

I.B. Singer

The Destruction of Kreshev (1943)

1. Reb Bunim comes to Kreshev
parodic Polish landscape
Jewish peddlers/Christian bastards
shtetl panorama
not much for the Devil to do!

The propserous household of Reb Bunim
his hyponchondriacal wife Shifra tamat
Lise

Mendl the Coachman
son of no consequence

2. The Daughter
her thirst for knowledge
her secular reading
a masculine female

Mendl's total isolation, emancipation, profligacy
a Jewish-Gentile

3. The Articles of Engagement
Lise chooses the sickly scholar-groom
overly attached to her father
the cosmopolitan groom
from rags to riches
chaste meeting: she quotes Talmud back at him
Rabbi Oyzer still in charge

4. Love
enter: the Evil Spirit
pining for each other
long postponment
Lise more beautiful & bewitched
memorizes *The Customs of Marriage*

5. The Wedding
no-holds-barred wedding
Lise truly penitent

even her mother is impressed [31]
Devil implants sexual torment
groom's sophistry
normative deviance @ wedding feast
marriage successfully consummated



6. Strange Behavior

Shloymele becomes a recluse
strange goings-on in the bedroom
Lise allows her hair to grow back
shtetl gossips that they're studying Kabbalah together

7. Secrets of the Chamber

sexual politics
God/Satan as equals
she becomes a slave to his will = doing the Devil's work [35]
Sabbatian heresy

8. Shloymele & Mendl the Coachman

homoerotic attraction
Shloymele's sexual inadequacy
wants her to have sex w/Mendl
perverse prooftexts to kasher adultery

9. Adonijah ben Hagith and Abishag the Shunnamite

seeing much of Mendl
demonic encounter with billy goat
gilgul: redeeming the souls who lusted for each other
consummating all passions to bring the Messiah
complete identification w/mythic paradigms
Shloymele rendered impotent



10. The repentance

manifold signs of divine wrath in nature
Elul disrupted by the Devil
Shloymele's public confession in besmedresh
admits to Sabbatianism & to driving Lise to adultery
Shloymele = Jerobam ben Nevat
Kreshev = Sodom
accepts 1st penance for adultery

11. The Punishment

Lise calmly accepts full blame & responsibility
Mendl unrepentant
Shloymele reveals full sexual transgression
public punishment -- turns into CARNIVAL
Lag b'Omer in midweek
Lise dragged through street in grotesque attire
she is singled out for abuse
Shloymele hands her a divorce

12. The Destruction of Kreshev

Lise hangs herself
town is divided but rabbinic faction prevails
buried behind the fence
Shloymele goes into exile

Reb Bunim returns & justifies God's ways
Satan has no dominion over him
after Holy Days, Reb Bunim sells the house & leaves Kreshev

Mendl sets fire to the town
survivors turn Lise's grave into holy site