



The Dance of the Demons: A Novel (The Helen Rose Scheuer Jewish Women's Series)

By Esther Singer Kreitman

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The Dance of the Demons is a major literary rediscovery. In her daring autobiographical novel, originally published in Yiddish as *Der Sheydim Tanz* in 1936, Kreitman vividly and lovingly depicts the world of Polish shtetls and Jewish Warsaw that many have come to know through the books of her famous literary brothers, Israel Joshua and Nobel-Prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer. Replete with rabbis, yeshiva students, beggars, farmers, gangsters, seamstresses, and socialists, this world looks radically different through the eyes of a sister, who was I. B. Singer's inspiration for the story "Yentl, the Yeshiva Boy."

Deborah (Kreitman's fictional self) is barred from the studies at which her idealistic rabbi father and precocious brother excel. She revels in the books she hides behind the kitchen stove, in her brief forays outside the household, and in her clandestine attraction to a young Warsaw rebel. But her family confines and blunts her dreams, as they navigate the constraints of Jewish life in a world that tolerates, but does not approve, their presence. Forced into an arranged marriage, Deborah runs away from her new home on the eve of World War I. Epic in scope, this neglected youthful masterpiece provides a shattering vision of a lost world, and reveals the fate of women in a contradictory time, where age-old tradition scraped against modernity.

Originally published in the United States as *Deborah, The Dance of the Demons* now includes memorial pieces by Kreitman's son and granddaughter.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A daring feat. . . Recommended for all libraries."

—*Library Journal* starred review

"Kreitman's opus is an important contribution to the vastly neglected genre of feminist Yiddish literature."

—*Booklist*

"Above all, the sheer story-telling skill of Kreitman's prose reminds us how past worlds are evoked through detail, practical reminders of daily lives and customs which no longer exist."

—*The Jewish Quarterly*

"I do not know of a single woman in Yiddish literature who wrote better than she did."

—**Isaac Bashevis Singer**

"The reappearance of this novel will be welcomed by students of Jewish and Yiddish literature and 20th-century feminist writing. Summing up: Recommended."

—*Choice*

"Kreitman's writing is clear, marvelously descriptive and occasionally evocative. . . A wonderful introduction by Ilan Stavans and comprehensive afterword by Anita Norich draw the parallels with Esther Kreitman's life and place the book in historical perspective."

—*Jewish Book World*

"[Kreitman] clearly has the same deep, haunting literary storyteller's gifts as her siblings."

—*Lilith*

"This new edition, with its timely critical reappraisal of Kreitman's place in her famous family as well as [*The Dance of the Demons's*] place in Yiddish literature, marks a long overdue effort to translate the rest of Kreitman's work, and is still, after so many decades, a haunting and haunted book."

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"[A] truthful and delicate portrait."

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About the Author

Esther Kreitman (1891-1954) was born in Bilgoray, Poland, and is the sister of renowned Yiddish writers Israel Joshua and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Raised in Warsaw and married in Antwerp, Kreitman and her family fled to London at the start of World War I. She is the author of two novels and a collection of short stories.

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