevis-Varshavski: 100-96 ז' 50 (סעפטעמבער 1967), ז' 100-96.

¹²¹ הלל ראָגאַף, "יצחק באַשעוויס", אין: ל, *דער גייסט פֿון פּאַרווערטס: מאַטעריאַלן צו דער געשיכטע פֿון דער ייִדישער פּרעסע אין אַמעריקע*, ניו-יאָרק, 1954, ז' 233.

her scandalous poetry (LOA vol. 3, p. 330), which printers as well as bookstores had already refused to accept (p. 334). However, the “naked truth” she exposes in front of the AN in her temperamental hypodiegetic narratives is not salacious in its essence, but violent. In her monologue she also criticizes writers of fiction as misrepresenting the truth about love: “I had begun to read novels, and realized the writers were all brazen liars. They kept on beating around the bush and they never came to the point. They babbled without end about love. There is no love” (p. 331). Krumbein’s view in “The Interview”, expressed through a hypodiegetic narrative, coincides with Bashevis’ articles on realism as a literary genre that should be based on facts – even when the facts are confusing or raise discomfort – rather than maintaining literary conventions of what appears truthful.¹²²

In “Di avanture” (no. 36; 1971; The Adventure, 1974) the erotic element emerges as Ana, the wife of a printer who prints a new literary journal the AN edits, offers the AN to become her lover. She explains that her husband had decided that he would be an appropriate choice for this role because of the erotic content of his literary work:

- פֿאַר וואָס האָט ער אויסגעקליבן מיך?

- אַ, צוליב אייער שרײַבן... [...] איר האָט דערמאָנט אין אייערס אַ סקיצע אַז איר האָט גערן פֿרויען וואָס זענען עלטער פֿון אייך (p. 44).

Although the story is titled “Di avanture”, Ana’s suggestion involves a lot more than embarking on a sexual adventure. She tells the AN that the idea of taking a lover is in fact a way to cope with the loss of their son. As the AN considers the offer, the supernatural element emerges: the dead son appears in his dreams, and the fear it raises in him, along with the general discomfort

י. באַשעװיס, "רעאַליזם ווי אַ מעטאָד און אַ וועלט-אַנשויונג", *די צוקונפֿט* 49, נומ' 2 (פֿעברואַר 1944), 111-115 זז'.

regarding the offer, cause him to swear by the bible that he would not become Ana's lover. Instead of straightforwardly rejecting her, the AN resorts to avoiding the couple altogether, even if this would cost him the publication of the literary journal. Like many other stories by Zinger, among them AN stories as well, the theme of unfaithfulness and love triangles arises. However, the fact that it arises as a result of the AN's writing but is not put into practice, could function as an answer to critics such as Kuperman, who believe that stories with sexual content may corrupt the Yiddish readers.¹²³ In addition, the course of events here, which perhaps develops contrary to the readers' expectations as it is contrary to the content of the AN's work, is a signal that the protagonist-narrator, the implied author and certainly the real author are not to be confused.

What is common to all of the abovementioned thematic characteristics of the AN stories is that Zinger deals with all of them *from a meta-poetic point of view*. After several brief comments on the language in these stories, I will further develop their meta-poetic aspects using a narratological analysis.

2.5 Language

The AN's Yiddish, mostly as he is commenting on the extradiegetic level but also in the intradiegetic one, is rather neutral in comparison with the hypodiegetic narrators. His language is embedded in traditional Jewish upbringing, but its simple syntactic structures and use of clear terms – even for ambiguous concepts, such as *יענע וועלט* or *יצר-הרע* – is intelligible also to readers who were never *cheyder-yinglekh*. As to the English versions, the AN's language can be described similarly; In English as in Yiddish, the AN does not attract excessive attention as a

¹²³ מיט תאוהדיקע גוזמאדיקייטן אפליקירט ער [באשעווייס-ווארשאָווסקי] דאָס צום ייִדישן מענטש, מיטן דערפֿירן אים אין תהום פֿון זנות (Kuperman, p. 98).

dramatized narrator, since he only appears as such – although he is often a homodiegetic narrator, i.e. narrating events which occurred to himself, his narratees (which, in this case, are identical to his implied readers) are undramatized as characters in the story and therefore his narration is undramatized as well.¹²⁴

The case is different with regards to the hypodiegetic narrators. These are mostly his readers, who encounter the AN and identify him as a suitable narratee for their personal stories, but also fellow Yiddish writers. Their dramatized speech often represents oral storytelling and resembles other, non-AN stories, which include dramatized narrators.¹²⁵ For example, the phrase איצט הערט א מעשה recurs in stories set in the Old World with no extradiegetic narrator such as “Di nodl”,¹²⁶ but also in AN stories such as “Ir zun” (no. 38; 1972; Her Son, 1973) and “Moris un Timna” (no. 55; 1976; Morris and Timna, 2004).

The AN tends to refer the reader’s attention to the hypodiegetic narrators’ Yiddish speech as part of their overall characterization. For example, the reader who phones the AN in “Der sod” (no. 63; 1983; The Secret, 1985) speaks יידיש מיט אלע טענער און בייטענער פֿון די לובלינער קאָנטן קאַנטן.

The AN stories set in America are naturally full of Anglicisms. These are especially prominent in the hypodiegetic narrators’ speech, such as Sam Palka’s in “Eyn emese libe” (no. 42; 1973, Sam Palka and David Vishkover, 1974). This character’s monologue combines many English words,

¹²⁴ David G. Roskies expressed a negative view of this “neutrality” in the AN’s speech: “The syncopated and sententious folk speech of the Old World storytellers is absorbed by the rambling newspaper copy of Yitskhok Warszawski [...] – folk speech and news speech become the undifferentiated English of one ‘I. B. Singer’” (Roskies, p. 304). David Neal Miller also identified a dissolving of the borders between reportage and fiction, however not as a characteristic of Bashevis, Varshavski or Segal’s language but as a result of the blurred lines between facts and fiction in both genres (Miller 1985, p. 100).

¹²⁵ See also Shmeruk’s comment: “In this series of monologues of contemporary Jews, which take the form of confessions made to the author-narrator, there is a great deal of linguistic and stylistic variety” (Shmeruk 1986, p. 114). In fact Shmeruk had already applied the distinction between narrative levels in his research on the monologue techniques in Zinger’s fiction, however his conclusions were mostly related to Zinger’s style didn’t include an in depth literary interpretation, as I hope to accomplish in Chapter 3.

¹²⁶ יצחק באשעווייס-זינגער, “די באַדל”, אין: הג”ל 1975, ז’ 108

which indicate a high degree of integration for a Jewish immigrant (פּרײַוועט-סקולס, פּראָספּעריטי) (דזשולערי, p. 95) with the usual lively Yiddish speech. Furthermore, Sam Palka's hypodiegesis on his lover Chone-Bashe marks him as highly susceptible to the language of the Old World: זי רעדט און קראַסנאַסטאַוו (p. 98). In the English translation of this story and others there is no way to reflect the degree of integration of these characters by means of dramatized speech.

Stories taking place in the State of Israel occasionally reflect Modern Hebrew speech, as well as its uncanniness to the AN's ears. In "Bruder zshuk" (no. 5) the AN encounters a passerby¹²⁷ on the street in Tel Aviv and addresses him in English, and the passerby says "דבר עברית" as out of ideological rejection of foreign languages.

Finally, it is necessary to discuss the meta-poetic aspect of language in the AN stories as it emerges when describing the act of writing and its result. It is often described using pejorative language, both by the AN and by other characters, as פּאַטשקען ראַמאַנען ("Di parti", no. 54) or שרײַבערלעך ("Di aventure", no. 36, pp. 40-41) and Yiddish authors can be named שרײַבערלעך (Ibid., p. 40). The English versions also reflect the same belittling approach toward the act of writing by using the expressions "our pretentious writings" ("The Adventure", no. 36, LOA vol. 2, p. 796), "little scribblers" (ibid, p. 797), "to scribble novels" ("A Party in Miami Beach", no. 54, LOA vol. 3, p. 73).

¹²⁷ The passerby is elderly in the English version. He is also further described in English as a much more pleasant figure than in the Yiddish version: "There was fatherly reproach in his eyes, embedded in shadow, as if he knew me and had guessed my plight" (LOA vol. 3, p. 112).

Chapter 3: Narratological Analysis

3.1 The Implied Author vs. the Narrator

According to Wayne C. Booth's distinctions,¹²⁸ an undramatized narrator, is generally identical to the implied author, which is the real author's authorial persona as it is constructed by the reader. A narrator who reaches the minimal degree of intradiegetic and homodiegetic narration by referring to himself as an "I", on the other hand, qualifies as a dramatized narrator. Following these definitions, one can safely say that all of the AN stories are told by a *dramatized* narrator, and not by the *implied author*, whether it is Yitskhok Zinger, Yitskhok Varshavski or Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger, who were known among Yiddish readers, or Isaac Bashevis Singer, as he was uniformly presented to and constructed by Zinger's English readership.

The problem arises when the narrator is described using many details that are publicly known about the implied author. In this case, the most prominent of all is him being a Yiddish author living in America. Very few stories mention the AN's name, as if to maintain the ambivalence regarding the differentiation between the implied author and the narrator. In "Hanka" (no. 44) the AN introduces himself twice as "Yitskhok" (pp. 75, 85),¹²⁹ and in "Der madrekh" (no. 19; 1968; The Mentor, 1970) the AN mentions that the Jews he knows from Jadow call him "Itche" or "Itche the rabbi's" and that he has a pen name which the Warsaw Jews call him by (LOA vol. 2, p. 85).¹³⁰ However, this is a rare example of self-reference. It is important to note that the AN never refers to himself as Bashevis, nor as Zinger, as if to always maintain a degree of separation

¹²⁸ See: Chapter 1, pp. 24-25 here

¹²⁹ In English: "Isaac" (LOA vol. 2, p. 580).

¹³⁰ I did not have access to the Yiddish version of this story.

between the author signed on the stories, while, at the same time, revealing clear autobiographical elements in texts that are unequivocally presented as fiction: They either appear in the Yiddish press with the subtitle *dertseylung*, or in English story collections, that are visibly separate from Zinger's autobiographical volumes. Another story, which signals Zinger's wish to distinguish his authorial persona as implied author from his own personal identity, introduces the AN as Varshavski ("Antloyf fun tsivilizatsye", no. 40; 1975; *Escape from Civilization*, 1972). Although it is tempting to assume so, in this case Zinger did not create an identity between the implied author and the AN – this particular story is not signed by Yitskhok Varshavski, but by Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger.

In several stories the AN's name is mentioned, but it is different than the real author's or the implied author's name. For example Moris in "Die psikhische rayze" (no. 53; 1976; *The Psychic Journey*, 1976), Menashe in "Di parti" (no. 54) and the nickname Loshikl in "Der manuskript" (no. 51; 1975; *The Manuscript*, 1979). In "Di avature" (no. 36) the AN's character is unmistakably based on Zinger himself and what the reader constructs as the implied author Yitskhok Bashevis: he is a young author and an anonymous editor of a literary journal¹³¹ in prewar Warsaw. However, the name of the AN is only mentioned once, as the wife of the printing shop's owner, who is also responsible for the printing of the literary journal, invites the AN to their home. During this scene, the wife calls the AN הער גריינדינגער (p. 42), the same name as the AN in the novels *Neshome-exspeditsyes* and *Farloyrene neshomes*.¹³² The same Ahren Graydinger is evoked in "Die kafeterye" (no. 14), as the AN mentions that his *landslayt* at the

¹³¹ In the Yiddish version the journal is unnamed, and is only described as זשורנאלעכל (p. 40). In English its name is *Sproutings* (LOA vol. 2, p. 796).

¹³² Perhaps the name was misprinted in the Yiddish version of the story, since the name of the character in the novels is Graydinger and not Grayndinger. Also, in the English version of the story the AN's name is David Greidinger (as opposed to Ahren Graydinger in the novels), and he mentions it himself at the very beginning of the story (LOA vol. 2, p. 796).

cafeteria greet him by saying "Hello, Aaron!". However, this name appears only in the English version of the story (LOA vol. 2, p. 68).

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, in some AN stories there are only few details that disclose the similarity between the implied author and the narrator, however the fact that there are no other details which conflict with this notion is enough to determine their resemblance. This is the reason why scholars have commonly read the AN stories (as well as the novels) either as autobiographical or as semi-autobiographical writings¹³³ and did not analyze them using literary theories adequate for fiction. One may call this misinterpretation, or mishandling of the AN stories fiction, *The Autobiographical Fallacy*, borrowing Dan Miron's use of New Criticism terminology in his book *A Traveler Disguised*. Miron coined the terms "The Pseudonym Fallacy"¹³⁴ and "The Folkstip Fallacy"¹³⁵ to demonstrate how the character, narrator and authorial persona of Mendele Moykher Sforim was misunderstood as a direct representation of the author S. Y. Abramovitch. According to Miron's conclusions, it is important to regard the *real author*, Yitskhok Zinger, as separate from the *implied author*, i.e. the authorial persona he developed since the first stages of his career as Yitskhok Bashevis, later as Yitskhok Bashevis and Yitskhok Varshavski as well,¹³⁶ and finally as Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger, his synthetic pen

¹³³ For example, Edward Alexander mentioned in an introductory book about Zinger's oeuvre the AN stories as "thinly veiled segments of autobiography" (Edward Alexander, *Isaac Bashevis Singer*, Boston, 1980, p. 139). I would argue that Janet Hadda's choice to analyze the stories merely from a psychodynamic perspective derives as well from a reduction of the stories to their autobiographical dimension (Hadda 1985). See also, regarding *Neshome-ekspeiditsyes* and *Farloyrene neshomes*: Novershtern, pp. 178 -197; חנה שמערוק, "יצחק באשעוויס אויף די שפורן פֿון זײַן", אױטאָביוגראַפֿיע, די גאָלדענע קײט 115 (1985), ז' 14-27.

As mentioned, Shmeruk had dealt with the AN stories in his 1986 article about the monologue technique in Zinger's short fiction, where he described the AN stories as "quasi-autobiographical". However, he applied literary theories in his research and did not analyze them as mainly autobiographical (Shmeruk 1986, pp. 112-114).

¹³⁴ Miron 1996 [1973], pp. 130-168

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 169-202

¹³⁶ It is debatable whether D. Segal should also be included as one of his familiar authorial personas that are connected with him, the real Yitskhok Zinger, but not identical to him. This question depends on the extent in which the readers knew who is the writer behind the pseudonym D. Segal. As Novershtern remarks, already in 1954 Hillel

name, which followed the English publications as Isaac Bashevis Singer. And, of course, it is necessary to set apart these various implied authors from the various narrators in Zinger's stories, even as implied author and narrator seem interchangeable.

Zinger admitted that although Bashevis and Varshavski were initially separate authorial personas, they later became interchangeable.¹³⁷ However, this fact is not evidence that the border between different levels of narrative communication were also obscure in his writing. In an interview Zinger remarked: "A pen name is very important for a writer. It is a different kind of ego. It is a kind of second personality".¹³⁸

It is possible that Zinger's wish to write about real experiences in a fictional context led him to include in the AN stories many details which invite the reader to connect the first-person narrator to the actual Zinger, while some details contradict "publicly-known facts about Singer's person and oeuvre".¹³⁹ For example, the abovementioned "Der madrekh" (no. 19) includes Zinger's childhood nickname, important dates from his biography and other true pieces of information about him, but Bilgoray, the town in which he lived with his mother and his brother Moyshe before moving back to Warsaw, is replaced with Jadow. Other stories include only true details about the AN, except for his name.

It is true, however, that the AN stories blur the distinction between the autobiographical and the fictional. First, they often contain meta-poetic statements on this matter, such as in the story "Shkheyrim" (no. 38; 1972; *Neighbors*, 1972). The AN's neighbor, Moris Terkeltoyb, the

Rogof had confirmed that D. Segal's are in fact written by the same person who publishes as Bashevis, but this confirmation had been overlooked for years, at least by scholars (Novershtern, p. 643).

¹³⁷ Quoted in: Shmeruk 1986, p. 108

¹³⁸ Marshall Berger and Bob Barnhart, "A Conversation with Isaac Bashevis Singer", in: Irving Malin (ed.), *Critical Views of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, New York, 1969, p. 33.

¹³⁹ Miller 1985, p. 94

אז די מעשיות זיינע זענען אלע for the Yiddish press, assures the AN שרייבער פֿון די "אמתע פֿאסירונגען" אָפֿט ווען איך האָב געלייענט "די אמתע"; however the AN assures his implied reader: פֿאסירונגען" האָב איך איינגעזען אין זיי אז זיי קאָנען נישט זיין אין גאַנצן קיין פֿאַנטאַזיע. Here the non-fiction which the AN's colleague claims to be fiction, turns out as truthful. At the same time, Terkeltoyb's real life stories are made up of fiction: ער האָט אָפֿילו זיך נישט געשעמט צוצושרייבן צו זיין. ביאָגראַפֿיע פֿאַקטן גענומען פֿון ראָמאַנען אין דער וועלט-ליטעראַטור.

Second, in some texts the different publication circumstances of the Yiddish and the English versions may effect these distinctions, and the view of the AN stories in Yiddish and in English as one, though double corpus, may complicate them.

In my bibliographical research I have noticed the phenomenon of publishing certain texts as memoirs in the Yiddish press, and later republishing them as fiction in English magazines and in book form. The story "The Missing Line" (no. 72; 1988), published in book form only in English, is in fact an adaptation of one chapter in the memoir series *Figurn un epizodn fun literatn-fareyn*, which was published in the *Forverts* between 1979 and 1980.¹⁴⁰ The original Yiddish text was published as part of the chapter "Shrayber analfabetn", and continues another story of a strange coincidence in the Yiddish printing business: איצט אַן עפֿיזאָד וואָס האָט אויך אויסגעזען: ווי אַ רעטעניש. In the next paragraph Zinger introduces the protagonist of this real story, Yehoyshue Gotlib: איינער פֿון די עלטערע און חשובֿע זשורנאַליסטן אין שרייבערקלוב איז געווען ד"ר יהושע גאַטליב. גאַטליב האָט לאַנגע יאָרן געשריבן אין "היינט". ער איז געווען אַ ציוניסט [...] געהאַט אַ געפֿיל פֿאַר הומאַר און זײַנע אַרטיקלען זענען געוואָרן געלייענט און ציטירט. זײַן ליבלינג-אַרטיקל איז געווען זײַן פֿרײַטיקדיקער פֿעליעטאַן.

¹⁴⁰ This information doesn't appear in Roberta Salzman's bibliography nor in the notes to the LOA edition.

The English adaptation of this real story was presented as fiction in its first publication in the *Partisan Review*¹⁴¹ and shortly afterwards in book form, in the story collection *The Death of Methuselah and Other Stories*. In the English version there are clear signs of adapting the text from non-fiction to fiction: In the beginning there is an additional descriptive paragraph, in which the AN conveys the atmosphere of a late night at the Yiddish Writers' Club in Warsaw. The hypodiegetic narrator in the English version is the same Joshua Gottlieb, only presented differently: "the main feuilletonist of *The Haint* [...] president of the journalists' syndicate, a doctor of philosophy" (LOA vol. 3, p. 687) etc. Both descriptions match the real Yehoyshue-Heshl Gotlib's biography.¹⁴²

The setting implies that the AN was created in the image of young Zinger, and yet, he still gives away some hints about his age and place in the Warsaw literary scene: "He would not have invited a beginner like myself to his table, but there was no one else available at this hour, and he liked to talk and tell stories" (Ibid.). In the Yiddish version there is no setting for the story, as it is already dramatized as a memory of the *real author*. Only at the end of the memoir episode in Yiddish does Zinger mention hearing the story directly from Gotlib: ווען גאטליב האָט מיר דערציילט די דאָזיקע געשיכטע בין איך געווען אין אַ רעליגיעז-פּילאָזאָפּישער שטימונג און איך האָב געזאָגט צו אים: ערגעץ וווּ וועלן געלעזט ווערן אַ סך פֿון די רעטענישן וואָס זעען אונדז אויס היינט צו טאָג אומלייזבאַר. ד"ר גאָטליב האָט געטאָן אַ שמייכל און געזאָגט: In the English version, however, Zinger further developed the dialogue about the supernatural between Gottlieb and the young AN (LOA vol. 3, p. 692).

¹⁴¹ Isaac Bashevis Singer, "The Missing Line", *Partisan Review* 55, No. 2 (Spring 1988), pp. 205-210. Available online: <http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1988V55N2/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#159> (Retrieved November 5, 2017). One can infer that "The Missing Line" was published as fiction from its publication along with "The Last Gaze", a story told in the third person, and therefore more obviously fictional.

¹⁴² אַלױעלטלעכער ייִדישער קולטור-קאָנגרעס, "גאָטליב, יהושע-העשל", אין: לעקסיקאָן פֿון דער נייער ייִדישער ליטעראַטור, צווייטער באַנד, ניו-יאָרק, 1958, ז' 18-16

“Vanvild Kava” (no. 58; 1980) is a similar case, although here the text was not significantly adapted as in “The Missing Line”. In the same 1979-1980 *Forverts* series, the chapter “Vanvild-Kave” opens rather casually: איך האָב פֿרײַער דערמאָנט וואַנווילד-קאַווע און עס איז פֿדאי וועגן אים צו שרײַבן.¹⁴³ The English version, which was published as a fictional story in *The Atlantic* in 1980 and later in the 1982 volume *The Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, opens with a more meaningful tone: “If a Nobel Prize existed for writing little, Vanvild Kava would have gotten it” (LOA vol. 3, p. 260). The opening of the Yiddish version approaches the implied reader of Zinger’s regular *Forverts*’ contributions, while the English one is perhaps a reminder that the majority of Zinger’s readership in this language knows him primarily thanks to his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 1978. Otherwise the text had not gone through many changes in his English version. Unlike “The Missing Line”, the narration was not further dramatized as a hypodiegesis, of which the AN is the narratee, but rather it is focused on the intradiegetic and mostly homodiegetic narration of the Zinger-like AN.¹⁴⁴ One minor change is worth mentioning here: The title of the memoir chapter in the *Forverts* is titled “Vanvild-Kave”, and the *makef* indicates the compound of the pseudonym (Vanvild) and the real Shloyme-Leyb Kava’s last name, whereas in English the title “Vanvild Kava” seems like a first and a last name. This difference shows that the Yiddish implied reader may know which historical figure Zinger is referring, while for the English implied reader Vanvild Kava may as well be a fictional character.

In these two examples the different publishing circumstances in each language, and the different genres assigned to the texts, result in a different narrative structure. Therefore they require a

¹⁴³ Perhaps Zinger means his writing on Kava in a previous autobiographical series called *Fun der alter un nayer heym*, which he published under the pseudonym Yitskhok Varshavski between 1963 and 1965 (The parts about Kava appear in: 1964, מײַ 15, פֿאַרױערטס).

¹⁴⁴ Also, much more than in “The Missing Line”, the AN gives away details that help the implied reader identify him with the implied author: the fact that he is I. J. Singer’s brother (p. 260), his leaving for America in 1935 and publishing *Der sotn in goray* in the same year (p. 267) etc.

different narratological analysis: The serialized memoirs in Yiddish have no narrator, but only a real author; Whereas the English versions, published as fiction in magazines and short story collections, have an AN, which is clearly based on the implied author. In the English versions there is no final indication of its connection to the real author. In addition, since these versions are presented as fiction, the question regarding the truth value of the text is irrelevant, whereas in the Yiddish version such a question never arises, since it's already answered by its framing as memoir. It is likely that Zinger chose to publish these two texts as fiction because their enigmatic content fits a genre in which the truth value of the text is inherently obscure, and thus fits the rest of his fictional oeuvre, which is mostly embedded with supernatural elements.¹⁴⁵

3.2 Narrative Levels

As I've already shown in the thematic characterization of the AN stories, the hypodiegesis is a prominent component in their structure. Their function¹⁴⁶ with regard to the higher, intradiegetic level is usually the *actional* one, since often the main event in the story is the act of narration by a character other than the AN, whether it is an acquaintance in prewar Warsaw such as Berger in "Petsh" (no. 10; 1966; The Bond, 1985) or an avid reader of the AN in the second half of the twentieth century such as the stranger in "Koykhes" (no. 11; 1966; Powers, 1967). In these cases the hypodiegetic level is in fact more important than the intradiegetic level, which mostly provides a dramatic frame for the act of narration and positions the AN as a narratee.

Some hypodiegetic narratives have an *explicative* function, however the ambiguous quality of the AN stories that makes them suitable for the definition of fantastic realism problematizes their

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 2 here, pp. 38-41. There may be other interesting phenomena to be discovered in the context of publishing circumstances and their effect on the narrative structure and narratological analysis. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, the AN corpus requires a more comprehensive bibliographical research, which I could not conduct here.

¹⁴⁶ See the functions of the hypodiegetic narratives according to Rimmon-Kenan in Chapter 1 here, p. 27-28.

interpretation as simple “explanations”. For example, the hypodiegetic narrator Maks Blendever in “Matones” (no. 61; 1983; Gifts, 1985) tells the AN about his wife’s old obsession with sending gifts as an explanation to the bottle of wine the AN surprisingly received from her, but he concludes that his wife’s story may always remain a mystery: מײַן טעאָריע איז אַז קײַן שום זאַך קאָן קײנער נישט אויפֿקלערן. The *thematic* function, which constitutes an analogy between narrative levels, is never overtly present in the AN stories; In general, there is not enough information about the AN’s intradiegesis to connect him to the content of the hypodiegesis when there is one.

Stories with no hypodiegesis, or with no significant hypodiegetic level, can be divided into two categories: stories in which the AN is *homodiegetic* and takes part in the events that he narrates to a degree that there is no place for another subordinate narrator (such as in “A tog in kuni ayland”, no. 32 or “Aleyn”, no. 2); Or stories in which the narrator is *heterodiegetic* to a degree that he is almost extradiegetic, had he not been dramatized as a narrator that at least speaks in the first person and tells about past events from personal knowledge or memory. These are stories strictly about other characters, such as the abovementioned “Vanvild Kava” (no. 58) and “Der bashuldiker und der bashuldikter” (no. 64; 1983; The Accuser and the Accused, 1988), in which the AN recollects a rumor one Yiddishist had spread about another.

“Die temes” (no. 6) is an unusual example for a story in which the hypodiegesis is told by the AN himself. Since this hypodiegetic narrative – the development of a new story by the AN about Moris Krakover, a Communist who sees a ghost at a peace conference – is defined as fictional, one can say that it corresponds *thematically* with the intradiegetic narrative, which consists mostly of the AN’s recurring dream about being trapped in a dark, haunted basement. Unlike other AN stories, the hypodiegesis in “Di temes” is undramatized and heterodiegetic. This narrative situation is enabled by the fact that the hypodiegetic narrator’s role is taken by the

intradiegetic narrator. The possibility of a two-layered narrative situation that is almost entirely exclusive to the narrator's mind has to do with his characterization as an author. In this story, as well as in other AN stories with a more conventional structure, it appears that the presence of a narrator who is an author by profession is ideal for shaping a narrative structure of a fictional story within a fictional story.

3.3 The Implied Corpus

Following the brief discussion on “Di temes” and the connection between its unique structure and the literary occupation of the narrator, I would like to introduce here another narratological concept that I find necessary to add when discussing a narrative focused on author figures: the *implied corpus*. This term applies to the mentioning of the literary production of an author figure in the story and specifically when the content of his work plays a part in the narrative, either when the author figure is placed at the narrator's position, or when one of the other intradiegetic characters is (also) an author.

The notion of the implied corpus cannot be understood without referring to the participants of the narrative communication, in particular the *implied reader* and the *narratee*, as I will show in this sub-chapter. At least in Zinger's AN stories, I would argue, *the implied corpus constitutes a separate narrative level* parallel to the hypodiegesis, and no less important. At the same time, the implied corpus belongs to the *extradiegetic level*, because it refers to a text that precedes the narration of the intradiegesis.

A few examples may clarify this notion, as well as illustrate which parts of Zinger's own corpus he chose to reflect via the AN. “Di kafeterye” (no. 14) exemplifies how the implied corpus interacts with the events of the intradiegesis, as Ester, the AN's reader who reflects Zinger's

implied reader, evokes the content of his literary production: דאָס וואָס כ'וויל אייך דערציילן וועט אייך אויסקומען אין גאַנצן ווילד, איינפאַך משוגע. [...] אין דער לעצטער מינוט, איז מיר איינגעפאַלן אַז אויב מ'קאָן אייך נישט פֿאַרטרויען אַזאַ זאַך, דעמאָלט איז איבערהויפט נישטאַ צו וועמען צו רעדן. כ'לייען אייערע ווערק און ווייס אַז (p. 62). Here the implied corpus is used by Ester as a hypodiegetic narrative that functions *explicatively*, as a reason for choosing the AN as a suitable *narratee* for her own, supernatural hypodiegesis about witnessing Hitler and his helpers in the Yiddishists' cafeteria. In this respect, the implied corpus functions at the *intradiegetic level*. Its function at the *extradiegetic level*, the evoking of an implied corpus that is indisputably fictional in a story in which the narrator is also an author, marks the current narrative, i.e. the intradiegesis, as something less fictional than the implied corpus. In this way, the truth value of the intradiegesis becomes greater once it is compared to the implied corpus, which is part of the extradiegetic level, and thus intensifies the ambiguity of the story's fabula: Was Ester indeed a ghost, as the AN implies at the end of the story? Was her nightly vision of Hitler the cafeteria genuine? These questions seem even more complicated once "Di kafeterye" is characterized as a rather realistic story by comparison to the AN's implied corpus.

In a previous passage, the AN describes his frequent encounters with his readers at the cafeteria: זיי זענען צוגעקומען צו מיר, זיך פֿאַרגעשטעלט, מיך געלויבט און באַלד זיך גענומען מיר פֿאַרהאַלטן אַלערליי ליטעראַרישע זינד: כ'האַב מיך ווידערגעשפּראַכן אין מיינע אַרטיקלען; כ'האַב איבערגעטריבן אין מיינע שילדערונגען פֿון סעקס; כ'האַב געשילדערט ייִדן אַזוי, אַז די אַנטיסעמיטן וועלן דאָס קאָנען אויסנוצן פֿאַר זייערע פּראָפּאָגאַנדע. טייל (p. 54). This quote reflects known facts about Zinger's self-perception as an author, his familiarity with his readers and his acceptance among critics, which I have discussed in detail in the

historical background¹⁴⁷ to this thesis and in the thematic characterization of the AN stories.¹⁴⁸ It also summarizes key aspects of the AN stories, such as the daily encounter with the readers and the reflection of Zinger's implied readers as characters in the AN stories and the AN's frequent role as his readers' narratee, specifically when their stories are related to the historical suffering of the European Jews.

In "Di forlezung" (no. 8; 1965; The Lecture, 1967) the implied reader emerges as the AN's connection to the Old World: As the AN is stranded near the Canadian border due to a snow storm on his way to give a lecture in Montreal, he is invited to stay for the night at the poor home of his two devoted readers, a mother and her daughter who had read his work already in the D.P. camps: מיר האָבן איך געלייענט נאָך אין די קעמפּס. נאָך דער מלחמה האָט מען אונדז גענומען שיקן ליטעראַטור און איך האָב זיך אָנגעשטויסן אויף אייערס אַ זאָך. כ'געדענק שוין נישט ווי זי הייסט. כ'לייען איבער און ס'ווערט מיר ליכטיק אין די אויגן. [...] איך האָב געפֿונען אַן אוצר... דאָס זענען געווען מיניע ווערטער - -

In this story, the fictional work of the AN is not the significant part of his implied corpus, but rather the lecture he is supposed to give: ייִדיש פֿון צוקונפֿט דער צוקונפֿט פֿון ייִדיש. He is looking forward to his lecture with discomfort and fear that he is being ungentle: די פֿאַרלעזונג, וווּ איך זאָג צו ייִדיש אַ הערלעכע צוקונפֿט, האָט מיך אויך געמאַטערט. וואָס בין איך דאָס געוואָרן מיט אַ מאָל אַזוי האָפֿערדיק? ייִדיש גייט אונטער פֿאַר מיניע אויגן. During the night at the mother and daughter's home, the AN reveals that he had lost the manuscript of this lecture. "The future of Yiddish" is lost in more than one way in this story: Soon after, the mother is found dead in her sleep. This sudden death makes the AN give in to uncertainty and bottomless doubt: וועט שוין די זון מער נישט אויפֿשיינען? האָט גראָד היינט געטראָפֿן יענע קאַסימשע קאַטאַסטראָפֿע, וואָס דייוויד יום האָט געשילדערט ווי אַ טעאַרעטישע

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 1, pp. 22-23

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 2, pp. 37-38

מעגלעכקייט? He comes back to his senses only later, when he realizes that at least his US citizenship papers were not lost. These papers, which establish the AN's safety in the New World, replace the lost manuscript of the lecture. The lecture on the future of Yiddish served as an implied corpus, *thematically* characterizing the intradiegetic event of his reader's death. Although the loss of the manuscript is a clear symbol of the demise of Yiddish literature's entire readership, perhaps the reliance upon the US citizenship papers as a textual anchor of a safe existence in the New World can be interpreted as marking the shift toward a literary production in Yiddish that can sustain itself even after the annihilation of its place of origin.

Interestingly, in other stories which take place within the Yiddish postvernacular cultural sphere, the AN appears as other characters' connection to the Old World. For example, in "Moris un timna" (no. 55), one of the AN's old and forgotten friends tells him that he still reads his work, because, as he says to the AN, פֿאַרגאַנגענהייט מיט דער פֿאַרגאַנגענהייט. In this respect I accept Hadda's analysis of the AN character as a bridge between Zinger's wish to reconcile the now extinguished past with his contradicting urge to find refuge in the present.¹⁴⁹ However, this explanation does not provide an understanding of the AN as a meta-poetic device.

One can read Zinger's AN stories as a comment on Yiddish literature not only based on the representation of the AN's implied corpus, but also by examining the implied corpus of other author characters as well. "Dos naye yor" (no. 48; 1974; The New Year Party, 1974) provides a grotesque view of the AN's female readers who are also Yiddish writers themselves, as he is invited to a New Year's party in his honor. The AN describes their implied corpus along with the dishes they bring to the party as a painful metonym of their unsuccessful literary efforts, and thus also expresses his covert contempt towards women Yiddish authors as well as toward his

¹⁴⁹ Hadda 1985, p. 177

readers. For example, one of the *shrayberins* who attend the party is described as banal and saccharine: מירא רויזקעס האָט געהאַט אָנגעשריבן אַ בוך לידער מיטן נאָמען "דער מענטש איז גוט". זי האָט געבראַכט מיט זיך אַ רייזיקן שמאַלצקוכן.

This is not the only story which consists of a rather misogynistic depiction of the AN's female readers, although in "Petsh" (no. 10) there may also be a degree of self-awareness and irony regarding this matter. Here as well, the implied corpus is not that of the AN, but of a colleague in prewar Warsaw named Menashe Berger¹⁵⁰ whose narratee is the AN. Berger's hypodiegetic narrative has the *explicative function* as to why he announces suddenly: יאָ, ס'זענען פֿאַראַן אזוינע וואָס מ'מוז זיי שלאָגן unstable that only a slap from him would bring her back to her senses. One time, when she insisted on joining him for a lecture in a provincial town, the same situation arose as they were sitting together on the train, and he was "forced to" slap her in front of the other passengers. Later, shortly before his lecture, one of the female passengers who sat on the same train arrives at Berger's door and tells him that she recognized him as her favorite romantic author and was deeply disappointed by his conduct with women: זי האָט געלייענט מיניע ביכער און מיך געהאַלטן פֿאַר דעם צאַרטסטן שרייבער פֿון ראָמאַנטישע דערציילונגען. [...] ספּעציעל, האָט זי געטענהט, האָט זי באַוווּנדערט די טיפּע פֿאַרשטענדעניש מיניע פֿאַר דער פֿרוי. [...] – וואָס? א י ר זענט פֿעיק צו פֿאַטשן אַ פֿרוי? – האָט זי גענומען שרייען. – אויב אזוי, איז אַלץ פֿאַלש; אויב אזוי, איז די גאַנצע וועלט-ליטעראַטור איין גרויסער שווינדל!

Berger's reader is so disappointed by the discrepancy between the work of literature and the real author that she doubts literature in general and its ability to convey the truth. Perhaps Zinger intended to express in this story the absurdity of expecting the author to behave according to the

¹⁵⁰ In the English version his name is Reuven Berger (LOA vol. 3, p. 317).

¹⁵¹ The English version is more explicit: "There are cases when a man is forced to slap a woman" (ibid.).

values of his own fiction; at the same time he was also adhering to this expectation and carefully avoided recognizing the AN – and possibly himself – with misogynistic views, and instead delivering them through another character's hypodiegesis.

In "Petsh" Zinger illustrates the Yiddish literary readership in the Polish province as well, and this picture is even less flattering than the depiction of the female readership: די טיפישע פראווינצער אינטעליגענטן [...] כ'דארף אייך נישט זאגן, אז יעדער פון זיי האָט געפרוּווט שרייבן. זיי האָבן אַלע ערגעץ ליגן לידער און נאָוועלן און וואָס נישט. דערפֿון דער נייגער צו ליטעראַטור, די פֿאַרערונג פֿון שרייבער און גלייכצייטיק אַ סאַרט ביטערניש און באַהאַלטענער כּעס אויף יענע וואָס האָבן, מ'שטיינס געזאַגט, דערגרייכט צום אַלימפּ. These are of course Berger's words and not the AN's. Apparently also regarding the readership of the Polish province Zinger wished to distance himself from the opinions expressed in the text, while still providing a lively description of the once thriving Yiddish literary scene in Poland.

The story "A por" (no. 43; 1973; A Pair, 1973) depicts the same golden age of Yiddish literature in Poland from a more evidently retrospective position of the AN and his colleagues. The AN in this story works at a Yiddish American newspaper, and one day the poet Getsele Tertsever, a former member of the Warsaw Yiddish Writers' Club who escaped Hitler, appears in his newspaper office. Tertsever's implied corpus is described as enigmatic avant-garde poetry: זיי האָבן נישט פֿאַרשטאַנען [זיינע לידער]. אַפֿילו נישט יענע קריטיקער וואָס האָבן געגאַלטן ווי אָנהענגער פֿון מאָדערניזם. געצעלע טערצעווער האָט געהאַט אַרױסגעגעבן איין בוך – אַ געמיש פֿון פֿאַעמען, אַפֿאַריזמען, מינאַטורן, אונטערן געצעלע "די וועלט-געשיכטע פֿון מיין צוקונפֿט" (p. 354). However, the significant part of his implied corpus is not the content of his poetry, but his lively performance as he executed them: טערצעווער האָט יענעם אָונט געזאַלט פֿאַרלייענען זײַן פֿאַעמע "די מלכה פֿון אומרו". ער איז אַרומגעלאָפֿן אויף דער בינע, געלייענט פֿערזן פֿון קליינע שטיקלעך פֿאַפּיר, געשריגן מיט באַנומענע קולות (p. 355). The AN mentions

that Tertsever's poetry had the pretense to express the secrets of the universe, but it was not understood by its audience: איין מאָל אין יאָר האָט מען איינגעאַרדענט פֿאַר אים אַן אָוונט אין שרייבערקלוב. געצעלע האָט געלייענט לידער, וואָס האָבן געזאָלט איבערגעבן דעם סוד פֿון דער באַשאַפֿונג, נאָר דער עולם האָט געלאַכט (ibid.).

On the other hand, Tertsever points at the lack of purpose in the AN's current literary work in postwar America, as he asks the AN, using pejorative language: פֿאַר וועמען פֿאַטשקעסטו? פֿאַר היטלערן? (ibid.). Tertsever then urges the editor in chief of the Yiddish newspaper to print his poems. Their dialogue demonstrates Tertsever's irrelevance in the Yiddish literary scene of the New World, and at the same time Tertsever's opinion of his now American colleagues as maintaining a hopeless culture:

- וואָס איז דאָס, טערקיש?

- אויב עץ פֿאַרשטייט נישט קיין פֿאַעזיע, מאַכט'ן מיר אַן אָוונט.

מיר מאַכן נישט קיין אָוונטן.

- וואָס מאַכט עץ יאָ? מ'עט אייך אַלע אָפּווישן און ס'וועט נישט בלייבן קיין משתין-בקר.

(p. 356). Later in the story the AN meets Karola Lipinska Kohn, who came to America with Tertsever. She identifies herself as an avid reader of the AN, and expresses the opinion that Tertsever's greatness as a poet lies not in the texts but in his performance: ער איז אַ גרויסער דיכטער. נישט מיט דער פען. ער רעדט זינע לידער אַזוי ווי אין די פרע-היסטאָרישע צייטן איידער פֿאַעטן האָבן געקאָנט (p. 358). The eccentric woman then tells the AN that she is a poet herself. Much like Tertsever, she is not a regular poet. The poetry she has written so far in Polish was completely annihilated during WWII, and her current

מינע ווערטער קאנען אייך פאָרקומען ווי פוסטע פראָזן, אָבער זײַט וויסן, אַז כ'בין: poetry is entirely unwritten: אליין אַ דיכטערין און לויט מיין אייגענער אָפּשאַצונג – די גרעסטע אין אונדזער צײַט. איך שרײַב אין פּויליש, - דאָס איז מיין אומגליק. מינע לידער זענען געוואָרן פאַרברענט אין פּוילן צוזאַמען מיט די יידן. ס'איז געווען אין פּוילן אַחוץ מיר בלויז איין גרויסער דיכטער און אויף ווי ווייט איך ווייס, איז ער שוין נישט צווישן די לעבעדיקע. איך אליין האָב שוין אויך אויפֿגעהערט שרײַבן. כ'ליג בײַ נאַכט און בעט און רעד מינע לידער צום סופֿיט.

- דאָ אין אַמעריקע קאָנט איר ווידער אָנהייבן שרײַבן. מ'וואָרט דאָ אויף אַן אמתן טאַלענט. מ'וועט אַפּילו איבערזעצן וואָס איר שרײַבט.

- וואָס? כ'האָב מיך שוין אָפּגעוויינט פֿון שרײַבן. איין טאָג קומט אַ היטלער און ברענט ביכער. אַן אַנדער טאָג קומט אַ סטאַלין און פאַרלאַנגט, אַז די פּאָעטן זאָלן באַזינגען זײַנע מערדערײַען. ס'איז נאָך ווייט נישט געענדיקט. ס'וועלן אויפֿקומען אַנדערע טיראַנען און זיי וועלן אויסראַטן די וועלט-ליטעראַטור. וויבאַלד סעקס איז בלויז פֿאַר צוויי – און טיילמאָל בלויז פֿאַר איינעם – פֿאַר וואָס מוז עפעס פּאָעזיע זײַן פֿאַר אַ סך? איך בין געוואָרן מיין אייגענע דיכטערין. (ibid.). Unlike the AN, who sees a future for her poetry in America (also by means of translation), Karola had given up on literature in the common sense of the word, because manuscripts, like people, can be easily turned to ashes. Hers and Tertsever's implied corpus is not a physical corpus, but a series of vocal and bodily gestures that are unintelligible to anyone except for the two of them. This poetic pair doesn't see their work's lack of communicativeness as a disadvantage – on the contrary, they imply that the future of more traditional types of literature is much less certain.

In the *extradiegetic level*, the pair's implied corpus undermines the very act of writing and publishing an AN story; at the same time, their implied corpus at the *hypodiegetic level* is a lively picture of a once rich and flourishing culture, which can at least be preserved as a text written within a postvernacular Yiddish culture. Similar conflicting meta-poetic considerations

of Yiddish culture can be found in two more stories I chose to discuss here at length, “Der mekhaber” and “Der manuskript”.

“Der mekhaber” (no. 5; 1965; “My Adventures as an Idealist”, 1967) introduces the AN first and foremost as a translator, like Zinger in his early career, who had translated Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* from German to Yiddish. He arrives to Zigmunt Zeltser’s hotel room to discuss the translation of his autobiographical book, “מיין אַבענטויער אַלס אידעאליסט”, also from German to Yiddish. From the very beginning of the transaction it is clear that Zeltser is not requesting a translation in the common sense of the word, but wants the AN to rewrite his book and create a new, Yiddish version: מאַכט אַ בוך ס׳זאָל זײַן וואָס צו לייענען. ס׳זאָל דאָרט זײַן אַלץ: דאָס לעבן פֿון מענטש, און געדאַנק, און טאַקע נשמה אויך. אַ בוך דאַרף געבן אַ צופֿאַט-דאָ, אונטערן לעפֿעלע דאָס בוך איז אַרויס אין 1932 און זינט דעמאָלט האָט זיך אַ סך געענדערט אויף דער וועלט. He also asks the AN to update the book: He mentions Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, and adds that since the book will appear in Yiddish, it should include the Jews in Palestine as well. It appears that the Yiddish title of the story has a double meaning: the *mekhaber* of the implied corpus is both Zeltser as well as the AN, who begins as a translator, promoted to the role of an editor and rewriter and finally becomes not merely a ghost writer, but the author of Zeltser’s life story.

At an early stage in their acquaintance, the AN realizes that Zeltser cannot be the author of his own book, because he is not even capable of signing the advance check for the translation: דער דאָזיקער מענטש האָט קיין מאָל גאַר נישט געשריבן. דאָס איז געווען אַן אונטערשריפֿט פֿון אַן אַנאַלפֿאַבעט. Moreover, the AN knows that the original language of the book is not German, but Zeltser avoids him when he asks in what language was the text written originally. As he starts working on the translation, he understands that the book would require an even greater extent of rewriting: ס׳האָט נישט געהאַט קיין שום זין נאָכצופֿאַלגען דעם דײַטשן טעקסט. ווער דער דאָזיקער שרײַבער איז

נישט געווען, האָט ער געהאַט אויסגעטראַכט אַ ביוגראַפֿיע וואָס האָט אַפֿשר געפֿאַסט פֿאַרן דײַטשן לײענער, אָבער נישט פֿאַרן ייִדישן. די זאַצן זענען געווען לאַנגע, דער סטיל שווער, פֿול מיט יענע באַנאַליטעטן וואָס זענען כאַראַקטעריסטיש פֿאַר מערבֿ-אייראָפּעיִשע שונד-שרײַבער, ווען זײ שרײַבן וועגן ייִדן. [...] איך האָב געמוזט צוטראַכטן אַן אַנדער סאַרט קוואַטש. Thus the implied corpus, aside from lacking credibility as an autobiography, is unreliable even as a fictional text about Jews.

During their meetings Zeltser asks the AN to show his work's progress and read his "translation" aloud. At this point the AN doubts Zeltser's ability to tell the difference between truth and lie, or more accurately, between reality and fiction: זיגמונט זעלצער האָט פֿאַרלאַנגט כּוֹזאַל אים פֿאַרלײענען די קאַפיטלען פֿון דעם שרײַבעכץ און כּהאַב יעדעס מאָל געהאַט דאָס אײגענע אויסטערלישע געפֿיל: אַז ער גלױבט אַליין אין די ליגנס וואָס איך האָב וועגן אים אויסגעקלערט. Apparently Zeltser had hired the AN not only rewrite a fictional book so that it would appear more like his autobiography, but also to "rewrite" his own memory so that it would appear more like fiction.¹⁵² In an ordinary relationship between an author of an autobiography and his ghost writer, the author – in this case, Zeltser – would open with a hypodiegetic narrative, which would later be reflected in the implied corpus; whereas in this story, the implied corpus affects the hypodiegesis. During their meetings, Zeltser tells the AN all kinds of implausible stories from his life, of which the AN remarks: טײלמאַל האָט זיך מיר אויסגעוויזן אַז זיגמונט זעלצער מאַכט נאָך די אויסגעטראַכטע אַוואַנטורעס פֿון מײַן ייִדישן טעקסט.

Unlike other stories in the AN corpus, there is no indication of the AN's own implied corpus, except for his Yiddish translation Thomas Mann's novel. Even though the work on Zeltser's book stretches upon many years, during which the AN becomes a *mekhaber* in his own right, Zeltser still refers him as his subordinate, as the AN tells: איך האָב שוין אין דער צײַט געהאַט

¹⁵² This is not the only story in which Zinger presents the memoir as a deceitful genre: "All memoirs are full of lies, and since I can tell only the truth, how can I write my memoirs?" (LOA vol. 3, p. 680), says the feuilletonist Zeinvel Markus in "Runners to Nowhere" (no. 67; "Di loyfers", 1983; 1988; I did not have access to the Yiddish version of this story).

פֿאַרעפֿנטלעכט אַ פֿאַר ביכער און באַקומען אַ שטיקל נאָמען אין דער ליטעראַטור, אָבער זיגמונט זעלצער האָט מיך נאָך אַלץ פֿאַרגעשטעלט פֿאַר זײַן איבערזעצער. In other stories the implied corpus, or at least the fact that the narrator is known as an author, is a reason for other characters to see in him their ideal narratee and to confide in the AN with their life story – either because it is strange and implausible much like his own writing, or because they merely want to be immortalized in a text by any talented enough author. For example, in “Dos farloyrene vayb” (no. 7) the hypodiegetic narrator who encounters the AN is a Yiddish author himself, but since he writes only poetry, he wishes to entrust his story in the hands of a prose writer: ווען איך בין אַ פֿראַזאַיקער, נישט אַ פֿאַעט, וואָלט איך די זאַך אַליין אָנגעשריבן, אָבער איך בין נישט קיין דערציילער. In “Der mekhaber”, the hypodiegetic narrator had chosen the AN not for his competence as a storyteller, but for his experience as a translator from German. Although the original text of Zeltser’s autobiography turns out to be irrelevant and perhaps even inexistent, it is important for Zeltser to refer to the AN’s work as an act of translation. It is possible that among other meta-poetic matters, Zinger had also reflected in “Der mekhaber” his careful conduct regarding the translations of his own work (from Yiddish to English) and his fear of losing authorship in the process.¹⁵³

This interpretation is based on an analogy between Zeltser and the implied author, while most AN stories generally invite the reader to see the AN as analogous to the implied author. Jan Schwarz suggested another interpretation, based on identifying Zeltser, the hypodiegetic narrator, with the real author:¹⁵⁴ Schwarz regarded Zeltser as a depiction of Zinger himself, who

¹⁵³ On Zinger’s fear of being overshadowed by his translator, see: Chapter 1 here, p. 15.

¹⁵⁴ I chose the term “real author” instead of “implied author” because at the time of the story’s publishing (1965) Zinger was not yet known as an author who had never completed his autobiographical project. Only in hindsight, after Zinger’s passing, can a reader make this analogy.

also never concluded the great project of publishing his autobiography,¹⁵⁵ and kept publishing new serialized autobiographies throughout his career.¹⁵⁶

I would argue that since the implied corpus belongs to both Zeltser and the AN – as mentioned, it remains unclear who is the *mekhaber* of Zeltser's autobiography – the interpretation of “Der mekhaber” does not rely upon determining which of the two characters represents the implied author more, nor on drawing clear parallels between either of them and the implied author. The main conclusion I would like to draw from this story is rather its meta-poetic implication.

Even after the AN finishes writing the epilogue for Zeltser's book, Zeltser requests him to add more details, so the book will include his recent failed marriage as well. The AN responds: מ'קאן נישט אַלץ אַרײַנשרײַבן אין איין בוך. But Zeltser cannot be dissuaded. It seems that Zinger not only problematizes in this story the fickle distinction between reality and fiction, but also parodies the attempt to encompass every aspect of Jewish existence in Yiddish fiction, and perhaps answers his critics, who blamed him of misrepresenting authentic Jewish life.¹⁵⁷

Only on his deathbed is Zeltser prepared to seal the corpus of his ongoing (auto)biography. As the AN visits Zeltser, he finally sees the final edition of the book: דאָס מאַנוסקריפּט איז געלעגן אויפֿן נאַכטטישן. ער האָט געהאַט אַ נייעם איינבאַנד. ער איז געהאַט געוואָרן טאַפּלט אַזוי דיק, ווייל זיגמונט זעלצער האָט געהאַט איינגעבונדן די ענגלישע איבערזעצונג צוזאַמען מיט דער ייִדישער (my emphasis). This description may also be a sign of Zinger's relationship to his own English translation as an integral part of his original corpus and as necessary for the survival of his literary legacy. The ending of the

¹⁵⁵ Schwarz 2015, p. 236

¹⁵⁶ See Shmeruk's article on Zinger's autobiographies: Shmeruk 1985

¹⁵⁷ This conclusion may be established by comparison to the story/memoir “Vanvild Kava” (no. 58, see p. 56 in this chapter), in which Kava had probably ridiculed the AN's request to submit an all-encompassing essay about literature in general and Yiddish literature in particular. The real Shloyme-Leyb Kava, as well as the fictional Vanvild Kava in the English version, submits a 59.5 pages essay about horses instead.

story also refers to the question of survival through texts. In Zeltser's last words, literature is presented as a means of survival: ... אַ בינטל פאַפּיר. As the Yiddish title, these final words have a twofold meaning: they imply that literature and the written word in general as something necessary to hold on to since it replaces the physical body after its passing; on the other hand, Zeltser may express the worthlessness of human life, regardless of the value of literature, as amounting to no more than a bundle of paper.¹⁵⁸

The story "Der manuskript" (no. 51; 1975; The Manuscript, 1979) expresses a similar ambivalent view of literature as a matter of utmost importance and completely worthless at the same time. As a story that is embedded even deeper than "Der mekhaber" in Yiddish culture, one can read it especially as a meta-poetic comment on Yiddish literature. The large part of "Der manuskript" is a hypodiegetic narrative told to the AN by his old acquaintance from Warsaw Shibta, as both sit in a Tel Aviv restaurant some decades later. Shibta's hypodiegesis carries out the *explicative function*, as an answer to the AN's question about why she and his late friend, the Yiddish writer Menashe Linder, had separated. She mentions that at their happiest times together she was very much involved in Menashe's literary production, and was especially invested in the novel he began to write in 1938: די מוזע האָט אים באַפֿאַלן און ער האָט אָנגעשריבן אַ בוך וואָס, לויט מיין מיינונג, איז עס די בעסטע זאַך וואָס ער האָט ווען ס'איז געשריבן. איך האָב עס איבערגעשריבן אויף דער שרייבמאַשין. ווען עפעס איז מיר נישט געפֿעלן, האָב איך אים געזאָגט מיין מיינונג און ער האָט אַלע מאָל אויסגעבעסערט. כּוּהאַב אַרשטעלן אַרײַנגעלייגט דערין מער וויפֿל דו קאַנסט דיר פֿאַרשטעלן. Otherwise she does not disclose much about this implied corpus, except that it was an autobiographical work named שטאַפּלען, the first book in a trilogy, or in an even longer series.

¹⁵⁸ The English version is more specifically meta-poetic. In English, Zeltser's final words are „In the end what remains after us *writers*? Nothing but a bundle of paper“ (LOA vol. 3, p. 758, my emphasis), implying that he sees himself as a writer, and also that his utterance about the worthlessness human life applies only to the lives of writers.

Menashe had also acknowledged the greatness of this novel. As he and Shibta were preparing to escape the Nazi occupation, she asked him if he packed his latest manuscript, and he replies: בלויז דאָס. אַלע אַנדערע זאַכן מײַנע וועלן שוין לייענען די נאַציס. This brings the theme of *postvernacular Yiddish culture* into the story, and the question of what will remain of the extinguished Yiddish culture of Eastern Europe – a question that may not be as present for the characters in the hypodiegesis as it is for the narrator and narratee of the intradiegetic level, which is located in the State of Israel, a place where Yiddish culture clearly exists mostly in its postvernacular mode. While Shibta and Menashe were fleeing from Warsaw to Bialystok, Shibta noticed other Jews who took manuscripts with them. Shibta found this absurd: אויפֿן וועג האָבן מיר געטראָפֿן זשורנאַליסטן, שרײַבער און אַזוינע וואָס האַלטן זיך פֿאַר שרײַבער. אַלע האָבן געשלעפט מיט זיך מאַנוסקריפטן און אין דער גאַנצער בהלה האָט זיך מיר געגלוסט צו לאַכן. ווער מישטיינס געזאַגט האָט געדאַרפֿט זייערע שרײַבערײַען?

This question echoes through the rest of the story. Apparently Yiddish manuscripts were much needed also in Bialystok during the war. Even at this time of instability and distress, the Yiddish writers already begin their cultural activity and find a press for the Jewish refugees' literary production. Menashe then realizes that he had left his novel's manuscript at their Warsaw apartment, and mistakenly put another author's manuscript, some young "*grafoman*", in the envelope with the title of his own novel. In order to publish Menashe's novel, Shibta was determined to go back to Warsaw for the manuscript, although this journey may risk her life, as she told him: כ'קאָן נישט לאָזן דיין ווערק זאָל פֿאַרפֿאַלן ווערן. ס'איז נישט בלויז דיין ווערק, ס'איז מיין ווערק. Shibta's words present Yiddish literature as something that has become so important precisely at this time of distress, that even non-writers would risk their lives for its sake. She heads back to Warsaw, receiving help from other refugees as she lies about coming back for her child who was left there. She found the manuscript in their

apartment, already occupied by another family (whose members are, incidentally, Menashe's admirers). When she returns to their new place in Bialystok, she finds Menashe in bed with another woman, a non-talented poet. Her wrath leads her to burning his manuscript on the spot.

Back at the intradiegetic level of the story, Shibta concludes that the fateful loss of the manuscript was eventually in Menashe's favor, as he escaped to Russia after this incident: אויף ווי ווייט איך ווייס האָט ער מער קיין מאָל גאָר נישט געשריבן. זאָלסט נישט אויס מיר לאַכן, נאָר דאָס נישט-שרייבן האָט אים געראַטעוועט. ער איז געווען אויס שרייבער און פאַרשפּאַרט צו ווערן ליקווידירט מיט די אַנדערע שרייבער. Following the logic of Shibta's conclusion, advancing Yiddish literature can cost people their lives, whereas avoiding literary activity can be lifesaving; Yiddish literature is both more important than life itself and can be easily destroyed in a heartbeat.

Interestingly, the stories I discussed as demonstrative of the concept of the implied corpus, expressed their utmost meta-poetic meaning precisely when the content of their implied corpus was less significant than its symbolic value. In some AN stories, the implied corpus had a more detailed content and served as a means for the AN's readers to reach out to him and turn him into their narratee ("Di kafeterye", "Der soyne", "Der sod" and many others); in the prominently meta-poetic AN stories, the manifestation of the implied corpus was often unusual: the implied corpus was either lost ("Di forlezung", "Der manuskript"), too obscure and chaotic ("Der mekhaber") or deemed irrelevant ("A por"). These multi-layered stories, written at a late stage of a Yiddish author's career, portray Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger as a highly self-aware writer of his own role as a Yiddish author as well as of his place in Yiddish culture, which he had witnessed its rapid transformation into a postvernacular culture.

Conclusion

In the conclusion of *A Traveler Disguised* Dan Miron calls for a further research into what he describes as “the progress of the dramatic persona in modernistic Yiddish fiction, from Perets to Y. Bashevis Singer with his manifold masks of prattling innocence and garrulous, rather Mendeleian devils”.¹⁵⁹ In this thesis, I undertook that task by focusing on Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger as one of the last self-conscious writers of Yiddish fiction. However, my research did not examine his demonic narrators, but rather the varied forms and functions of a much more quotidian, though no less meaningful narrator: the Yiddish author, who frequently appeared in Zinger’s fiction from 1960 up until the end of his career.

In a special *Tsukunft* issue mourning the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, Zinger published a long article summarizing the Yiddish literary activity of the Old World, which was now irrevocably lost. Although he did intend for the article to serve as a sort of monument for Poland’s Yiddish literary scene, Zinger did not allow the elegiac mode of this essay to displace his usual persona as a pungent literary critic. In his overview he mentions two limitations faced by the Yiddish Polish writer: the poverty and monotony of their daily reality, and the inadequacy of Yiddish for the purposes of modern literature. In his view, these two limitation left open two literary options: אָדער ווידער אַ מאָל אויסלאַכן דאָס באַשפּיגענע און טראַגישע קאַבאַנאַנסק, צו וועלכן דער גורל האָט אים צוגעשמידט, אָדער גראַבן אין דער טיף, קוקן אויף צוריק, זוכן אין דלות דאָס גרויסע, דאָס טיף-ייִדישע, דאָס אַיביקע.¹⁶⁰ As far as the part of Zinger’s oeuvre which is focused solely on the Old World is concerned, one can say that as a Polish Yiddish writer, he sought to achieve a combination of these two options in his many tragic-comic, deeply pessimistic and yet revitalizing prose works.

¹⁵⁹ Miron 1996 [1973], p. 268

¹⁶⁰ י. באַשעוויס, "אַרום דער ייִדישער ליטעראַטור אין פּוילן", די צוקונפֿט 48, נומ' 8 (אויגוסט 1943), ז' 471.

However, his author-narrator stories, which constitute the majority of his writing about the New World, present a third option for a Yiddish author operating within a postvernacular Yiddish culture, but still deeply rooted in prewar Warsaw: the option of a meta-poetic reflection on himself, his peers and the significance of writing fiction in Yiddish after the Holocaust.

In my thesis I did not intend to conduct a study in cultural history, nor to undertake a comprehensive bibliographical research, but rather to pursue an in-depth narrative analysis of that subset of Zinger's short stories which are told from the perspective of a Yiddish author. However, the salient autobiographical element in these stories meant that the literary discussion required a broad cultural background, which I have provided by discussing the state of the Yiddish author and his readers in America in Chapter 1. In the same chapter I situated Zinger as a Yiddish American author conscious of his possibilities and limitations both in Yiddish and in English.

I returned to this theme in Chapter 2, in which I confronted Zinger's writing as a literary critic as well as the responses he received, with his fictional depictions of the Yiddish author and his surroundings. As I have shown, Zinger approached the thematic elements of the author-narrator stories, including occultism, the fate of the European Jews and complicated romantic intrigues, all from a meta-poetic perspective. In this chapter I also described the different publication circumstances of the author-narrator stories in Yiddish and in English, and pointed out how Zinger adapted those according to the different addressees in each language.

In Chapter 3, following Miron's example, I used narratological theories in order to identify the intricacies within Zinger's narrative voices and structures. Inspired by Miron's theory of the "Mendele phenomenon", I examined Zinger's self-perception as a Yiddish author and his

establishment of an authorial persona, which in Zinger's case is representative of the late, postvernacular stages of Yiddish literature. By discussing several author-narrator stories at length and applying concepts pertaining to the implied author, the narrator, narrative levels and my own notion of the implied corpus, I demonstrated that Zinger's depiction of the Yiddish author – as well as the narrative structures that stem from his use of this figure as a narrator – are deeply informed by the postvernacular mode of language use described by Jeffrey Shandler, that of speaking *in* Yiddish for the purpose of speaking *on* Yiddish. This mode goes hand in hand with the ongoing meta-poetic reflection in these stories, which attempt to propose answers to the questions facing Yiddish literature in the second half of the twentieth century, in original, complex and often self-contradictory ways, as only great fiction can.

This research has been a first step toward an assessment of Zinger's significance as a Yiddish author aware of his emerging status as a classic author, either as the last in a chain of Yiddish fiction writers, or as one of the first in a developing new global Jewish literature, unlimited by the borders of language. Further study is needed in order to establish a deeper understanding of this double role, for example through a comparison of Zinger's use of pseudonyms to that of Mendele Moykher-Sforim and Sholem Aleykhem and through an examination of the various manifestations of the "Bashevis phenomenon" in Yiddish and in English; A more exhaustive bibliographical study would also be necessary in order to more accurately determine the magnitude of Zinger's author-narrator corpus and its relation to the rest of his writings; Finally, it would be beneficial to conduct additional research in order to further compare Zinger's critical writing, along with his disputes with other critics, to the meta-poetic values implicit in the author-narrator stories.

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Notes to Appendix A

This Appendix includes all bibliographical information about each of the author-narrator stories I could trace in Yitskhok Bashevis Zinger's corpus. The stories are numbered and appear in chronological order, according to the date of their first publication in Yiddish or in English (usually the first publication was in the Yiddish press). I also included their appearance in book form, in Yiddish and in English. I included no reprints of the stories in magazines and in book forms (if they were published more than once in either magazine or book form), except for the 2004 Library of America edition, which I used for the English quotes throughout the chapters of this work. The exact page numbers appear only when referring to the Yiddish journals,¹⁶¹ the publications in Yiddish book form and the LOA edition. All story collections in English appear in the Appendix only in abbreviations, as detailed below.

Abbreviations

The Collected Stories (The Library of America Edition), 3 volumes, New York, 2004 = LOA

The Death of Methuselah and Other Stories, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988 = DM, 1988

Gifts, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1985 = G, 1985

The Image and Other Stories, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985 = I, 1985

¹⁶¹ I avoided adding page numbers to the *Forverts* references, since those are short issues and the page number can be easily found.

The Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982 = CS, 1982

Old Love, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979 = OL, 1979

Passions and Other Stories, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975 = P, 1975

A Crown of Feathers and Other Stories, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973 = CF, 1973

A Friend of Kafka and Other Stories, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970 = FK, 1970

The Séance, and Other Stories, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968 = TS, 1968

Short Friday, and Other Stories, New York, Fawcett Crest, 1964 = SF, 1964