

华中师范大学

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硕士学位论文

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辛格短篇小说中的圣经原型研究

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20080501



## 内容摘要

艾萨克·巴什维斯·辛格(1909-1991)是坚持用意第绪语写作的著名犹太作家,也是二十世纪最有影响的美国作家之一。辛格用一种濒临消亡的语言一意第绪语生动的勾勒出17世纪到20世纪上半叶的犹太世界。出生于波兰却在英国写作,用意第绪语创作却在英语世界获得广泛成功,描写的过去然而预料的未来,这使辛格成为了谜一样的作家。经过数十年的时间,传统的辛格作品研究已经取得了大量成绩,但仍有问题有待进一步的探讨。

本文拟从圣经原型分析的角度切入,围绕辛格短篇小说的人物、主题和叙事结构探讨小说家与犹太传统的渊源。

本文共分为四章。第一章为引言部分,通过考察辛格的国内外研究现状,总结前人的理论成果和研究空白。辛格研究在国外成果丰硕,国内也越来越受到重视。可是对于他到底是传统的作家还是以以色列的叛徒的争论仍然不绝于耳。另外,他自己和评论界都认为他风格的最好表现的短篇小说却很少作为整体的研究对象。而且,他长期受犹太文化的熏陶,《圣经》对于他的影响巨大,然而研究者中鲜有人从辛格的文学与圣经文学的关系间研究他的作品。为了更好的理解他的作品,我们从他的家庭背景出发,结合犹太历史文化,分析了《圣经》对他的影响。

第二章简单综述原型批评的文论。包括其起源,基本概念以及文中所用到的圣经原型批评策略。

第三章着力于分析辛格作品中的人物原型,主题原型和叙事策略。我们把他的人物分为撒旦和替罪羊两类。撒旦是犹太传统道德观念的试金石。他采取金钱、性和虚幻的真理等为诱饵,来试探现代犹太人的违背道德和背弃信仰的根源。替罪羊原型最能表现现代犹太人的罪恶和缺点。辛格出于对民族的责任感和改变现状的急切愿望描写犹太民族的阴暗面。辛格作品中的主题,也是犹太文学和文化的不变母题是流亡和救赎。流亡对于现代犹太人来说更多的是一种精神上的流亡。寻求各种各样的出路没有解救犹太人,反而加剧了他们的精神流亡。辛格给我们提供的救赎方式非常传统。一是回归犹太传统,二是神圣的性爱。最后,辛格短篇小说的叙事也采取了圣经中的U型和倒U型叙事结构。通过分析,我们可以清楚的看出辛格对犹太传统的态度。

第四章通过上面的文本分析来探讨辛格使用这些原型的出发点和目的。辛格本



人利用这些原型表现了现代犹太人的困惑和两难处境。作为一个犹太人民的儿子，他认为唯有回归到犹太教和犹太传统中才能求得生存和发展。

**关键词：**短篇小说，原型，犹太传统



## Abstract

Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991) is one of the greatest Yiddish writers as well as one of the America's most influential writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By means of the dying language—Yiddish, Singer presents the Jewish world from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For a man born in Poland but writing in New York, a man writing in Yiddish but being read in English, and a man looking forward past to tell of the future, Singer is a rather mysterious writer. Although the study of Singer and his works that lasts more than 50 years obtains many valuable achievements, there are many aspects to advance.

The present thesis intends to interpret Singer's short story from the perspective of the biblical archetypal criticism. It uncovers the archetype character, motif, and narrative structure to demonstrate Singer's inclination to the Jewish tradition.

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction that examines Singer's study home and abroad. It concludes the achievements and the fields that are rarely touched by the critics. Singer's study achievements are abundant abroad made by the predecessors, meanwhile in China the study heat springs up in the recent years. However, the discussion about whether he is a "traditional writer" or a "betrayed of Israel" never ceases. And most Singer's study focuses on the novels. The added weight should be put to the short stories which Singer himself and critics take as the representation of his style. As Singer's close connection with the Jewish tradition and the Bible, the exploration of the archetypes in his work is to understand Singer's works better. Starting from his family background, we observe the influence of the Bible on him.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive survey of the archetypal criticism, covering its origins, basic concepts and biblical archetypal critical tactics in the thesis.

The third chapter focuses on how to apply the archetypal criticism as a critical method to analyze Singer's short stories. Through the detailed analysis of Singer's short stories, it is evident that character archetypes as scapegoat and Satan, motif archetypes exile and redemption as well as the narrative archetypes U-shaped, inverted U-shaped are widely used.

The Satan character is the test stone of the Jewish tradition. Satan attempts the Jews



with his weapons—money, sexual lure and false truth. It gives us an insight into the reasons why the Jews break the moral bondage and give up their belief. The scapegoat character best presents the sins and faults for the modern Jews. Singer's descriptions of the modern Jews' dark side are rooted from his ethic-anxiety and the urgent desire to change the condition. The motifs in Singer's short stories, as well as the everlasting motifs in the Jewish literature, are exile and redemption. Exile for the modern Jews is more attached to the psychological and spiritual drifting. Finding all kinds of ways to salvation does not change the exile, yet intensifies it to some extent. The redemption in Singer's stories is rather traditional. One is the transgression to the Jewish tradition; the other is the sexuality which is the essence of Cabbalism. At last, through the analysis of the narrative structure, we can see clearly Singer's attitude toward Jewish tradition.

Chapter four is the conclusion which summarizes Singer's full reworking of traditional values through the use of biblical archetypes. Here, we try to explore the aims of the adoption of the biblical archetypes. Facing the difficulties and dilemma of the modern Jews, Singer, a son of Israel, holds that only embracing the Judaism and Jewish tradition can the Jews survive and develop.

**Key words:** short stories, archetype, Jewish tradition



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## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Professor Chen Lihua, who has given me encouragement, advice and strict instruction all the while.

Secondly, I wish to express my thanks to Professor Qiao Guoqiang who is always ready to help. He provides me a lot of valuable materials and inspiring ideas.

My sincere and hearty thanks should also go to all the teachers. Their profound insights into literature and effective guidance enlightened me greatly.

Last but not the least, I am deeply indebted my husband, parents, colleagues and friends. Without their help, I could not have turned out this thesis.



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Literature review

Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991) is the most famous Jewish American writer in the twentieth century. By means of the dying language—Yiddish, he wrote nearly 200 stories that win him the fame of a prolific writer and master storyteller. He had won lots of awards and honors such as Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978; National Awards in 1970 and 1974; and Gold Medal for Fiction from American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1989.

Various kinds of criticisms about his works prevail for a long time, especially after he became the Nobel Prize laureate. Most influential monographs are published by Irving H. Buchen, Edward Alexander, Richard. Burgin and Grace Farrell Lee. To name a few, Irving H. Buchen published *Isaac Bashevis Singer and the Eternal Past* in 1968. Edward Alexander published two books *Isaac Bashevis Singer* and *I. B. Singer: A Study of the Short Fiction* both in the year 1980. Richard Burgin published *The Sly Modernism of Isaac Singer* and *Isaac Singer Talks About Everything* in 1982. Later in 1987, Grace Farrell Lee's monograph *From Exile to Redemption* came out. Besides these outstanding critics, other predecessors' critical essays have been collected in *The Achievements of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, *Critical Views of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, *Recovering the Canon* and so on.

Although Singer's works have been studied for a long time, people give added weight to them nowadays. In 2004, Library of America (LOA), the America Library Organization and the National Endowment for the Humanities jointly organize a nationwide celebration in memory of the hundredth anniversary of Singer's birth. The centerpiece of the Isaac Bashevis Singer Centennial Celebration is the publication of a three-volume edition of his collected stories and a fully illustrated companion Album. Max Rudin, Library of America publisher and Centennial director, has emphasized the significance of the celebration.

The Library of America is delighted, and honored, to gather for the first time the brilliant stories that speak so powerfully to the fears and longings of our modern





nation of immigrants. We hope the books and the Centennial celebrations will introduce new generations of readers to the work of this self-described “entertainer of the spirit”. (Rudin, “I. B. Singer Centennial Celebration”, 2004)

From the celebration, some Chinese critics keenly observe that the upsurge of Singer’s works is worthy of proper attention not only because it is “a trend of the literary world” but also “a subtle influence to Chinese avant-garde writers” (王毅, 傅晓微, 2005: 29). For instance, avant-garde writers Yu Hua and Su Tong spontaneously select the short story “Gimpel the Fool” as the one of the most influential short stories for them.

Even though Chinese critics raise their interests in the study of Singer’s works, comparatively speaking, the study in China lags behind western countries. The monographs come into being in the recent years. Professor Qiao Guoqiang and Professor Fu Xiaowei contribute a lot to the study, they published monographs *The Jewishness of Isaac Bashevis Singer* and *Who is the God?* in 2003 and 2006 separately. Besides the monographs, there are more than 30 papers and seven master theses on Singer and his works, according to the data collected from CNKI. Among them, only a few are about short stories.

Although the predecessors have done quite well on the analysis of Singer’s works from different angles; the study has thousands of reasons to advance. For “a man born in Poland but writing in New York, a man writing in Yiddish but being read in English, and a man looking forward past to tell of the future”, it is hard to fully understand his works (Vinson, 1987: 621).

Firstly, different views about whether Singer is a “tradition writer” or a “betrayal of Israel” have been debated heatedly since 1958 (quoted in 傅晓微, 2006: 30). Many Yiddish scholars attack Singer’s deviation of Jewishness. Landis indicts Singer “stands outside the mainstream of modern Yiddish literature; he rejects outright its central value” (quoted in Qiao GuoQiang, 2003: 24). Feinberg even argues that Singer betrays the Jews to attract the American readers, because “he describes the evil Jews who are more vicious than the Gentile” (quoted in 傅晓微, 2006: 31). The most hostile criticism was written by Jacob Glatstein. He asserts Singer’s works “are more attune to the non-Jewish than to the Jewish reader to whom Bashevis’ themes are a distasteful blend superstition and shabby mysticism” (quoted in 孙珍, 2004: 8-9). Until now, the attacks upon Singer’s works do not cease.



Secondly, Singer's short stories have been taken as the study object by few critics. In the meantime, the studies of his short stories are almost all on the several famous ones, such as "Gimpel the Fool", "The Spinoza of Market Street" and so on. In fact, Singer is indisputably a master of the short story. "Singer's earliest fictional works, however, were not big novels but short stories and novellas, a genre in which he has perhaps given his very best as a consummate storyteller and stylist" (Gyllensten, "Noble Foundation", 1978). Critics even state that "Singer's ultimate reputation must rest on his short stories. Here his narrative quickness and philosophic depth show to best advantage, not marred by the structural flaws of some of the novels" (quoted in Kahn, 1979: 200). Singer himself takes short story writing as his most effective and favorite genre because "only in short story can a writer reach perfection—more than in a novel" (quoted in 孙珍, 2004: 9-10). Both critics and Singer himself make a consensus on the value of the short stories, therefore, the study of Singer's short stories becomes necessary.

Thirdly, critics have referred to Singer as "Yiddish Hawthorne" who stresses the need for all individuals to relate to God and to man (Hyman, 1996: 36). Influenced by his orthodox family, he has great attachments to the Bible and uses a "technique of Biblical writing found most frequently in the prophetic books" (Eisenberg, 1969: 62). Many critics pay attention to the relationship between his works and the Bible, yet only few survey his works from the archetypal perspective. I only find that Grace Farrell Lee analyzes Harry Bendiner in "The Old Love" as an archetype of Job, Sheldon Grubstaking compares Gimpel and Elka to Adam and Eve. However, till now none of the critics gives a thorough systematical analysis from this perspective.

For these reasons, the present theses attempts to apply biblical archetypal criticism to analyze Singer's short stories. Without an understanding of the Bible, it is impossible to give a thorough and satisfactory account of a Jewish writer. Without an understanding of Singer's orthodox background, we have no access to appreciate Singer's works. So I will begin to talk about Singer's literary life and pay special attention to the influence of the Bible on him.

## 1.2 Singer's literary life

Isaac Bashevis Singer was born in an orthodox background family in Poland. His father, mother and paternal grandfathers were rabbis. Singer once recalled that his



father's home on Krochmalna Street in Warsaw was a "study house, a court of justice, a house of prayer, of storytelling, as well as a place for weddings and Chassidic banquets" (Gyllensten, "Noble Foundation", 1978). He have heard from his father and mother "all the answers that faith in God could offer to those who doubt and search for the truth" (Gyllensten, "Noble Foundation", 1978). In his home and in many other homes "the eternal questions were more actual than the latest news in the Yiddish newspaper" (Gyllensten, "Noble Foundation", 1978).

The most important factors for his outlook of the world and life are from his family. There are three conflicting thoughts in his family coming from his farther, mother and brother—Hassidism, rationalism and secularism.

His father Pinkhos Singer, a pious Jew and Hassidic Rabbi, strongly believed in the mysticism of the Cabala. He studied, prayed, and practiced a discipline of strong piety, which made rigid demands upon himself and his family. Such an insistence on the Hassidic tradition caused his constant turning to God, to the Torah, and to other holy books for answers when he was confronted with questions. Under his father's tutelage, Singer was made to read religious texts in preparation for the more extensive study necessary to become a rabbi. And like all orthodox Jewish boys of his time, he received his early formal education in cheder—traditional religious schools, where he studied the Bible and the Talmud. Hence, "from his childhood on, Singer's imagination glowed with vivid recreations of biblical scenes", and "the Hassidic seed took root in his mind" (Qiao Guoqiang, 2003: 15).

On the other hand, his mother Bathsheba was a learned and logical woman belongs to Micnagdim, opposed Hassidism. She believed in God, but was a skeptical rationalist and practical worshiper. Janet Hadda writes about Bathsheba in Singer's biography, *Isaac Bashevis Singer: A Life*, "she was a powerful intellect", "she knew much more about scholarly matters than other women of similar background" (Hadda, 1997: 28). Singer's attitude towards God descends from her mother. He once said in an interview: "My mother would say, it's one thing to believe in God and another to believe in man. My mother's point of view is also my point of view" (Blocker, 1969: 12).

The most important to note to young Singer are the dynamics between the mother and father: endless conflicts between mystic father and rationalist mother. Pinkhos was optimistic and Bathsheba was morose and melancholy. So Isaac clearly demonstrated his



mixed heritage. He was a believer in his faith, but a rationalist in his concept of God.

By far the most influential person in Singer's life was his elder brother. Singer has given the speech on the noble lecture: "As a child I had heard from my older brother and master, I. J. Singer, who later wrote *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, all the arguments that the rationalists from Spinoza to Max Nordau brought out against religion" (Singer, "Nobel Lecture", 1978). Joshua (1893-1944) was an artist, journalist, philosopher and, more important, a Yiddish writer. He is also a devotee of the Jewish Enlightenment; he broke away from the enclosed world of the Polish Jewish ghetto. He was ideologically a modern Jew who educated himself in the mainstream of Western culture. He not only brings spiritual liberation to Singer, but also gives a wide range of books to him. The most influential writers to Singer are Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Dickens, and Allen Poe.

Singer once asserted: "The only person I have a lot to thank for...was my brother, I. J. Singer. But even here I wouldn't say that I was my brother's disciple. I would almost say that I tried to create my own tradition, if one can use such words" (Blocker, 1969: 9). It is true that noticeable difference exists between the two brothers.

I. J. Singer writes within the orbit of, even though he has begun a withdrawal from, the moral premises—rationalistic and humanistic—of 19<sup>th</sup> century Yiddish literature. I.B. Singer has taken the step his elder brother could not take; though a master of the Yiddish language, he seems to have cut himself off from the mainstream of Yiddish literature, moving backward to a pre-Enlightenment sensibility and forward to modernism. (Vinson, 1979:115)

Singer made a momentous decision in his early 20s: he would drop his religious studies and become a secular writer. He remarked that he would not become a rabbi because he had doubts about tradition and dogma, not about God. Instead, he wanted to be a writer, following his brother, much to the regret of his father and also dismay of his mother. With Joshua's help, Isaac Bashevis Singer left Poland for the United States in 1935. He took a job there as a free-lancing writer for the Yiddish newspaper the *Jewish Daily Forward*.

His first major work, the novella, *Satan in Goray*, appeared in Yiddish in 1935. Since then, he has written novels. *The Family Moskat*, was published in an English translation in 1949. In 1953, Saul Bellow translated his short story "Gimpl the Fool" that brought Singer to the attention of English-speaking audience. He won his fame in the



America and was awarded the Noble Prize in 1978 for “its world, which the reader encounters in Singer’s stories, is a very Jewish but also a very human world” (Gyllensten, “Nobel Foundation”, 1978).

Isaac Bashevis Singer was unwilling to discard his past altogether. Gone were the ear locks, beard and clothes of the orthodox Jew of his father’s tradition. Singer blended into American culture by his outward appearance, his emotional psyche remained Yiddish.

### 1.3 The influences of the Bible on Singer

Judaism, with a history of well over 3,000 years, remains for thousands of years the behavioral guide and the source of strength for the Jews. What we should make clear is that the Christian Bible does not refer to Judaism. Singer’s own works give us a view about this. In “A Crown of Feathers”, Akhsa finds a Bible translated into Polish—the New Testament as well as the Old. “Akhsa knew it was a forbidden book” (Singer, 1982: 355).

The basis of Jewish faith is the Hebrew Bible Tanach (called the Old Testament by the Christians), which are the collection of 24 documents. They are arranged in three groups: the Law (Torah), the Prophets (Navim) and the Writings (Ketuvim). The Torah, the first five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, is the most important to the Jews. The Torah overwhelmingly concerns about the event that gave the Hebrews a religion, a nation, and an identity: the children of Israel. The migration from Egypt involved two crucial events: the introduction to Yahweh on Mount Sinai and the receiving of Yahweh’s religious and social instructions.

The Jews are required to learn the Torah. Singer identifies the Jewish people as “They were the people of The Book in the truest sense of the word. They knew of no greater joy than the study of man and human relations, which they called Torah, Talmud, Mussar, Cabala” (Singer, “Nobel Lecture”, 1978). And it is recorded in the document that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonide defined the study as an obligation to everybody. “No matter old or young, healthy or unhealthy, every Jew must study the Torah. Even the beggar and the bread winner of the family should try and find time to study” (顾俊, 1993: 115). Born in the pure religious family; Singer’s mind is deeply engraved of Jewish complex of Torah and Messiah.



Consciously or unconsciously, Singer adopts some biblical archetypes. Once Singer explains symbols, he straightly puts forward the biblical influence on him. He asserts: "Take symbolism in the Bible. Every story in the Bible is a symbol—the story of Joseph, and the story of Abraham, and the story of Jacob, and so on—but this is not false symbolism" (Alexander, 1990: 93). This is to say, he absorbs a lot from the Bible and obtains some biblical symbols which we can take as archetypes. What's more, critics find Singer's traces of the Hassidic stories and affirms his stories "are the best known modern genre in which a conscious attempt is made to have literature express messianic mystical and mythic themes" (quoted in Qiao Guoqiang, 2003: 15).

Through his writing, especially short stories, he reveals his concern about the biblical archetypes. Edward Alexander points out that "Singer is the poet laureate of the Jewish sense of the past that is archetypal and circular rather than historical and linear" (Alexander, 1990: 29). And the Biblical archetypes are "by taking for granted the timelessness" (Alexander, 1990: 29), the experiences of the Jews have repeated time and again. In the long history, the Jewish existence and survival have never really changed. Consequently, Singer's writing originates from the biblical archetypes while it stands both in the past and future.

Therefore, the use of biblical archetypes sheds new lights on Singer's adherence to the traditional Jewish values as well as his deep concern with the modern Jews' existence. And equally important, the archetypes of Judaism enhance the readability, profundity and deeper meaning for his stories



## 2. Archetypal Criticism

People say that the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the century of the myth rebirth. Modern archetypal theory is also called mythic archetypal criticism. As a kind of unique critical method, archetypal criticism greatly influences literary research. It not only presents the research of the literary criticism, but also represents the combined researches of the anthropology and psychology which are the most important sources of archetypal criticism.

### 2.1 Theory sources of archetypal criticism

Archetypal criticism owes to the following three persons: Frazer in the late nineteenth century revealed the recurring mythical patterns in tales and rituals; Jung in the 1930s and 1940s developed a theory of archetypes; and Frye proposed a whole system of literary archetypal criticism in the 1950s.

Among the three, British anthropologist Sir James G. Frazer's theory in *The Golden Bough* and psychologist C.G. Jung's theory of collective unconsciousness are the two main theory sources. Surveying the two sources briefly will enhance our comprehension of archetypal criticism.

#### 2.2.1 Frazer's anthropology theory

Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941), British anthropologist, historian of religion and classical scholar, is well known among the 20<sup>th</sup> century's writers. His works cover a wide array of anthropological research. He is the first to suggest a relation between myths and rituals. His theory is extended to explain the meaning of myths in literal societies. His monumental work *The Golden Bough*, a study of ancient cults, rites and myths, has a great impact on early 20<sup>th</sup> century's thoughts. It parallels with early Christianity and traces the evolution of human behavior, ancient and primitive myth, magic, religion, ritual, and taboo.

In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer argues that everywhere in human mental evolution there is a belief in magic preceded religion, which in turn is followed in the west by science. In the first stage, a false causality is seen to exist between rituals and natural



events. Religion appears in the second stage and the third stage is science. Customs deriving from earlier periods persist as survivals into later ages, where they are frequently reinterpreted according to the dominant mode of thought. *The Golden Bough* stimulates a number of writers, including D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot.

In his mythological studies, Frazer believes that rituals derive from a universal psychic impulse. In this view, he draws parallels between the death and resurrection of Christ and ancient beliefs. He points out that the early myth and sacrificial rites are closely related to natural phenomena such as the cycling of the seasons. In other words, the central motif that Frazer deals is the archetype of crucifixion and resurrection, especially the myth describing the “killing of the divine king” (Guerin, 2004: 168).

Then, he finds out that there are similarities in myth and sacrificial rites in different cultures. From it, he traces the resurrection of Jesus to the worship of Adonis, a very important archetype in the western culture. The scapegoat archetype comes in turn. “This motif centered in the belief that, by transferring the corruptions of the tribe to a sacred animal or person, then by killing this scapegoat, the tribe could achieve the cleansing and atonement thought necessary for natural and spiritual rebirth” (Guerin, 2004: 169).

These findings influence the growth of archetypal criticism greatly. Later Frye comments on Frazer’s work as: “it has had more influence on literary criticism than in its own alleged field, and it may yet prove to be really a work of literary criticism” (quoted in Manganaro, 1992: 18).

### 2.1.2 Jung’s psychological and archetypal theory

Another influential person C. G. Jung (1875-1961) examines archetype from the aspect of psychology based on his theory of collective unconscious. Jung was the student of Freud, but later he broke with his teacher. He expands Freud’s theories of unconscious by classifying it into personal unconscious and collective unconscious. Collective unconscious which he defines as: “a racial memory inherited by all the members of the human family and connecting modern man with his paramecia roots” is the deepest and most hidden part of psyche (quoted in 高红, 2006: 3).

According to Jung, archetypes are some images, which reveal the content of collective unconscious by way of symbol or metaphor. He once mentioned that: “There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has





engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution” (Zhu Gang, 2001:142).

Through detecting the relationship between archetypes and myths, arts and collective unconscious, Jung also applies his theory to literary research. In his *Archetype of Collative Unconscious*, “he theorizes that myths do not derive from external factors such as the seasonal or solar cycle but are the projections of innate psychic phenomena” (Guerin, 2004: 179).

He also points out that the great artist is a person who possesses the “primordial vision”, a special sensitivity to archetypal patterns and a gift for speaking in primordial images that enable him or her to transmit experiences of the “inner world” through art (quoted in Guerin, 2004: 179). Jung also suggests it is only logical that the artist “will resort to mythology in order to give his experience its most fitting expression” (quoted in Guerin, 2004: 179).

Frye frequently acknowledges his debt to Jung and refers his theory as “Jungian criticism” (Frye, 1990: 291).

## 2.2 Frye’s theory of archetypal criticism

The most important critic on archetypal criticism should be the Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye. On the basis of Frazer and Jung’s theories, he developed his theory into the mythological approach to literary criticism. He transferred the definition of archetype from the field of anthropology and psychology to literature.

Frye’s first book is *Fearful Symmetry*, a groundbreaking study of Blake. He regards it as “a study of comparative religion, a morphology of myths, rituals and theologies” (quoted in Manganaro, 1992: 111). At that time, Frye’s literary criticism has a close relationship with Frazer’s comparative anthropology. His conception of archetype consists of “the study of ritual” and “mythopoeic dreams” (quoted in Manganaro, 1992: 111). Frye thinks that literary history moves from the primitive to the sophisticated. Therefore, we can see the literature as a group of formulas that can be studied in the primitive culture. If so, the search of archetypes can provide a way that the literature is informed by pre-literary forms such as ritual, myth and folktale. In that way, myth criticism will be an all round technique that sees the work as an integrative forces of the human beings.

After ten years, with the publication of *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye established



his foremost position in the myth critic. Although he continues to draw on the psychologist of Jung, on social anthropology, on the study of religions, he tries to redefine what literary criticism is and what it can be expected to do.

In the "Polemical Introduction" to *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye attempts a new way of literary criticism, which aims to break "anti-critical prejudices" (Frye, 1990: 3). Although various theories have flourished in the twentieth century, they do not satisfy Frye's reflection on criticism. He criticizes:

It would be easy to compile a long list of such determinisms in criticism, all of them, whether Marxist, Thomist, liberal-humanist, neo-Classical, Freudian, Jungian, or existentialist, substituting a critical attitude for criticism, all proposing, not to find a conceptual framework for criticism within the literature, but to attach criticism to one of a miscellany of frameworks outside it. (Frye, 1990: 6).

For him, he would rather regard literary criticism as a kind of "an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field" (Frye, 1990: 7).

He is ambitious to survey literature in a rather scientific procedure. Here, "Frye applies patently Arnoldian assumptions: Greek writing culture has given us roots in myths of freedom, Hebraic culture promotes concern" (Manganaro, 1992:142). As we known, the western literature is based on two primary sources: the Greek culture and the Hebrew culture. In the Hebrew culture, there is a book, namely the Bible that accumulates its rich cultural heritage. Most western authors are influenced by those two literary origins consciously or unconsciously. The core of Frye's literary framework is the Bible as he explains that "western literature has been more influenced by the Bible than by any other book" (Frye, 1990: 14).

Later in the contents of the book, he presents four essays that are "a trial or incomplete attempt, on the possibility of a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles and techniques of literary criticism" (Frye, 1990: 3). His first essay recognizes various levels of realism in literature, an articulation he termed the theory of modes. The second essay puts forward a theory of symbols, defining four phases of symbols. They are the literal and descriptive phase, the formal phase, the mythical phase and anagogic phase. Symbols of different phases are symbols as motif and sign, symbols as image, symbols as



archetypes and symbols as monad separately. The definition of archetype appears here as “a typical or recurring image”, “a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience” (Frye, 1990: 99). And he also makes clear that “archetypes are associative clusters, and differ from signs in being complex variables” (Frye, 1990: 102).

The most influential contribution of Frye is the theory of myth in the third essay. He starts by identifying myth and the organizations of myths and archetypal symbols in the literature. Then he first states “We proceed to give an account first of the structure of imagery, or dianoia, of the two undisplaced worlds, the apocalyptic and the demonic, drawing heavily on the Bible, the main source for undisplaced myth in our tradition”(Frye, 1990: 140). Frye let the myth of the Bible determine the classification and the symbolic meaning of an archetype which is subdivided into the apocalyptic, the demonic and the analogical. Apocalyptic imagery is mainly about the Christian symbols of Apocalypse or Revelation. Demonic imagery is opposed to apocalyptic symbolism, it is the presentation of “the world of nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion” (Frye, 1990: 147). In demonic world, one individual pole is represented by “the pharmakos or sacrificed victim, who has be killed to strengthen the others” (Frye, 1990: 148). Scapegoat character and demon character are derived from Frye’s analysis of the biblical images, so do the motifs.

Corresponding to the apocalyptic way or straight road, demonic way is the “sinister spiral, the sinister cross, the sinister circle the wheel of fate or fortune” (Frye, 1990: 150), “The labyrinthine wanderings of Israel in the desert fit the same pattern” (Frye, 1990: 150). It is clear for us that exile is a biblical motif as well as a historical and cultural motif for the Jews.

The last essay proposes a theory of genres. When Frye mentions the specific encyclopedic forms, he says “the Bible is a work of literature” (Frye, 1990: 315). Strongly attached to the Bible, he restates some views on the biblical study. For him, “A genuine higher, therefore, would be a synthesizing process which would start with the assumption the Bible is a definitive myth, a single archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse” (Frye, 1990: 315). To make this more specific, he gives examples of biblical imagery covering the characters like Job, Adam and Satan. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* presents all the characters in the Bible. The themes like Messianic cycle and



resurrection “The analytic view of the Bible begins to come into focus as the thematic aspect of it” (Frye, 1990: 325). As for epic, “The action of the Bible, from the poetic point of view, includes the themes of the three great epics: the theme of the destruction and captivity of the city in the *Iliad*, the theme of the *nostos* or return home in the *Odyssey*, and the theme of the building of the new city in the *Aeneid*” (Frye, 1990: 319). We can also conclude these as themes of return, Messianic cycle and resurrection. At last, Frye proposes a typical kind of structure.

When we do look into it, we find that the sense of unified continuity is what the Bible has as a work of fiction, as a definitive myth extending over time and space, over invisible and visible orders of reality, and with a parabolic dramatic structure of which the five acts are creation, fall, exile, redemption, and restoration. (Frye, 1990: 325)

Later in the introduction of *The Great Code*, Frye states: “In a sense of all my critical work beginning with a study of Blake published in 1947, and formulated ten years later in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, has revolved around the Bible” (Frye, 1982: x iv). His later works, such as *The Secular Scripture* (1976), *The Great Code* (1982) and *Words with Power* (1990) all center on the study of the Bible. They are the detailed explanation of his early works.

### 2.3 Frye's archetypal analysis of the Bible

In *The Great Code*, he treats the Bible as a totally unified book. In the very beginning, he reveals his writing aim as “attempts a study of the Bible from the point of view of a literary criticism” (Frye, 1982: XI). He is attracted to the Bible “not because I thought it reinforced any ‘position’ of mine, but because it suggested a way of getting past some of the limitations inherent in all positions” (Frye, 1982: x vi). In order to further emphasize the significance of the Biblical criticism, Frye continues: “Many issues in critical theory today had their origin in the hermeneutic study of the Bible; many contemporary approaches to criticism are obscurely motivated by a God-is-dead syndrome that also developed out of Biblical criticism; many formulations of critical theory seem to me more defensible when applied to the Bible than they are when applied elsewhere” (Frye, 1982: x ix). To make the biblical criticism as an application of myth archetype theory with structuralism and logo centralism, Frye demonstrates his research



through language, myth, metaphor and typology. He discovers the same kind of unifying repetition or typology in the recurrence of specific images throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Frye divides the phases of the revelation into seven phases: creation, revolution or exodus (Israel in Egypt), law, wisdom, prophecy, gospel, and apocalypse. Five of these phases have their center of gravity in the Old Testament and two in the New (Frye, 1982: 106). First, the creation provides us the main characteristics of the creation myth. God as Father “keeps shifting from the benevolent to the diabolical, from a being genuinely concerned for man to an essentially malicious being compounded of wrath and condemnation” (Frye, 1982: 110). The first fall of Adam and Eve is the fall of man in which the man acquire sexual experience and knowledge of good and evil.

Second, God has contracts and testaments with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob and Moses. We know that although God has the ultimate power, the attitude toward him not intends to be passive. Frye concludes this as “In the Old Testament God is naturally assumed to be capable of doing what Israel cannot do for itself, but his willingness to do it depends on their obedience to his law, and that is a strenuous and full time activity” (Frye, 1982: 118). For the Jews, the covenant with God bears a sense of ethical covenant which has a far reaching influence. They take for granted they are the God’s Chosen People and await the coming of Messiah. Liu Hongyi names this theological viewpoint of the Chosen People as “transcendental naming and experimental functions” and the Covenant as “dual-binding from theology and social conventions” (刘洪一, 2004: 149, 159).

Third, Law follows the Exodus soon after the spoiling of the Egyptians. As law is general, wisdom begins in interpreting and commenting on law. The last phase of the Old Testament is prophecy which “is the individualizing of the revolutionary impulse” (Frye, 1982: 125).

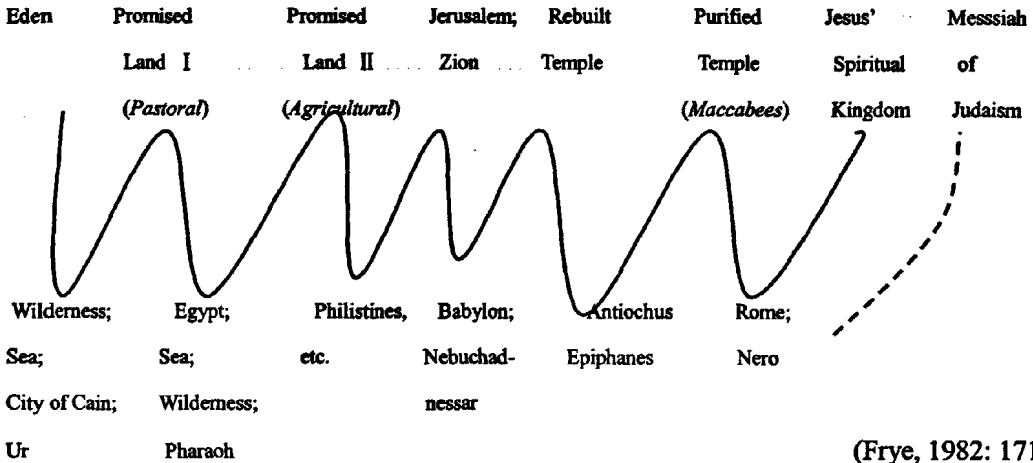
In addition, Frye declares Bible’s narrative as a whole is created by a “U-shaped plot”—typical of comedy.

This gives us a narrative structure that is roughly U-shaped, the apostasy being followed by the descent into disaster and bondage, which in turn is followed by repentance, then by a rise through deliverance to a point more or less on the level from which the descent began. This U-shaped pattern, approximate as it is,



recurs in literature as the standard shape of comedy, where a series of misfortunes and misunderstandings brings the action to a threateningly low point after which some fortunate twist in the plot sends the conclusion up to a happy ending. (Frye, 1982: 169)

Through reading the Bible, the falls and rises can be found by us.



The first fall, naturally, is that of Adam and Eve, where Adam goes into a wilderness that modulates to heathen cities founded by the family of Cain. Passing over the story of Noah, which adds the sea to the image of disaster, the first rise is that of Abraham, called out of the city of Ur in Mesopotamia to a Promised Land in the west. This introduces the pastoral era of the patriarchs and ends at the end of Genesis, with Israel in Egypt. This situation again changes to an oppressive and threatening servitude; Israel again passes through a sea and a wilderness and under Moses and Joshua reaches its promised land again..... For Judaism, the expulsion from their homeland by the edict of Hadrian in 135 A.D. began a renewed exile which in many respects still endures. (Frye, 1982: 172 )

In the Bible, U-shaped pattern also governs dozens of minor plots of fall and rise subsumed in the major one. The stories of Joseph, of Moses, of Ruth, of David, of Job, of Peter and of Paul are examples.

Besides the comedy, Frye thinks "the Bible is not friendly to tragic themes, except for the Passion itself, its approach to victim figures tends to be ironic only" (Frye, 1982: 181). It is the same as Liang Gong observes that "the Bible and the Hebrew culture do



not have much close relation to the tragedy” (梁工, 赵复兴, 2005: 75).

However, serving as the minor structure, the inverted U-shaped narration can be regarded as the typical shape of biblical tragedy. Frye defines inverted U-shape narration as “it rises to a point of ‘peripety’ or reversal of action then plunges downward to a ‘catastrophe’, a word which contains the figure of ‘turning down’” (Frye, 1982: 176). Judas and Satan have the process of degeneration that confirms the inverted U-shaped.

From the above analysis, we can see there are many existed archetypes derived from biblical materials. The critical strategy is to find out the underlying correspondences or analogues in the Bible so as to apprehend the recurrences of certain archetypal figures, themes, and narrative patterns. Thus, the significance of literature can be fully understood.



### 3. Biblical Archetypes in Singer's Short Stories

According to the above analysis of Frye's theories, we know that archetypes can be an image, a character, a motif, a genre or a kind of narrating way, which recur often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience.

In the present chapter, we may explore the character archetypes, the motif archetypes and the narrative archetypes in Singer's short stories. In fact, he frequently mentions the Bible as well as the Judaic doctrines. By identifying and analyzing these recurring biblical archetypes, we have an overall view about Singer's Jewish world which has not really changed since the biblical times.

On the one hand, the Jews suffer as they have been suffering in the Bible. Being the chosen people, Singer said that "amnesia is the only sickness from which the Jews do not suffer" (Alexander, 1990: 28). Singer, like a prophet, sighs sorrowfully for the Jews' sufferings yet directly uncovers the Jews' sins. The presentation of the ugliness of the Jews is attacked by critics as "the revenge of Isaac Bashevis Singer" (quoted in 傅晓微, 2003: 31). However, I insist that Singer's real concern is the revival of the Jews by using the biblical elements. On the other hand, after waiting too long for the coming of Messiah, some of the Jews begin to doubt their belief. Due to the holocaust in the Poland and the Europe, many Jews abandon their belief and tradition totally. "It seems all of Singer's characters have a natural flair for failure, yet they can 'immediately make up some other illusion'" (Qiao Guoqiang, 2003: 86). Some of the illusions work while the others are not. Through the biblical archetypes, Singer foretells the future of the Jews—only to behave as the Bible tells them can they survive and develop. In light of these two points, we first look at Singer's character archetypes.

#### 3.1 Character archetypes

Certain characters in the Bible are considered as archetypes by Frye and many other critics. These characters symbolize the universal feelings which are shared among cultures. Those who are recurring in the world literature are such models as the rebel characters like Satan and Samson, the outcast like Job, the temptress like Eve, the





scapegoat, the savior and others.

Singer knows the Bible well, so Adam, Eve, Satan and Job are all in his allusive concern. But many critics find that he seems to feel a certain kinship with the demonic stories. There are some reasons why he uses the demon characters. The first was economy: "By using Satan or a demon as a symbol, one can compress a great many things. It's a kind of spiritual stenography." The second reason was symbolism: "Instead of saying this is the way things happen, I will say, this is the way demons behave. Devils symbolize the world for me, and by that I mean human beings and human behavior." His third reason is: "Every serious writer is possessed by certain ideas or symbols, and I am possessed by my demons" (quoted in Alexander, 1990: 14).

For my part, Singer utters his voice through the Satan characters to link the human experience in the biblical and the modern time. Detailed analysis of the Satan characters is as the following.

### 3.1.1 Satan character

The biblical image of Satan is the representative of vicious power, evil and temptation. In The Old Testament, Satan is the "the chief evil spirit, the enemy of God and man" (Bible, 2001: 60). He and his demons are responsible for human sins and sufferings.

Considering the demonic treatment in Singer's short stories, he "enters the world of the folk tale, in which the supernatural is very much part of the texture of reality" (Malkoff, 1969: 151). The demons not only definitely exist; they are the narrators. They affirm their identity and their purpose in the stories. To illustrate, they say: "I AM the Primeval Snake, the Evil One, Satan" (Singer, 1982: 94), "IN ancient times there always lived a few men in every generation whom I, the Evil One could not corrupt in the usual manner" (Singer, 1982: 170), "I, a demon, bear witness that there are no more demons left" (Singer, 1982: 179). In the story "The Unseen", the demon speaks directly about what a demon will do to human being:

They say that I, the Evil Spirit, after descending to earth in order to induce people to sin, will then ascend to Heaven to accuse them. As a matter of fact, I am also the one to give the sinner the first push, but I do this so cleverly that the sin appears to be an act of virtue; thus, other infidels, unable to learn from the



example, continue to sink into the abyss. (Singer, 1982: 57)

Linked to religious tradition and possessed of sharply contrasting literary temperaments, Singer's use of the Satan characters may be "as least concerned with moral or religious hysteria as he is with sexual hysteria" (Malkoff, 1969: 152). Singer reexamines the human condition through these aspects. Eisenberg points out: "the moral fiber, of Eastern European Jewry is directly traceable to the morality of the Talmud and the Bible" (Eisenberg, 1969: 63), moral dilemmas in Singer's short stories can be traced back to the Bible as well. The prominent ones are the greed, lustfulness and sensuality.

"The Gentleman from Cracow" depicts the destructive power of money. Inhabitants in Frampol are impoverished. The sudden appearance of the gentlemen seems to be a miracle. He squanders his money and tends to give a ball. A ball is all right for rich Gentiles, but the Jews have not indulged in such festivals since the destruction of the Temple. Actually the attendance of the ball symbolizes the loss of Jewishness. At the ball, the gentleman from Cracow offers ten thousand ducats for each maiden as dowry on the condition that every girl must have a husband before the clocks strike twelve. People go mad for money and obey the gentleman's words without the consideration of the Jewish law.

Only Rabbi Ozer remains sane amid the lusty madness. He sees the sinful dangers and tells the townspeople that they bring down a plague and innocent infants be made to pay for their frivolity. At the moment all the townspeople are hysteric about the money and joy, the whole town is on fire. Then the gentleman reveals his true identity—Ketvet Mriri, Chief of the Devils. The entire village consumes by fire which is an image of God's wrath. The demon corrupts the poor townspeople in terms of gold. To obtain money, they abandon their Jewish tradition and law. However, this brings them disasters.

Rabbi Ozer prefigures out: "It was the infants who had been the real victims of the passion for gold that had caused the inhabitants of Frampol to transgress" (Singer, 1982: 27). The demon punishes the townspeople on sacrificing children to their greed, the lust for gold. The massacre of the children is the warning of the modern Jews. Like the people from Frampol, the Jews "have been blessed with fine children" (Singer, 1982: 15). It is a gift from God, but if the Jews descend to a deeper state of corruption, God will punish them. The story is rather like a modern fable to the Jews while Singer is rather like a rabbinical man here.



Besides money, the demonic narrators triumph through sexual lure. Putting Singer's works back to his Judaic culture and history, his attitude towards sexuality can be interpreted. Judaism strongly disapproves that the sexual desire is sinful and shameful. Singer takes the sexual love as the source of happiness and the power to development (乔国强, 2008: 334). Although Singer has some sexual descriptions in his works, he holds firm that if the immoral sexual relationship develops the people who commit sin will be punished.

In "The Unseen", Nathan is destroyed by his sexual enjoyment. He is tempted by the whorish servant Shifra Zirel and deserts his wife. Unfortunately, this is the arrangement of the Destroyer; Nathan is cheated and deserted with the expense of losing all his money.

In the end, Nathan dies without the confession of his sins whereas we know the triumphant Devil pushes him to sin of lechery. Singer presents us the story how the demons forced the sinner Nathan to "become a man who sees without being seen", "so that his bones would never be properly buried, which is the penalty for lechery" (Singer, 1982: 67). Illusory and imaginative, Singer punishes the people for submitting to the temptation.

Within legal marriage, excesses of sensualism lead to destruction. "The Destruction of Kreshev" is an example. Shloimele is a Talmudic scholar and prodigy but a secret follower of the false messiah Sabbatai Zevi. He shares his master's belief that an excess of degradation means greater sanctity. He not only guides his wife Lise to the forbidden knowledge but also puts her to commit adultery out of intellectual curiosity, boredom, and perverseness. Reb Shloimele's obsession with the mystical sensualism of the Cabbala leads to his downfall, the death of his wife and the destruction of the town. Finally he has gone to exile.

The Satan narrator concludes at last that "I have power only over those who question the ways of God, not those who do holy deeds" (Singer, 1982: 129). It can be understood as that the results of immoral sensual pursuits are anguish, chaos and destructive.

In addition to these concrete pitfalls, the spiritual ones are more of Singer's concern. Like in the Bible, demon's duty is to test whether human being keeps their faiths in God. Loyalty to the only God Jehovah and persistence in the faith is the covenant between



God and Man. Considering with the test of the religious concern; the characters who are perplexed by the demons are all knowledgeable.

In "Zeidlus the Pope", Zeidlus devotes all his time in accumulating knowledge. He doesn't enjoy food, is indifferent to women, and never has anything to do with business. The only human weakness he possesses is haughtiness which is "much more than that silver of vanity which the Law permits the scholar" (Singer, 1982: 172).

Sometimes, Singer's demons are always "to wear through the veneer of civilized behavior" (Malkoff, 1969: 161). Not forcing the protagonists to do anything, he only talks to them. Offering things the protagonist wants, and then they achieve their aims. Here, the Evil One tempts Zeidlus to convert by the prospect of fame, even the hope of becoming a pope. He talks directly to Zeidlus, saying:

I'm telling you because it's not right that a great man such as you, a master of the Torah, an encyclopedia of knowledge, should be buried in a god forsaken village such as this where no one pays the slightest attention to you where the townspeople are coarse and the rabbi an ignoramus, with a wife who has no understanding of your true worth. (Singer, 1982: 172)

If you excel and throw together some hodgepodge about Jesus and his mother the Virgin, they will make you a bishop, and later a cardinal—and God willing, if everything goes well, they will make you Pope one day. (Singer, 1982: 174)

The persuasion works on Zeidlus well, he soon embraces Christianity. After that, he discovers that "even among the Gentiles things were far from perfect" (Singer, 1982: 176). Instead of becoming famous, he suffers from poverty and lives in darkness. He neither refuses to be a monk nor return to Judaism. "He no longer had any earthly desire, but one yearning still plagued him: to know the truth" (Singer, 1982: 177). In the end, only when Satan uncovers his identity is truth apparent to Zeidlus. The truth is "if there is Gehenna, there is God" (Singer, 1982: 178). Singer also reminds us of the existence of the Satan character as the antithesis of God.

Knowledgeable women characters are aims of the Satan as well. In "The Crown of Feathers" and "The Destruction of Kreshev", women characters degenerate because of the curiosity of the false truth.

A small wrong step may endanger one's immortal soul. Akhsa's life in "The Crown of Feathers" is shattered by her intellectual arrogance. Initially she is a girl "dazzled



everyone with her beauty, wisdom and diligence” (Singer, 1982: 352). Dislike traditional Jewish women, Akhsa is a learned woman and searches for truth by her own judgments. When the ghosts of her grandfather and grandmother give diverged guidance to Akhsa, she confidently makes a judgment through the sign of a crown of feathers. She falls into the Devils trap, becomes a Catholic and marries a Polish squire. Years later, her marriage proves to be a failure and her faith decays.

She calls the Devil and asks, “Where is the truth” (Singer, 1982: 360). The Devil tells her: “The truth is that there is no truth” (Singer, 1982: 360). She returns to the Jewish community. She fulfills severe forms of contrition but she doesn’t attain peace. At the end of her life, she is waiting for the pure truth. She spies the crown of the feathers and finds four letters of God’s name had been braided in its top. Akhsa dies with the question “in what ways was this crown more a revelation of truth than the other” (Singer, 1982: 371). The crown’s symbolic revelation of truth is pointed out in the end of the story “if there is such a thing as truth it is as intricate and hidden as a crown of feathers” (Singer, 1982: 371).

Akhsa’s tragic life is a result of the doubt of belief. As awoken, penance could not bring her consolation and peace. She searches for truth all her life. Although her grandfather welcomes her in heaven, she wonders “was it possible that there were different faiths in Heaven” (Singer, 1982: 371).

Lise in “The Destruction of Kreshev” shares some similarities with Akhsa. Lise is beautiful and well brought up. The distinguishing characteristic of Lise is “she put no limit to her thirst for knowledge” (Singer, 1982: 97). She chooses Shloimele as his husband for his prodigious learning. But it is a tragedy, like Akhsa, Lise distorts her nature by her learning of the forbidden books.

To these persons, the Satan characters tempt them by the truth of the world. In order to search for new and real knowledge, they are irresistibly attracted by the truths Satan provides. After that, the innocent persons gradually become hopelessly diseased. They suffer from horrible state of reexamining their convert and exploring the faith.

However, Evil fails for a time in “The Last Demon”. The last demon is cute and thoughtful. He always raises questions such as: “Why demons, when man himself is a demon”, “Why persuade to evil someone who is already convinced” (Singer, 1982: 179). From his words, we know the modern Jews become sinful day by day. The demon states



the condition as:

It has reached a point where people want to sin beyond their capacities. But another imp almost goes mad for seducing young rabbi Tishevitz who keeps his steady as a rock. They try many ways—money, woman, Hersy, reputation, but they are all in vain. Again the demon tells us among all the snares they use; there are three that work unfailingly—lust, pride, and avarice. Of the three, pride has the strongest meshes. (Singer, 1982: 183)

The demon decides to use his last weapon. He concentrates on vanity. This is the same temptation for rabbi Tishevitz and Zeidlus while different results come out. Rabbi Tishevitz resists the temptation, instead he pulls out *The Book of Creation* and waves it to the demon. No devil can withstand this book, so his spirit comes into pieces. *The Book of Creation* and other holy books can get rid of evils. The Jews are urgent to turn back to the bondage of the holy books.

From above stories we can make clear surrender to Satan's inducements brings about the fatal destruction to individuals or to the community. Sex and money, moral depravity, vanity, intellectual pride, are Satan's weapons. As a matter of fact, man's weaknesses and loss of belief give opportunity to Satan. On the surface, Singer provides us a view of man's destruction; though in a deeper sense he explores the sources of human evil and anxiety of the human destiny.

Satan characters can be regarded as a distinction in Singer's works which is an obvious test stone of the Jews' values and weaknesses. However, the scapegoat characters are hidden recorder of the Jews' sins and ugliness.

### 3.1.2 Scapegoat character

The archetype of the scapegoat originates in the Genesis of the Old Testament. It is a story that one day, Jehovah, the God, tested Abraham by asking him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. The next morning, Abraham rose early in the morning and brought his son to the appointed place. When they came to the place, which God had told him, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. He tied up his son and placed him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he picked up the knife to kill him. God, knowing that Abraham fears him, sent the angles to stop him. Instead, he took a goat as a burning offering to God.



Another story about the scapegoat is in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Leviticus. Goat was taken as sin offering to make atonement on the Day of Atonement. Aaron shall put both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the evils, sins, and rebellions of the people of Israel, and so transfer them to the goat's head. Then the goat was to be driven off into the desert by someone appointed to do it.

The goat will carry all their sins away with him into some uninhabited land. So only through scapegoat death, people can achieve cleansing and atonement. For Frye, "The figure of a typical or random victim begins to crystallize in domestic tragedy as it deepens in ironic tone. We may call this typical victim the pharmakos or scapegoat" (Frye, 1990: 41).

In Singer's short stories, the innocent miserable scapegoat characters' sacrifice presents us the sin of the surrounding Jewish community. The scapegoat characters may be the kind hearted rabbi-like Yoineh Meir in "The Slaughterer", may be the credulous Gimpel in "Gimpel the Fool", or even Henne Fire who is an enemy of the townspeople in "Henne Fire". Suffering from miserable lives, their final destiny is the death and salvation. From analyzing these characters, we can imply that Singer is infuriated at the indifference of the townspeople. However, Singer does not tend to attack the Jews but rather face directly the weakness of their nature. It is pitiable that sane persons who are persecuted silently by the surrounding people to become insane.

By experiencing the tensions of "The Slaughterer", we can more easily understand Singer's sympathy for the victim. The story describes the anguish that an appointed ritual slaughterer had trying to reconcile his compassion for animals with his job of slaughtering animals. It's a powerful and harrowing story.

Singer, as a Vegetarian, projects his opinion on the short story. Besides the Vegetarianism thoughts in the story, the character Yoineh Meir is a scapegoat of the human beings' sins.

How can a pious and softhearted person become a slaughterer? Yoineh Meir is a victim indeed. "Yoineh should have become the Kolomir rabbi" we are told in the first sentence, but he is frustrated by the "stubborn opposition" of the Kuzmir wise man (Singer, 1982: 207). They appoint him the town's ritual slaughterer. This will definitely ruin his life, but "everybody banded together to persuade him" (Singer, 1982: 207). The new appointed rabbi "was troubled about the sin of taking away another's livelihood, he



did not want the younger man to be without beard” (Singer, 1982: 207). The coldness and cruelty of the people is revealed. They need a slaughterer and they put Yoineh to the job without any sympathy for him.

Yoineh of course thinks the slaughterer is cruel and sinful. He is anguish but couldn't find any consolation. He watches, trembling, “as the butcher chopped the cows with their axes and skinned them before they had heaved their last breath. The women plucked the feathers from the chickens while they were still alive” (Singer, 1982: 213). But no one cares about his reflections and sufferings. His wife and family members benefit from his job by receiving spleen and tripe of cow and are “rolling in luxury” by the money he earns. So they do not feel Yoineh's anguish, let alone provide any help for him.

It is a dilemma between the job townspeople push him to and his compassion. Finally he ends his life to end the suffering. On the surface, it is a story of an individual torture and destruction. If we explore deeper, his tragedy is a result of the indifference and ignorance for him. The townspeople are not vicious in this story, but their deed actually is the external force for Yoineh's death. Compared with Yoineh's life, Gimpel's reflects the insane surrounding more.

“Gimpel the Fool” is generally regarded as Isaac Bashevis Singer's greatest fictional masterpiece. It has been translated by Saul Bellow and soon brought Singer to the attention of American readers. Critics take Gimpel as representing the recurrent “wise or sainted fool” of Yiddish literature (Siegel, 1969: 159). Singer takes Gimpel as an ideal character and has once asserted “I am Gimpel” (Kresh, 1979: 203). No matter how shining ring of lights on Gimpel, he roots extend all the way back to the Bible. He belongs to the figure of the archetype scapegoat.

Gimpel is an orphan in Frampol who is fooled by the townspeople. He doesn't regard himself as a fool and never believes the lies the townspeople tell him. He endeavors to believe them out of his goodness, or at least his desire to not make trouble. The pranksters are fools as the local rabbi remarks: “For he who causes his neighbor to feel shame loses Paradise himself” (Singer, 1982: 4). However, the townspeople do not change their behavior. They even urge Gimpel to marry Elka, a frivolous woman, who gives birth to a child seventeen weeks after their marriage. His life is like a joke, not only the surrounding people prank on him but also his wife. She gives birth to six children but





no one is Gimpel's. Gimpel asks, "What's the good of *not* believing? Today it's your wife you don't believe; tomorrow is God Himself you won't take stock in" (Singer, 1982: 4). Gimpel makes the connection between faith in his wife and faith in God.

Gimpel's love for Elka extends to all living creatures, from infants to the townspeople who mock him even to donkey calf and goat. The latter association of goat or scapegoat is emphasized: "The nanny goat was a good little creature. I had nearly human feeling for her" (Singer, 1982: 11). Congruent with Singer's ironic reversal, the animal functions ingeniously. Raised by human, goat is an innocent creature. When the goatkeeper Gimpel shows his loving care for it, "the little beast answered with 'Maa' as though to thank me for good will" (Singer, 1982:11). Despite the townspeople's animal behavior, Gimpel, as innocent and patient as the goat, behaves as a true man. Sheldon Grebstein points this as "sanity is thus affiliated with cruelty and foolishness with kindness" (Grebstein, 1986: 64).

After Elka's death, Gimpel wanders over the land like the scapegoat driven to the deserted land. During the wondering years, he is saint-like with philosophical thought about the world. He decides "No doubt the world is entirely an imaginary world, but it is only once removed from the true world" (Singer, 1982: 14). He chooses to continue to believe even when doing so cause him pain. The longer he lives the more he learns to believe and do well. The more he does these the truly wiser he is.

From him, we can observe the power of believing and keeping on it. Can the modern Jewish people still keep steadfast faith? Singer answers for us—only ones who can keep will be wise man. Gimpel may be a person embodied the holy simplicity which is rather a wit strategy to the surrounding lies. While the townspeople are cruel and insane who make fun of their fellow man.

The townspeople who persecute silently the sane people into insane has been depicted vividly in the "Henne Fire". Singer's abuse of the wrong doing of the townspeople is more severe here than the two previously mentioned stories. From the narration in the very beginning, we can see Henne Fire seems to be bizarre and insane or even terribly possessed by some demon. Black skin, coal black eyes, narrow face, sunken cheeks and emaciated-skin and bone depicts a skeleton-like woman to us readers. Always a blaze with her is a horrible thing for the villagers as if Henne was controlled by some fire-breathing demon.



Later we find the more evident and deep reasons why villagers and narrator show no compassion to her, but scorn and dislike. It is because she behaves in the ways that scare adults and children alike. Henne is easily provoked, and she often responds to perceived slights with swear words and curses that are like “worm-eaten peas” (Singer, 1982: 240).

She not only blasphemes against God but also quarrels about everything. At that time, Henne Fire becomes an abandoned woman by the community and even her own family members. We readers are wondering the later story of repentant or fallen woman of this demon invaded Henne Fire.

Singer, however, cunningly presents the reader a scene about halfway through the story that would be easily ignored by the careless readers. On the contrary, the attentive readers will change their previous opinions on Henne Fire. The narrator mentions Henne announces in the marketplace that “the rich boys were being deferred and the poor ones taken in the recruit” (Singer, 1982: 242). Here the narrator admits that this is true. He thought: “But if they had all been taken, would it have been better? Somebody had to serve” (Singer, 1982: 242). And he relates: “But Henne, good sort that she was, could not suffer injustice” (Singer, 1982: 242). Careful readers may question the judgments he has made up to Henne. The narrator moves on to tell us “The Russian officials were afraid that she would cause trouble and had her sent to the insane asylum” (Singer, 1982: 242). What are the troubles she would cause? What are the truths behind her madness on the surface?

The narrator of the story is one of the townspeople, he records Henne’s behavior and talk, and we do not hear the story on Henne’s side. Singer’s superb writing technique lies here. He gives us many clues that hint Henne is not totally be depraved while those around her were not altogether upright and rational.

From part two, the compassion for Henne’s miserable life and the wrath for the townspeople’s cruelty and degeneration has aroused in my mind. After her house is on fire, she has been exiled by the neighbor. Even the poor and sick would not let her into the poorhouse. At last the rabbi’s family took her in as the neighbor noted, “What else could they do? Jews don’t let a person perish” (Singer, 1982: 244). In fact, the rabbi’s behavior is not on his initiative.

After the booth has burst into flame, the neighbors want to send Henne into another town. She tells the village elder, “I’ve lived here all my life, and here I want to die. Let



them dig me a grave and bury me. The cemetery will not catch fire” (Singer, 1982: 245). People are cruel to her, but she wants to stay. Then we find that her misfortune makes her spiritually dead as if she has accepted her dismal. No one can help her. Nothing can cure her. This is the depression for people.

Worse still, knowing her daughters become rich and send money to Henne, her neighbors are soon corrupted by money, and begin to treat her well on purpose. This seems to make Henne even more miserable, and she takes to drink. Soon she burns to death. Viewing the town’s scapegoat Henne, we also face the shortcomings and faults of the villagers.

Setting in the Jewish world, Singer’s story displaces the Jewish life and gives us the stories of innocence and sin. The juxtaposition of truth and falsehood, the kindness and cruelty, the sane and insane shows clearly Singer’s inclination. The Jews, living in exile and misery, could not immerse in their holocaust nightmare too long. They should pay more attention to the inner community and try to get rid of the shortcomings and faults. Only in that way, can they be a vigorous race and continue their history.

### 3.2 Motif archetypes

Certain motifs in the Bible are widely used and become archetypal. Such motifs as the creation, the exile, the paradise lost, and paradise regained are familiar ones for us. Concerning the relationship between the myth and the modern novel, there is a principle: “Works that are mythical do not offer myths as analogies, but make them their principle subject matter or structural principle” (quoted in 高平, 2006: 18). Singer’s works are guided by this principle; exile and redemption are the motifs in his works. Blindness to these motifs will lessen the value of Singer’s work.

#### 3.2.1 Exile

It has long been fashionable to point to the Jews as the perfect symbol for this condition of exile and alienation. Long period of exile is a biblical archetype for the Jews and also an historical motif for them. In the book of Genesis, God said to Abram: “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s home and go to a land that I am going to show you” (Bible, 2001:13). After that, Abram and his descendants were drifted from Haran to Canaan a land flowing with milk and honey. But they are later forced to move



to Egypt in order to escape the famine, they became the aliens in the land of Egypt. For four hundred years, the Jews live under disaster of being slaved and oppressed in the Egypt without a nation. God rescued the Israel to escape from Egypt after hearing their groans in suffering. He chose a great leader Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt and out of slavery. After encountering many hardships as the Israelite people wander in wildness for 40 years. They eventually arrive at their Promised Land Canaan. Frye thought that Exodus is important for the Jews: "with all this it seems clear that God's statement 'Israel is my son, even my first born' confers a highly ambiguous honor, raising the possibility that Israel is being chosen either as a sacrificial victim, or to be passed over and sent into exile, or even both" (Frye, 1982: 186). And he further analyzes that "In the Exodus-Gospel parallel we saw Jesus as following the rising movement of the redemption of Israel of which the Exodus is the chief prototype" (Frye, 1982: 176).

The exile is a "convenient symbol of alienation" and "one segment of thought conceives of as the essential consciousness of being man" (Schulz, 1969: 142). Perpetual exile and a ghetto-existence were supposed to reflect perfectly the Jews in the world without belonging to it. Singer sees the true experience of alienation and exile not only in the ghetto Jews, but also in the emancipated and enlightened Jews. Weakening of the belief in tradition Judaism is not the solution of exile, only the places you belong will consolate you.

As a successful intellectual in the Jewish world, Rabbi Nechemia in "Something is There" has been plagued by "wrath against Creator" (Singer, 1982: 332). He becomes a wandering meditant who finds a way to solve this problem. Like Moses who led the Hebrews in the wild for years before they arrived to the Promised Land, Rabbi Nechemia finds the way hard. At last, to prove the existence of God, he makes a decision: "You conceal your face and I conceal I" (Singer, 1982: 332).

Then he deserts his rabbinical post and starts his drifting to the modern world. Leave Poland and take a train to Warsaw is really an awful thing for the rabbi. The Gentiles on the train are coarse. The rabbi raises his unsettling questions: "Can I become one of these", "If God doesn't exist, neither did Jesus" (Singer, 1982: 336). These questions equal with the long lasting question for the

Jews—where the God's Promised Land is. Pogroms and persecutions on the Jews from Gentile world never cease and become severer.



In Warsaw, Rabbi Nechemia meets his enlightened brother accidentally and finds him paints nude woman. After that, he meets prostitutes, unclear food, hardship and cheating for survival. Even at this hard time, his spiritual drifting doesn't stop, he visits Bresler's library every day except Saturday. He reads extensively to explore answers to his questions, including Spinoza, Kant, Leibnitz and Schopenhauer. None of the books could satisfy him—"No matter where he opened, he encountered a lie" (Singer, 1982: 349). He says to Hinde Shevach: "The whole world worships idols. They invent God and they serve them" (Singer, 1982: 350).

However, in the end of the story "a light he never knew was there flickered in his brain", he finally confesses, "something is there" (Singer, 1982: 351). The end reminds us of Moses death, before his death, he saw the Promised Land.

Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Mount Pisgah east of Jericho, and there the LORD showed him the whole land: the territory of Gilead as far north as the town of Dan; the entire territory of Naphtali; the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh; the territory of Judah as far west as the Mediterranean Sea; the southern part of Judah; and the plain that reaches from Zoar to Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob I would give to their descendants. I have let you see it, but I will not let you go there. (Bible, 2001:214-215)

Rabbi Nechemia's exile ends with a sign and the Jewish helpless optimism of Messiah. Yes, it costs a long time to wait for the God's fulfillment of his promise. Through the period, the Jews try to adhere to their belief. God conceals his face, therefore many Jews turn their back to God and lose their faith. The relationship of man and God distorts.

Although Singer himself spent more than a half century in the America, he kept writing his subject matter "with unique characters in unique circumstances, a group of people who are still a riddle to the world and often to themselves—the Jew of Eastern Europe, especially the Yiddish speaking Jews who perished in Poland and those who immigrated in the U.S.A" (Friedman, 1988: 8). Poland's attraction lies in the allowance of entering many vocations, which were closed in other countries. This doesn't bring eternal peace to the Jews. The Jews revolted against the oppression of the Polish nobility,



so they became the object of persecution. Thousands of the Jews fled to any country that they could stay and the considerable number took refuge in the America.

Exile is the God's instruction for the Jews. If they can go through the hardships and be faithful, Messiah and Promised Land will all become true. However, immigration may cause the loss of belief in religion which is the spiritual homeland of Jews. Through their drifting, Singer's characters find meaning of the existence.

"Three Encounters" is a story that illustrates Singer's concern about the exile of the modern Jews. The story which is told by the first person narrator I may always be the piece of Singer's autobiographic writing. The character I here is somewhat like Singer, a rebel in a rabbi family. He "didn't believe in the Gemara...didn't wish to become a rabbi, didn't want to marriage arranged by the matchmaker" (Singer, 1982: 473). I relate his three encounters with a Jewish woman, another main character Rivekele.

The first encounter is in the Old-Stikov a small town in Poland. Rivekele, the only daughter of the shoemaker, is going to marry his father's apprentice. Though young as the writer I, she is traditional and innocent at that time. In the result, the first encounter is rather like a modern teacher teaches an uncivilized student. Like "some old enlightened propagandist", I bring up topics of love, marriage and a quiet different life in Warsaw (Singer, 1982: 477). From frightened to curious, we may assume Rivekele will be persuaded to try some bold behavior. Singer doesn't do this; instead, their talk stops abruptly because of the coming of my mother.

I meet Rivekele again two years later when they are in Warsaw. I listen to Rivekele's story this time. She breaks the engagement and leaves her hometown with an America who is a liar and doesn't divorce his wife yet. Deserted by the America, Rivekele finds the author to take the consequences of his early words. What can the author do? He suggests they go away somewhere together, but the truth is "America has closed its gates. All the roads are sealed" (Singer, 1982: 480). Being discontent of Judaic traditions, they want to have the free will and run away to start a secular life. To break with the tradition, they not only leave their hometown but also suffer from a spiritual exile.

The third encounter is in New York nine years later. Material prosperity in America doesn't bring good fortune to Rivekele and me. As a Yiddish writer, I live in poverty. But Rivekele's life is no better than the author. Being a Jewish woman with no education



background, she marries and converts for survival and visa in America. The contradiction between their dreamed desire and the limit of the reality counts as the determinant element of their mental exile.

To be more factual, running after the absolute freedom, they abandon their Jewishness. Their life appears no more enjoyable than the life in Old-Stikov. They are searching for home after deserting it. The narrator I write articles about hometown. Rivekele thinks she “was got into a mess and was feeling hopeless” (Singer, 1982: 484). Only when she reads the articles about Old-Stikov, does she feel everything comes back. She confesses that she “want to be a Jewish daughter again” (Singer, 1982: 484).

Singer doesn't write Rivekele's life story directly, yet gives us three fragments of her life instead. It is obvious for Singer that the three encounters are the mirror of the modern Jews' wandering which brings them distorted life and spiritual lost. What's more, “Three Encounters” has an open ending. Rivekele wants them to marry and settle down. It is a desire of end the drifting life and finds a home. Singer doesn't intend to bring the destiny of the characters through the story. In the end, they sit in silent and listen to a mournful song:

He won't come back,  
Won't come back,  
Won't come back.  
Never, never, never, never.  
Won't come back... (Singer, 1982: 484)

Maybe Singer is uncertain to reveal the character's destiny to us. Their life is like the Jewish history. The Jews in their long history have been striving to survive by making hard choices, embracing and rejecting the Jewish tradition brings them from suffering back to suffering. Misery never ceased at a certain point. They have to exile until the Messiah comes. Before that, only to keep the faith and Judaic tradition can give them a home.

Dislike Rabbi Nechemia, Rivekele and I who search for the salvation yet end with an unexpected exile, leaving home for Abba does not come easy. He is pious and traditional. Baumgarten points out “Abba's strength as a character lies in his ability to project himself into the sacred books of his culture and through them makes sense of the confusing values of modernity” (Baumgarten, 1986: 92). Being a shoemaker, he keeps



his Jewish heritage through his work, which is as the tradition of his father as well as ritual. His identity is affirmed like many other Jews by the learning of the Bible.

When his wife, Pesha, read to him ... he would imagine that he was Noah, and that his sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Or else he would see himself in the image of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. He was living in exile because the Jews of the Holy Land had sinned, but he awaited the Messiah, and he would be ready when the time came. (Singer, 1982: 41)

The time hasn't come, while his seven sons immigrate to America. One day, hearing a tremendous crash, he ran out in ecstasy to see the Messiah. Instead Messiah, it is a bomb which has changed his life: "It was like a story he had read in the Bible...He had abandoned the house.... gone wandering like the Patriarch Abraham... as Jacob did at Beth-EL, on the way from Beer Sheba to Haran" (Singer, 1982: 50). He is forced to take up the journey to America which he takes as the God's will to let the Jews exile. In New Jersey, although his sons are very rich and live comfortably, he feels "disordered" and "constant anxiety" (Singer, 1982: 55). He loses his shoemaker's tools as well as his identity.

Only when he continues his shoemaking work, he obtains a new yet traditional life. The secret lies in the link between the shoemaking and the tradition. Keeping the tradition is the only way that brings peace to the shoemaker.

Exile seems to be a predetermination living condition for the Jews which are unavoidable. It is no longer a living condition but a sign of psychological and mental drifting. Singer, as a son of the Jews, bears an "ethic-anxiety complex" for his fellow men (傅晓微, 2006: 105). He explores the meaning of the existence for the Jews. He identifies the survival of traditional values and Judaism is a spiritual pillar to the Jews. To keep the nature and purpose of the Jewish life is to be redeemed. Then we look at the vision of the redemption in Singer's short stories.

### 3.2.2 Redemption

Redemption is an important motif in the Jewish literature as well. Being the God's chosen people, the Jews are waiting for Messiah to come. But the nature of Singer's redemption is neither a messianic event nor a revelation. As Grace Farrell Lee points out: "It is a redemption from utter meaninglessness for it imparts to life some value and





significance” (Farrell, 1987: 98).

In “Gimpel the Fool”, Gimpel goes to heaven “where even Gimpel cannot be deceived” (Singer, 1982: 14). Value and significance in his life lie in his last encounter with Elka, who answers all his queries. Elka deceives Gimpel all the time, while at last she tells truths to him. In Singer’s short stories, the Jews are trying to search for God, they finally get the statements like “something is there”, “one should always be joyous” (Singer, 1982: 14). The exile of their life ends with a transcendent forms of meaning.

Besides the epiphanies of different characters, Singer’s portrait of love which ends human exile is a special kind of redemption. Many detractors have accused Singer of “manipulating a sex-plus-religion formula in order to concoct bestsellers” for a long time (Prager, 1986: 67). Lanids even criticizes that “Singer’s work seems too demonic and erotic to be properly ‘Jewish’ at all” (quoted in Qiao Guoqiang, 2003: 25).

Other critics protest for Singer. Prager’s comment on this issue is “the juxtaposition of sex and religion is instrumental in expressing Singer’s ironic attitude, in discovering contradictions of human nature and in the universe” (Prager, 1986: 68). Liu Hongyi also asserts “Singer regards sexuality as the best way to have an insight into human nature” (刘洪一, 2002: 132). Considering Singer’s Judaic tradition, his use of love as a momentary and provisional end of human exile reflects the Cabbala’s emphasis on sexuality and its portrayal of redemption. In the story “Short Friday” and “The Spinoza of Market Street”, Singer gives us a vision of “order and faith” through love (Golden, 1969: 26).

In “Short Friday”, Shmul-Leibele, a tailor and his wife Shoshe though live a poor life, they are happy and love each other. They adhere faithfully to every detail of Jewish laws by taking their joy in the Sabbath. In the story, Singer pinpoints the Sabbath falling on the shortest day of winter—the Friday. On that day, they unite physically and spiritually. They have Sabbath feast, drink, and sex. Because they forget to open the flute, they are paralyzed and end up being led by an Angel of God into Paradise. The scene of their death is mysteriously and beautifully.

The brief years of turmoil and temptation had come to an end. Shmul-Leibele and Shoshe had reached the true world. Man and wife grew silent. In the stillness they heard the flapping of wings, a quiet singing. An angel of God had come to guide Shmul-Leibele the tailor and his wife Shoshe, into Paradise.



(Singer, 1982: 196)

Singer points directly to us that marital relationship survives mortality and love redeems human being. "The Spinoza of Market Street" is also a story related to love. Yet it is ironic that learned Dr. Fischelson finds his love with the illiterate Black Dobby late in life. Finally the love comforts his loneliness and redeems him.

Dr. Fischelson's lifelong devotion is the study of the Dutch-Jewish philosopher Benedict de Spinoza, the leading figure in the philosophy of seventeenth-century rationalism. He is Spinoza-like; he had been head librarian of the Warsaw synagogue, but "because of his heretical ideas he came into conflict with the rabbi and had had to resign his post as librarian" (Singer, 1982: 80). Members of the Jewish community on Market Street, regard him a "heretic" or a "convert" (Singer, 1982: 80). Black Dobbe, his uneducated neighbor, helps him when he is deathly ill. There is a large gap between them, but the differences attract them both and they gradually think of marriage. The marriage is presented as a miracle. Golden defines this as "archetypal male intellect and female warmth form a mystic and complete union" (Golden, 1969: 28).

In the last paragraph, Dr. Fischelson continues to stare at the heavens—he has just discovers his sexual potency. Then he relates: "Yes, the divine substance was extended and had neither beginning nor end; it was absolute, indivisible, eternal, without duration, infinite in its attributes" (Singer, 1982: 93). He sees himself as the product of an "unbroken chain of causes and effects" (Singer, 1982: 93). The last sentence is ironic that Dr. Fischelson begs forgiveness: "Divine Spinoza, forgive me. I have become a fool" (Singer, 1982: 93). Only in moving from an intellectual to a human does he merge with the universe. His new folly is wiser than his old wisdom.

From the above stories, we agree with Grace's statement that "In Singer's works, redemption is personally rather than communal and secular rather than religious" (Farrell, 1987: 105). The darkness and the blindness are of the human condition. Singer's characters try every means to go deep into the nature of the world and the meaning of life. At last, they will get their meaning of life through their meditation and love. This is the redemption from blindness in the universe.

### 3.3 Narrative archetypes

The Bible has its typical archetype structure, which Frye declares as the "U-shaped



plot". The structure of the whole Bible can be regarded as: paradise-committing the original sin-repentance-salvation. God created the human being and Paradise, but human beings rebel against God, committed original sin. Human beings are drifted out of the Paradise by God and begin their suffering life. After that, human beings find them in a Revelation by repenting to God and receiving forgiveness by God. So the Bible can be regarded as a great comedy, which consists of a couple of tragedies.

Golden tells us: "with Singer, we are rarely in the midst of tragic emotional identification or on the height of comic understanding, we are somewhere between, sometimes closer to one, sometimes closer to the other", that is "our sympathy is perhaps a moral rather than an emotional one" (Golden, 1969: 33). This makes Singer's short stories seem different from the biblical stories. But if we analyze the structure, we'll assume that Singer's short stories adopt the biblical structure for some purposes.

### 3.3.1 U-shaped narrative structure

There are many small U-shaped structures in the big U-shape structure. The Book of Job can be taken as the epitome of the narrative of the Bible too. Job is a man "who worshiped God and was faithful to him. He was a good man, careful not to do anything evil" (Bible, 2001: 509). He had seven sons and three daughters, and rich as well. The God was so proud of his servant Job. So God sent Satan to test the loyalty of Job. Job then lost his children and property, but he did not sin by blaming God. He was put into a confrontation with the ambiguities of human existence. "What is man" Job asks, "that thou makes much of him, and turns thy thoughts towards him, only to punish him morning by morning, or to test him every hour of the day" (Bible, 2001: 514). At last the Lord's appearance ended Job's questioning. He said: "So I am ashamed of all I have said, and repent in dust and ashes" (Bible, 2001: 542). The Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had had before.

Rabbi Bainish's experiences are somewhat like Job's. "Joy" depicts the crisis of belief that overcomes him who buried his four sons and two daughters. From then on, he finds himself hard to love God who permits death. He is so grief that he lives in isolation for a long time. Contradictory as his mind is, he goes back to the study house to search for the path to the meaning of existence. He thinks what he has suffered is not what he deserved. Misfortunes are sent by God as the punishment for sins to the wicked people.



Why did God put his anger against the upright and innocent rabbi? In the study room, on the one hand, he tells the little boy “he who created the bull can reason”, he declares “there is no justice, no Judge” (Singer, 1982: 32). This makes the listener astonished, but he thinks “if Job could endure it, so should the rabbi” (Singer, 1982: 32). Job and the rabbi raise the same kind of question in anguish, but the rabbi goes further. He is blasphemous to the God and says: “in the beginning was the dung” (Singer, 1982: 32). The result of his meditation is “nothing exists beyond the moment. Well, if so, we really have nothing to worry about” (Singer, 1982: 32). God’s silence continues, the abandonment deepens, and the rabbi’s life is meaningless.

The turning point of the rabbi’s spiritual crisis is the appearance of his daughter. His daughter appears in the New Year to ask him to join the guests, half-commanding, half-imploring. Is this the message from heaven? We are not sure, but we know the rabbi gets “the sense of wonder, a supernatural tang, a touch of heavenly joy” after the short meeting (Singer, 1982: 35). With unprecedented joy, he comments on Torah, a thing he had not done for years. And this is also the last epiphany in his life which goes like the following:

Of all the blessings bestowed on man, the greatest lies in the fact that God’s face is forever hidden from him. Men are the children of the Highest, and the Almighty plays hide and seek with them. He hides His face, and the children seek Him while they have faith that He exists. But what if, God forbid, one loses faith. (Singer, 1982: 35)

The rabbi has interpreted the tragedy of his children’s death as the evidence of God’s absence. At his death, all his dead relatives wait for him with arms outstretched. Isn’t it a kind of God mercy instead of wrath for him? He finally murmurs: “One should always be joyous” (Singer, 1982: 37). This is the restoration of belief and a salvation to sufferings as well. The adoption of the U-shaped structure is the modern Jews’ search of belief and meaning in life. God’s purpose transcends man’s ability to comprehend; being a believer makes a better life.

“Something is There” presents Singer’s intention in the same way. Another rabbi, pious and meditative, doubts about God. Breaking with his rabbi life, violating God’s rule, brings him nothing but disillusionment. The revelation comes to him on his deathbed through his final words “something is there” (Singer, 1982: 351).



Singer uses the U-shaped structure in Bible to give us a deeper sense of modern man's dilemma in life. Inherited the Biblical structure, Singer shows us the distinguished Jewish optimism. Our disbelief may prove to be unnecessary. As long as one believes in God, the exile may be eased, the silence may be broken, and the darkness and sufferings may be suspended.

### 3.3.2 Inverted U-shaped narrative structure

In the sequence of rises and falls, Frye finds the inverted U-shaped structure as "the typical shape of tragedy" (Frye, 1982: 176). As its opposite is of comedy, the inverted U is the rise to the highest point then the fall to a catastrophe.

In Singer's short stories, degeneration and rebellion to the Judaism will result in a fatal destruction. The violation of the God's law only brings punishment from God. Akhsa in "A Crown of Feathers" thinks she has found the truth and strays from the Jewish tradition. However, the truth is a false one and her soul suffers until she dies.

Zeidlus' degeneration is also an inverted U-shaped structure. He is rich and knowledgeable. His only weakness is haughtiness. Tempting by the fame of becoming a pope and becoming famous, he converts. At first, it is the first time in his life that he was honored. Yet later on, instead of becoming a pope, he is beset by the poverty and old age. Not until his death, he realizes he commits sin.

"The Gentleman from Cracow" enacts the horrors of the catastrophic novels. The stranger who brings money into the town insists a wedding regardless of the divine law. The townspeople take him as the false Messiah and follow his words. The catastrophe comes as in the Bible is the punishment of the children for the sins of the parents. "The Destruction of Kreshev" is a similar parable.

U-shaped comic structure and inverted U-shaped tragic structure bear the same aim in Singer's short stories. Singer warns that the more Jews try to flee from their faith and tradition the more worthless they find their freedom is. All the destructions of the Singer's Jews result from their casting off their tradition.



## 4. Conclusion

Born in an Orthodox family, with rabbis on both sides of the family, Singer received the traditional Jewish education. He was influenced by the Bible as many other Jews, and was thoughtful about the relationship between God and Man. Instead of becoming a rabbi, he chose to be a secular writer. Writing in Yiddish, he succeeded in America. Hence, whether he keeps his Jewishness becomes rather vague. In this thesis, I try to interpret it through the biblical archetypal analysis of his short stories.

After close analysis of his short stories, we can find the presentation of the characters; motifs and narrative structures have unique intention of Singer. Grace Farrell Lee's statement is like this:

Singer's mediation between the Biblical and the modern is an uneasy mediation. He uses Biblical material metaphorically in a way which deepens our understanding of what has come to be seen as the modern dilemma. But inherent in the biblical material, no matter the context in which it is used, is hope—hope that the exile may be eased, hope that the silence may be breached, hope that our disbelief may prove to be unnecessary. It is this which distinguishes Singer from his contemporaries, this quality of hope, this belief that no matter how dark the night, we ought to sit and wait, for anything is possible. (Farrell, 1987: 11)

Actually, the biblical materials are the link between the old and the new time. Through Singer's short stories, we can clearly see the son of the Israel is deeply concerned with the modern Jew's life and finds his way out.

Attacked by the critics to be too mystic, I think they haven't related Singer's works to his Jewish tradition. After probing into the different biblical characters, we can find the Satan character is a test stone of the Jews. Abandoning the Jewish tradition by various motions will lead to the destruction of the Jews or even the Jewish community. Satan's existence is the proof of the God's existence, but many Jews fail to keep the covenant with the God.

The scapegoat characters are used to reveal the Jews blemishment and sin. Unfortunately, this is always offended by some Yiddish writers and critics. Leon Wieseltier wrote a criticism named "The Revenge of I B Singer" to criticize Singer's



direct depiction of the ugliness of the Jews (傅晓微, 2003: 31). For my part, this deed coincides with what the Jewish prophets did in the Bible. He reminds the Jews of what are good and evil, what are proper for the Jews, why they are sinful and so on.

In this way, the presentation of themes of exile and redemption are closely related to the Bible all the same. Old as these themes are, they bear new significance because of the life in the modern time. Exile is a predetermined living condition for the Jews. In the modern time, exile is not only in the ghetto Jews, but in the emancipated and enlightened Jews; not only a spatial one, but a psychological and mental drifting. Under Singer's pen, exile is unavoidable. However, the Jews who cling to the tradition can find momentary redemption in the exile. The one who casts off the tradition will suffer from spiritual exile more severely.

Redemption in Singer's short stories is rather personal and secular including two ways. One is the epiphanies of meaning in life and the other is the love with emphasis on sexuality. Concerning Singer's Cabbalism thoughts, the redemption is a typical Jewish one.

At last, Singer adopts the biblical structure in his short stories. It is easy to understand that a circular structure is the metaphor that only when the Jews return to the Jewish tradition can they reach for God and truth. Deep love for the Jews leads to struggling efforts of which Singer puts into his stories.

A large amount of his genius lies in the fact that he is the part of his own culture, among which Bible is the origin. Under this influence, he uses complicated and rich archetypes in his works to transmute them to the eternal essence of the Jewish tradition. Breaking the boundaries of time and space, Singer's stories is a parable of Jewish life as well as Jewish past and future.

The biblical elements are what make Singer and his writing both distinctive yet traditional. He is the son of the whole Jewish society as he claims in the Noble Lecture:

As the son of a people who received the worst blows that human madness can inflict, I must brood about the forthcoming dangers. I have many times resigned myself to never finding a true way out. But a new hope always emerges telling me that it is not yet too late for all of us to take stock and make a decision. (Singer, "Nobel Lecture", 1978)

Bearing all the Jews in mind, he has never ceased writing in his life time. He once



tells us “In the history of old Jewish literature there was never any basic difference between the poet and the prophet. Our ancient poetry often became law and a way of life” (Singer, “Nobel Lecture”, 1978) In fact, he is the prophet who writes to guide the Jews to the good behavior and proper value of life. As a prophet, he predicts the only way for the Jews to survive and revival is to embrace the Jewish tradition. Therefore, his works will continue to engage in the Jewish literary history as well as the world literary history.





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