



Venus in Furs

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch , Larry Wolff (Introduction) , Joachim Neugroschel (Translation)

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'Venus in Furs' describes the obsessions of Severin von Kusiemski, a European nobleman who desires to be enslaved to a woman. Severin finds his ideal of voluptuous cruelty in the merciless Wanda von Dunajew. This is a passionate and powerful portrayal of one man's struggle to enlighten and instruct himself and others in the realm of desire. Published in 1870, the novel gained notoriety and a degree of immortality for its author when the word "masochism" - derived from his name - entered the vocabulary of psychiatry. This remains a classic literary statement on sexual submission and control.

Venus in Furs Details

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Author : Leopold von Sacher-Masoch , Larry Wolff (Introduction) , Joachim Neugroschel (Translation)

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From Reader Review Venus in Furs for online ebook

Morgan says

After reading Fanny Hill and Marquis de Sade, it only made sense to read this novella.

For erotica, Venus in Furs is actually well thought out and written. Yes, this about whips and things that are kinky, but it's also about the human psyche and mythology. There's some great character development and conflict in this novella.

Each of the main characters represent something either dealing with the human mind or mythology. You have Wanda (the title character) that represents power and Venus and Severin (the narrator) who is represents obedience and Dionysus. Later on, there is a Greek man that joins the party, but I won't explain his part because of spoilers.

The main plot of the story is Severin is obsessed with finding his Venus in Furs. He finds Wanda who looks like the goddess, but she is a dominatrix. She wants Severin as a sexual slave than a lover. He starts obeying his mistress until a Greek named Alexis (they call him Apollo) joins in on the fun. Then the conflict and the real drama of the book starts.

I love the use of mythology. It's not that hard to turn gods into sex allegories. In many ways, Severin is Faust trying to bring Helen back from the dead to have sex with her, except Severin is trying to make his dream of Venus in Furs a reality. There's a bit of Fraud and Jung going on in this novella. Maybe you can see some of Wonder Woman in this book as well. If you don't mind sexual domination mixed with mythology this book's a great read.

Tia Katrina Canlas says

It was as if Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch's translator was assigned to use the words "dilettante", "suprasensual", and "ermine" as many times as humanly possible in the course of 100 pages-- to lazily tell a story about a man who wants to be his lover's slave.

The most interesting part of the book is its introduction, in which it is made known that the author lived out his own character's fantasies when a woman copied Wanda's letter and made Sacher-Masoch her slave. Hopefully, they weren't as boring as their fictional counterparts.

Jessica says

If I remember correctly, this book was stupid. It also seems to have contributed to a lot of ridiculous behavior, and has led indirectly to many horrendous cultural products such as "people taking their silly sex hang-ups waaaaay too seriously," "fetish nights," "vinyl outfits," and "that irritating kid in your freshman dorm who walked around with a leash around his neck."

BUT, on the PLUS side, having read it made me feel way more knowledgeable about the VU song on the banana album, which I guess was pretty important to me at the time. I had to put this on here because I just reviewed SOAE and SOO, and even though this book is unfortunately not titled "Story of Venus in Furs," it's

associated in my mind with the other two as the sort of matching set of crap-you-read-as-a-kid-when-you-are-intrigued-by-the-idea-of-feeling-fancy-for-reading-some-kind-of-obscurish-book-with-a-cult-following-that-is-about-omg-omg: **SEX!!!!**

Okay, everybody on Bookface thinks this book is like amazing, so who knows, but it seemed awful silly to me when I read it as a fourteen-year-old. Maybe I didn't get it or something because I hadn't yet had all those subsequent masochistic relationships that have since plagued my life. OR, maybe everyone else on here is crazy.

Meredith says

Haven't reviewed on goodreads in a while, but was googling this work's translation dates and came across the negative reviews here. Thought I should contribute my defence.

What Makes *Venus in Furs* a groundbreaking and thoroughly enjoyable work?

1)Literary tradition

The finely-rendered frame structure follows the German novella tradition's strong, almost proscriptive, tradition of narrative framing (think Goethe, Storm, Hoffmann). Accordingly, it created a sensation among early readers by presenting shocking content (deviant sexuality) within a deeply conservative, conventional form.

2)Interpretation (dreams and ekphrasis)

What desires does a given dream or artwork represent, directly or indirectly? The novella demands that we read the layers of art within art, dream within fiction. It anticipates the work of his fellow Austrian, Sigmund Freud, particularly his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

3) Sexual Theory

Venus in Furs undoubtedly ranks in the top ten books of the nineteenth-century for advancing new ideas about sexual practice. The famous sexologist Kraft-Ebbing is deeply indebted to Sacher-Masoch, as one sees in the monumental *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886).

4) Contract Theory

The work carries interesting implications for the student of law in literature. The sadist Wanda and the masochist Severin set up a contract wherein he relinquishes himself utterly to her will. (The fiction's contract was based on a real contract Sacher-Masoch made with his wife!!!)

5) Feminist Moral

S-M concludes that as long as women do not receive the same educational opportunities as men, power differentials will exist between the sexes: "Woman...as man is at present educating her, is his enemy. She can only be his slave or his despot, but never his companion. *This she can become only when she has the same*

rights as he, and is his equal in education and work." (emphasis mine)

6) Charming to Read

From the prose details of costume, to the outrageousness of the "perversions", to the sense of place the text creates, the reader has a rich world in which to plunge. It's not a world I'd want to live in, but certainly a delightfully cruel world to imagine.

p.s. Deleuze has an interesting book on Venus in Furs--Coldness and Cruelty.

Lizzy says

"To be the slave of a woman, a beautiful woman, whom I love, whom I worship - !"

"And who mistreats you for it," Wanda broke in, laughing.

"Yes, who ties me up and whips me, who kicks me when she belong to another man."

If submission and bondage is your thing, then you will probably like this book. In a nutshell, Severin likes women. Severin likes women who are filthy rich. Severin likes women who are filthy rich and treat him like shit. Wanda is that woman. That is pretty much what Venus in Furs is about.

Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch apparently drew from his own masochistic experience with Baroness Fanny Von Pistor. He agreed to be her slave, and renounce all claim on his own life (she could even kill him if she wished), and this is reflected in Venus in Furs. The "contract" gives Wanda (or "Mistress") free reign to make Severin suffer in a variety of ways; whipping him regularly, kicking him around, starving him, torturing him emotionally, etc. And Severin seems to get off on it. In fact, he begs her to punish him ("I want to be your dog"). As long as she wears her furs whilst doing it, he's happy.

As you can imagine, the novel caused quite a stir in Austrian society. The idea of a woman being dominant (having the whip-hand, so to speak) was ludicrous to most people. We even see Wanda feeling hesitant at first. She is reluctant to defy social norms, and I can sort of understand this. She is used to being dominated, not the other way around. She is understandably creeped out by Severin to begin with, but I think that's mainly because he keeps kissing her feet and telling her to stand on his neck. He is, to put it bluntly, a pussy. I can think of no other word for him. He also has a habit of falling in love with statues, and treating them as though they were real. Despite all this, Wanda eventually overcomes her apprehension, after realizing that she **really** likes being in control.

There are many gender issues in this book, and I'm deliberately avoiding that long and winding road known as "Interpretation" as I will end up making no sense whatsoever. What I will say is that I was interested by the handsome, androgynous Alexis Papadopolis, who is so drop-dead gorgeous that literally **anyone** will fall in love with him. For example:

"He was a man like a woman. He knew he was beautiful and behaved accordingly; he would change his coquettish attire four or five times a day, like a vain courtesan.

In Paris he had appeared first in women's garb, and the men had stormed him with love letters. An Italian singer, famous equally for both his art and his passion, invaded the Greek's apartment, knelt down, and threatened to take his own life if his plea was not granted."

See what I mean? Even Severin has a bit of crush on him. I had to keep reminding myself that this book was written in 1869. At times, it voices startlingly modern sentiments. Sacher-Masoch certainly wasn't your average Austrian.

I gave Venus in Furs four stars because I enjoyed it rather more than I was expecting. The ending pissed me off a bit, as did Severin's constant cries of "Wanda!" (I counted eighteen times in 148 pages) but Sacher-Masoch writes so well that you find yourself unable to stop reading. Give it a go. I dare you.

Alex says

"You interest me. Most men are very commonplace, without verve or poetry. In you there is a certain depth and capacity for enthusiasm and a deep seriousness, which delight me. I might learn to love you." (20)

This line really jumped out at me, because it's just what I imagine a lot of nerds imagine some lady will say to them some day. And they'll be like yeah! I have a depth and capacity for enthusiasm! I was just waiting for someone to notice! I bet nerds really like this book, which was written by a nerd and then translated to English by a different nerd.

You know that old defunct Tumblr, "Nice Guys Of OK Cupid"? It was a collection of dating profiles from guys who were all "I'm so nice, why don't any women love me? I would treat a woman like a goddess but I guess they don't want to be treated like goddesses, they all want some asshole instead! Women are such bitches, because they don't love me!" They're descendants of this loser.

Masoch can't stop quoting this one line from Goethe, "You must be hammer or anvil." He thinks that "Woman demands that she can look up to a man, but one like [our dorktagonist Severin] who voluntarily places his neck under foot, she uses as a welcome plaything, only to toss it aside when she is tired of it." (105)

The problem here isn't with Severin's (or Masoch's) particular fetish, which is to have ladies whip them. That's fine, man, have your fun. The problem is that he extends it to some kind of conclusion about human nature that's not at all true. Women do not by nature demand either to look up to a man or toy with them. (Men aren't like that either.) That's a dumb idea. Here's another thing that's not true: "Man even when he is selfish or evil always follows principles, woman never follows anything but impulses." (43)

And it's boring! God, for a book about whipping there is none too much whipping. Instead there's a whole lot of him begging to be her slave, and then her treating him vaguely slave-y, and then him getting all indignant, and then her all "Well see, you're being a dick about it," and then him being all "Oh, you're mad at me, treat me like a slave," and then we circle back around to the beginning like fifty times. Wahhhhh, quit topping from the bottom, nerd.

If you flip the characters' genders in your head while you're reading, the book goes an awful lot like that 50 Shades thing does. (I know more or less how it goes from hearing a million readers and feminists get all pissy about it. It's hard to tell who's more offended about that book - readers or feminists.) But there's a funny twist at the end (spoilers follow for this and I think 50 Shades too): you'd expect a female protagonist to win over the guy and be with him (one way or another). But here, she just dumps him. She's all "I can easily imagine belonging to one man for my entire life, but he would have to be a whole man, a man who would dominate me, who would subjugate me by his innate strength" (23) and then she runs off with a dude who's just like that. So Masoch's kink assumes that one who has it isn't enough to satisfy a woman. That's weird, and probably kind of a bummer for him.

So this is a book about a self-defeating fetish for being controlled, born out of a weird hatred and fear for women. It's unpleasant, and boring, and all too familiar because I still hear that shit today, from miserable nerds.

Lame, dudes. Lame.

Sandy says

This book is much disadvantaged by being grouped with the books of the Marquis de Sade. It isn't a masterpiece per se, and it does have that "unfinished draft" air, but it was interesting and grabbed my attention all through the plot, and I don't think I felt bored or extremely disgusted while reading. What surprised me most was how the book in some parts was actually very emotional and soft in ways I couldn't explain or comprehend.

PirateSteve says

//www.youtube.com/watch?v=PK8ijrapwA8

Way back in 1869 Leopold wrote this book about some fun he was having.
Tis true. Leo gave the world a new label for these exploits... masochism.
What we've done with it since then is our own business.

Severin did get what he wanted.
So many people never do.
They never dare ask.

Paquita Maria Sanchez says

Umm, okay...

The first portion of this book is wonderful. The forced lasciviousness of the female protagonist, the pathetic attempts at seeming like a banshee, a Siren, all draped in furs and spouting some bullshit about Paganism. I have met this girl before, and this boy, I have watched their pitiful dance of apathy, their ham-handed fears of monotony and monogamy, the (in my opinion) bullshit notion that caring in the romantic sense for one chosen and well-suited person with whom you specifically connect and no other (and it goes without saying, no 'many others') is selfish and demeaning to the notion of 100% Venus-like, 'hypersensual' love of sexuality/sensation, inhibits one's ability to love all other human beings genuinely, and denies pure, primitive desires, bladdy fuckin' blah. I mean, I have greeted lovers with apathy, sternness, initial doubts which reached fruition in feelings chilling, freezing, eventually frozen; I would be completely out of touch with myself if I were to believe otherwise. We have all been cruel, we have all wavered, our eyes have wandered, our emotions fallen flat. Sure, sure. What I could never stand was the hyper-rationalizing of this emotion, the *forcing* of it. There was always a bit of schadenfreude which set in when some of the loftier of my hippie-dippie, "I just have to be free, maaaaan" acquaintances found themselves face-to-face with their own inherent, albeit denied natures, when all their trite musings and assumed sentiments about free love came back to kick them in their collective private parts via severe jealousy and heartache.

It reminded me of this conversation I had a few years ago. I was at a bar catching up with some old friends I had not seen in forever, though they were all still quite close, and seeming a little cult-y to me based on our talks that afternoon. They were discussing the various free-love, non-committed relationships they were attempting, and how this was "opening them up" to the possibilities of connection contained in any number of people. (Snicker.) After my initial, more pressing questions (e.g. "Uh, you have health insurance, right?"), I just set to half-drunkenly saying "Good luck?" and "No way, man. I have enough trouble dealing with one person. Also, I would be, you know, really depressed and completely miserable in that situation." Once I began attempting to explain the few snippets of evolutionary science I had read on the subject of jealousy, eyes glazed over, and it was clear we had reached an impasse. "Again, good luck," I said. They all shortly ended their romances. I guess people got jealous and shit got complicated. Weird.

Sorry to rant. I just adored the introductory chapters of this book for the fact that the woman they present is just. So. Full of it. What's better is, her nonsense about being free from attachments, a goddess who commands the love she needs then drops the tired bits like pencil shavings, a woman incapable of loving another human being, but rather simply bent on seeking out pleasure in the most hedonistic, unashamedly egocentric sense, seems to be heading toward a serious reckoning. What's more is, the man who is painted as her future slave represents all that is flighty in the dance of romance. He only loves a woman of stone, his interest wanes at kindness, he wants the one he can't have, and it's driving him mad all over all over all over his face every single goddamn time until the very moment when she cares, when she drops her guard and loves him back, and then his foot is suddenly wedged firmly in the door and his panties are noticeably roomier. We are all guilty at some point, right? People get bored. They want excitement and unpredictability and newness. They crave the hunt. Malaise. What could be were I free? It happens. It is not ideal.

Unfortunately, her reckoning does not ever really come about, and this suddenly turns into some bullshit about not letting yourself care about others, lest you be a malnourished, mistreated donkey. Exactly where I thought this was going is precisely the opposite of where it went, and not in a clever, plot-twisty sense. About midway through, I came to realize that Sacher-Masoch saw this forceably cruel woman as some sort of lesson-teacher about how cruel Women are. The smart ones, anyway! They know how to hold on to a man: treat him like shit! Okay, I admit that the two men I have been wholly unfrosty with in my adult life are the two men who have broken my heart, but I would like to think this won't always be the case, and that it is a horrifying and just awful notion that to keep someone in love with me, I have to hate his guts, or just deal with his existence begrudgingly like I deal with Austin drivers or my next door neighbor who is constantly making humping noises through the wall. These things I deal with. Companionship is often played like a chess game, but I thought the idea was to find someone with whom all that crap drops away? Ever seen an 80-something year old man carrying his similarly elderly wife's oxygen tank for her through Denny's? Did that warm your heart? Don't read this. Ever had friends who slipped into counter-culture to such an extent that your conversations suddenly turned into the dynamic of them constantly preaching and you constantly scoffing? Did it suck? Don't read this.

I should write an aside here that I know that there are all types of people in the world, all sorts of romantic arrangements, etc. I'm not saying it's impossible, I just think it goes against the more common manifestations of human nature to not feel emotions of possessiveness toward a cherished lover. Even a hated lover, sometimes! Your brain, your evolutionary history, your biology is playing tricks on you at all times, it's all very complicated, and sorry to over-simplify. It just seems like a lot of this modern embrace of what it is to be an Enlightened Lover and Self-Actualized Person is quite often going against the intrinsic needs of those who proselytize about it. It's, you know, *hip*, like riding a fixed-gear bicycle without being able to explain to me why you prefer not having brakes, or eating the 'Organic' ramen noodles because somehow they're better in this way you seemingly haven't even bothered to contemplate yet. You may have an explanation, and you may really feel it. More power to you. I'm quizzical by nature though, and am more often than not left, in my hippie-interrogations, with vacuous stares and zero answers from the interrogated. Hence the rant.

So this book: thank you for the lame female character I could make fun of, thank you for the spotty but at

times quite lovely observations of human emotional chameleon-ism and the malleable nature of attachment...thanks for all that stuff. I also thank you for The Velvet Underground & Nico, which in every single song manages to explore the subjects of dominance and submissiveness, passiveness and passion in a much purer, more accurate, and rewarding way than you ever possibly could, you mediocre book, ya. And that album has not just a heroine, but heroin! I'll be your mirror, and reflect what you are, in case you don't know: an overrated book; the scenes from a porno which lead into the actual pornography, as there is no sex in this book about sex, but just the ridiculous lead-up conversations. Do you watch *Logjammin'* to find out if he fixes the cable? No, you don't.

Greg says

How I caused irreparable harm to our entire country because of a relationship gone sour with the author of *Anti-Oedipus*"

Confession time. I didn't really read this book, but I'm going to rate it anyway. I did read the Deleuze book *Cruelty*, which is him writing about *Venus in Furs*, and then the book itself. I remember really liking the Deleuze part, but at that point in my life I was so in love with Deleuze that he could have written anything and I would have ejaculated all over it. It was a bad time for me, I thought things were going great between me and Giles, but it was still in the early months of our relationship, and things looked rosy. I didn't realize that I would become painfully co-dependent on him and that he would plague me for the next year, taunting me, not letting me get my school work done while he kept calling to me, asking me to read just one more book of his, one more essay, telling me that the paper I was writing on him would never be good enough. "Come on, edit me one more time, I promise we will then be done and we can get on with our lives," he would say, but it wouldn't be one more time, it would be again and again and again until he had me completely ruined.

And then about 20 months after our cheery romance began, I finally thought I would break free of him. I finished my stupid paper, at the price of basically ruining an entire year of school in the process, costing me more money than I make in a year in tuition, but I got it done; but Deleuze had the last laugh, the morning I finally dropped the paper into a mailbox to get it out of my life and into my professors hands he masterminded a complex plot to destroy a couple of buildings that just happened to be right across the street from the mailbox my paper was sitting in, and causing it never to make it to the professor (actually it did make it to him, but I had to resend it), but Deleuze's actions that day made me so fed up with the academic pretensions I'd been harboring that he successfully ruined grad school.1 for me.

Do I really believe that a dead French philosopher did all of this? Yes, yes I do. I believe that in my solipsistic view of the world that Deleuze orchestrated 9/11, that it was my stormy relationship with him that caused the death of thousands of people, threw our country into a stupid war that will probably never fucking end, that helped make our country even worse than it was before, and make the 90's look like a great time when all we had were jackboot ATF agents and an occasional bombing on foreign countries to make us look like total assholes to the rest of the world. I don't hold Bin Laden responsible, nor George Bush for anything he did post 9/11, how could he act any differently under the all encompassing power of Giles Deleuze?

Anyway, I really liked his part of the book. The part about the really fucked up relationship and fur coats and shit I didn't really like. So I thought I'd say that, just to clarify my opinion on another rating that has no review attached to it.

Teresa Proença says

Foi o livro **Venus à la Forrure** (o título em português foi dado por Ana Hatherly), de Sacher-Masoch que deu origem ao termo *Masoquismo*.

Vai daí, já se está mesmo a ver qual o assunto tratado neste romance...que de erótico não tem nada, mas de cómico tem tudo.

Séverine que, com pouco mais de trinta anos, já "*quase não se podia mexer; já quase não respirava* (pudera, com tanta porrada que levou...) conta a um amigo a sua louca paixão pela sádica Wanda. Ela não queria bater-lhe, mas ele pediu tanto tanto que a pobre se viu na necessidade de comprar um chicote e umas cordas. Até eu, que sou pacífica, se visse um homem tão necessitado de carinho como o escravo Gregório, por caridade, também lhe dava umas valentes coças...

Que mulher pode resistir a tais súplicas?

"Chicoteia-me, peço-te, é para mim um prazer!

Espezinha-me! Exclamei, e prosternei-me diante dela com a cara no chão.

(...)

As pancadas choviam vigorosamente nas minhas costas, nos meus braços, retalhavam-me a carne e deixavam uma sensação de queimadura, mas os sofrimentos extasiavam-me porque provinham da mulher que eu adorava, por quem estava disposto a dar a vida."

O amor exige tantos sacrifícios...

"Moral da história: *quem se deixa chicotear, merece-o.*"

(ilustração de Suzanne Ballivet)

Ina Cawl says

what an weird and strange fetish Severin had to feel ecstasy in pain and humiliation

Evan says

I wanted to write an in-depth review, quoting favorite passages from the book, but for now let's just say that this was the right read for me at the right time. I was expecting it to be titillating and dirty but instead encountered something rather lovely: a concentrated tale of obsession and longing and risky role playing that turns a woman emulating a simple ancient Grecian hedonism into an enthusiastic wielder of capricious physical and mental cruelty -- rendered to the sadomasochistic male lover who goads her into it in the first place and ends up getting more than he bargains for in the process. This is a tale dressed in elegant clothes and exquisitely described 19th-century European settings. This primal text in S&M lit must surely be one of its most poetic. I just found the whole book charming.

The bonus short story, "The Black Czarina" is a superfluous leftover scrap in the same vein. You can safely skip it.

comprehensive study guide to the ambivalence of love.

Steven Godin says

My initial fears with 'Venus in Furs' was would it sink into the darker depths of depravity similar with that of Donatien Alphonse François (the Marquis de Sade), but didn't need to worry, because I was pleasantly surprised by it's charming and playful nature. Predominantly only two characters take centre stage, with nobleman Severin von Kusiemski falling under the seductive spell of the flame haired Wanda von Dunajew, he loves her so much to the extent of wanting to be her slave, and encourages to treat him progressively more sadistic. Severin describes his lustful experiences as 'suprasensuality', and being dominated by a women and the total control and power she holds over him clearly rocks his boat.

I wouldn't exactly call the actions that unfold here as sadomasochism, at least not as it is recognized today, and there is nothing more extreme than being tied up, whipped and licking ones feet throughout the story, I think the real pain here lies psychologically, with mental anguish and humiliation in front of others that changes Severin's pleasure to one of inner turmoil, as he constantly pleads his undying love for her. His name would change to Gregor as her servant, they travel to Florence and take up residence in a villa close to the Arno river, and this luscious setting would see other gentleman catch the desirable eye of Wanda, a German painter who puts brush to canvas while in the middle of doing her portrait would suddenly declare "I want you to whip me, whip me to death!", right under the nose of the jealous Severin.

The relationship would then arrive at somewhat of a dilemma, when Wanda herself meets a man to whom she would like to submit, a rich Greek aristocrat known as Alexis Papadopolis, and they congress in a sexual manner until one final act of degradation while in the presence of Wanda and Alexis, would see Severin mentally broken and feel like an inanimate object void of any feelings for his once loved dominator.

I can understand why this would have caused a bit of a ruckus back in the day, but reading now in the 21st century it's about as controversial as a litter of kittens playing around in a summer meadow, and I actually found it quite delightful with moments of humour regardless of whether it was intended this way.
