

A Passion for Clothes

- I. The Temptation of Bashe Gitl
 - A. Dramatis personae
 - 1. Elimelekh: always a Hasid,
never a husband
 - 2. Bashe GITL [GUTE]
Jewishly educated; socially integrated
Pious but unprotected
 - 3. Satan [der bal-dover]
cannot proceed frontally
chooses disguise: **evil-as-virtue**
 - C. A sin-for-all Seasons
 - i. Three Festivals: skimps on Passover
 - ii. Sabbath / New year's /
 - iii. Purim, minor holidays
Scratching the bottom of the barrel
 - D. A gem for every self-indulgence
 - 1. ruby for easy childbearing
 - 2. emerald: touchstone for the soul +
built-in prophylactic
 - 3. sapphire for wisdom
normative magic; the women's realm
 - E. Satan quits the scene: natural plot takes over;
i.e. **her** imagination takes over
 - 1. replaces the maid w/poor orphan
 - F. Her paralysis
 - 1. healers are powerless
 - 2. sign of divine displeasure; Divine warning
 - 3. unrepentant
 - 4. working the poor orphan to the bone

5. Basha Gitl's Last Test
 - A. Her clothes are stained
 - B. Blaming & shaming of the orphan
 - C. Failed intercession of Zaddik of Lublin
 1. his prayers are blocked
 2. insists on seeing her face-to-face
 3. husband finally returns home
 - D. Visit to the Rebbe
 1. caught in forest in a blizzard for 3 days
 2. the haunted inn
 3. Elimlekh's interdiction
 4. Bashe-Gitl breaks the interdiction
 5. her punishment
 - E. The verdict
 1. Zaddik's sermon on moral equilibrium
 2. Bashe-Gitl's accpts the verdict
 3. Insists on restitution for the orphan girl
 4. Elimelekh follows suit & they are rewarded w/more pious children

SUMMARY:

1. The Narrator

"traditional" storyteller
 pious editorializing
 der bal-dover leygt, vi zayn shteyger iz, di
 shmadkeyt in der yire arayn
 very learned diction
 narrated in present about long ago
 before the mass immigration to America
 ironic comment about the # of Jew. holidays
 even then an orphan girl could be such a
 sinner!

When Polish squires caroused in Jewish inns

A Hasidic legend: hagiographic kernel
 Formally and ideologically a pietistic tale

B. Satan

Lets things take their course
 Only demon-wedding = fantastical

Other symptoms: strange but plausible

C. Zaddik: cameo appearance

More a plot catalyst than an active figure

D. Plot of sin-and-punishment

SIN: on victim's own terms

Trivial, cloaked as piety

Disguised as merit

Frenzy to acquire, wear clothes

Conspicuous consumption

SOCIAL CRIME: shames the poor orphan

How & why the community testifies against
her

E. Punishment & Final Stasis

BG acknowledges her sin & is forgiven

Jewish justice is restored

Evil is **externalized**

Q: What is new?

A: Evil as equal struggle

A: Supernatural is **knowable**

A: Sin = exploitation of the poor, conspicuous consumption

A: Focus on the psychology of temptation

Passion for Clothes

CREATIVE

Epic rules of folk narrative

1. Law of opening/closing
2. Law of repetition
3. Law of 2/scene
4. Law of contrast
5. Law of twins
6. Imp. of initial/final position

Stylistic features

1. Plot of action
2. Single-stranded
strict subordination to number
3. Patterning
4. Tableaux scenes
5. Logic:
themes exert influence on the plot
6. Concentration on leading character

High Mimetic Heroes

Bashe-Gitl < גיטל >
Jewishly educated; socially integrated
Elimelech: always a haoid, never a husband
pious husband but unprotected

Fantasy-as-Real

Satan: decadent, workmanlike, has a job to do
disguised as ג'וּנֶסֶר
even the party is relatively tame

Satan lets things take their course
only demon wedding = fantastical
other symptoms = plausible

Plot of Sin-and-Punishment

Sin: on victim's own terms; trivial, cloaked as piety
disguised as merit

frenzy to acquire, wear clothes; conspicuous consumption
shames the orphan = social crime
Her paralysis = divine warning

Punishment = Final stasis, forgiveness

Bashe-Gitl acknowledges her sin
Jewish justice is restored
evil externalized

BETRAYAL

outer vs. inner frames

redemptive ending

Alas, didactic, "traditional"
storyteller; pious editorializing
narrated in present about long ago
theoretically pietistic tale

Female character

Comes Appearance of Lubliner