



Delta of Venus

Anais Nin

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Anaïs Nin

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In *Delta of Venus*, Anaïs Nin penned a lush, magical world where the characters of her imagination possess the most universal of desires and exceptional of talents. Among these provocative stories, a Hungarian adventurer seduces wealthy women then vanishes with their money; a veiled woman selects strangers from a chic restaurant for private trysts; and a Parisian hatmaker named Mathilde leaves her husband for the opium dens of Peru. *Delta of Venus* is an extraordinarily rich and exotic collection from the master of erotic writing.

Delta of Venus Details

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Author : Anaïs Nin

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From Reader Review Delta of Venus for online ebook

Blanca says

Over a period of years, I tried to find what I could appreciate about Nin's writing. Sure, it was groundbreaking at the time it was written and critically, I guess that's important.

It's pretty silly. I imagine college girls trying to copy Dita Von Teese's style read this in a dressing gown, drinking wine on some Urban Outfitters' silk bedspread before going out. That is enough to make me dislike it.

Paul Bryant says

AUTHOR WEBCAM!!

- Hi there... my name's Anais, what's yours?

- Oh, er... hi Anais! My name's Pau---- Manny. My name is Manny.

- Hi Manny. How are you tonight?

- Oh I'm fine thank you. Er.... you have a great laptop there.

- Why thank you! It's a Lenovo Ideapad. Do you think it looks cute?

- Oh...yes.

- You should see the things I can do with it.

- Mm hmm.

- What would you like to see me do Manny? Would you like to see me ... type? Or...correct a manuscript? Do you want me to call my publisher? I can complain about royalty payments if you want – I complain really well. You know - if you have a publisher we could complain together.

- Could you... could you compose some erotica right now?

- Of course I could, Manny! Now, would you like that to be in long luxurious leisurely sentences with metaphors clustered like grapes hanging from a vine turning golden pale in the Tuscany sun? Or would you like it to be urgent, short, sharp, like a James Ellroy sex doll, no word over four letters?

- Please... just do what you feel you're into, Anais.

- Why thank you Manny, you're a gentleman. All right. Let's see now...

? says

I read this book while my heart was breaking in the Spring of 2009; stubborn & resistant to change, this was exactly the medicine I needed to break all the way open. It wasn't until I felt Anaïs' voice echoing inside me that I truly understood & respected what it means to be feminine, to accept, to renew, to hold & nurture, to passionately let go, & in the process become what I always felt a woman should be; warm, dark, fathomless ocean. Having a naturally very dominant, fiery, masculine personality... real, true femininity was something largely foreign to me, but her words/worlds helped me gently cross that threshold & realize what an immense power there is in being the passive force. Yes it is perverted & some parts are "wrong" & dirty as fuck, but Anaïs in her profound, Piscean way, makes it sacred. She makes you feel it, gives you a taste of the ocean.

Anaïs is a drug. I am sure this 'review' will do her no justice.

Aubrey says

3.5/5

Let's get one thing straight. This is erotica. Erotica erotica erotica erotica erotica. You know that phenomenon when you say something so many times that it temporarily loses its meaning? Firstly, it's a psychological phenomenon known as semantic satiation. Secondly, that's what I'm trying to do here with the word 'erotica'. Erotica erotica erotica erotica erotica. Run through that a few more times if you haven't sufficiently stripped yourself of assumptions, contextual peripheries, and all other sorts of ideological clutter. Also, don't even think of the word 'porn'. This isn't one-two-hup-hup-hup gratification on the simplest level of human biological stimulation. This is literature.

Feeling free of all that? Good. Because the theme that I'm working through in this review is this: erotica is a genre of wasted potential.

You heard me. Wasted potential. Just look at its current representative in the popular media. Not only is it a ripoff of a fanfiction of *Twilight*, a book that is an advocate of both poor writing and abusive relationships, it manages to compound both of those qualities to even more horrendous levels. Thanks to that book, the misconceptions regarding the more eclectic sexual activities have never been more horrible or widespread. I'm not even going to try to discuss the writing.

Now, let's return to the book at hand. *Delta of Venus* was published in 1977, thirty-four years before 50SoG. Had the erotica genre been taken seriously at any time since then, it could have been a game changer. Perhaps not for the quality of writing, which comes nowhere close to the masters, but not only does it cover a wide variety of sexual situations in unflinching physical detail without the slightest hint of judgment, it also touches on a huge number of issues that are present in how society treats sexual matters today (Yes, once again I am deconstructing societal issues. If you don't like it, shoo. You have the rest of the Internet. This place is mine.)

These issues include: varieties of sexuality, sociocultural gender constraints, patriarchal oppression, proper conductance of BDSM, fetishes ranging from pedophilia to necrophilia to gerontophilia to myriad objects, scents, textures, you name it, Nin's probably mentioned it. While her writing isn't the most prettily poetic thing under the sun, what it does accomplish is show exactly what is running through the participants' minds without once fetishizing abusive or bigoted aspects of sexuality, as well as get the reader comfortable with parts of the anatomy that society for whatever reason has an attitude both puritanical and childish towards. When you can't use the word 'vagina' when discussing abortion issues in governmental procedures, you know something's extremely wrong with the world.

I know there is literature out there that deals with the more uneasy aspects of sexual issues, even some like *Lolita* that are widely praised by the literary community. That doesn't change the fact that the genre of erotica is largely met with titters and contempt when it isn't banned outright, and the majority of its literature is filled with connotations of unrealistic sexual dynamics, borderline abusive situations, and frankly just a lot of bad writing.

When it comes to sociocultural progress, I see no catalyst more powerful than that of literature, especially literature that survives and thrives for centuries well into present times. Out of every genre of literature, the least likely to be taught in classrooms is that of erotica. Maybe you'll get a book that involves rape, or one that hints at homosexual liaisons, or perhaps relationships deemed illicit by reason of race, class, or culture. It is highly unlikely that a book that details sexual relations both healthy and unrestricted by stereotypes will ever make its way into the classroom without being met by childish behavior by both the students and their parents. Not while sexual education ignores the ramifications of rape culture, the realities of relationships fluid in both gender and sexual preferences, and the harmful effects of the ideologically constraining concepts of masculinity and femininity. No representation in classrooms leads to infantile reactions to it in reality leads to barely any incentive for writers to try their hand at it. It's a vicious cycle.

So, next time you see someone with 50SoG, inform them that there is a much better book out there called *Delta of Venus* that is not only erotica, but *classic* erotica. They probably won't ignorantly enjoy it as much as the former, but one hopes it will get them thinking. A much better end result, in my mind.

Amanda says

I think you have to be a little on the sick and twisted to get off on this book. Well, parts of it. Here are some examples of the icky ickiness Anais Nin writes about in *Delta of Venus*.

- Dude lays in bed early in the morning, and some kids who live in the house come in and horse play around his room. He gets a hard on and encourages them to frolic about on top of the covers.
- Same dude, decades later, takes custody of his teenage son and daughter. Then he fucks 'em.
- A different dude burns some lady's cootch with a hot pipe.
- Another dude helps some man take a dead body out of the river and then he fucks the dead body while water pours out of her orifices.
- A lady rides a horse bareback, and gets all horny from the feel of the horse's rough coat against her clit.
- etc

Ew, right? I mean, she does have some good stuff in the book, but honestly, it's so overshadowed by the ick, that it's hard to lose oneself in the writing. That being said, I'll admit that the reason we read Anais Nin in 2009 is to gain some perspective on the history of erotica, moreso than for sexy fun times. There's no doubt

that Nin was remarkable--after all, she's female working in a male-dominated industry--but her writing is flat and stale (kinda like this review). Very few of her stories were fleshed out, and I found that she was missing the intense emotional connection I'd expect from a woman writer; the poeticism is noticeably absent. I'm completely and utterly disappointed. Maybe I set my expectations too high...

Here's the blurb on the back of the book (this edition published in the 1970s):

Thirty-five years ago, Anais Nin created the female language for sexuality. She did it for a wealthy male patron for \$1.00 a page. He ordered her to "leave out the poetry," but she simply couldn't. The publication of Delta of Venus now makes available to the rest of us the seductive, erotic and full-bodied nature of her writing. And it reveals Anais Nin as a woman ahead of her time.

Well Mr. (or Ms.) Blurbist, you couldn't be farther from the truth. Or further. Whatever.

Maria Clara says

Como siempre he dicho, no soy de leer novela erótica, pero por una vez me apetecía leer algo así sin tener que aguantar a ningún macho alfa de los que abundan en las novelas románticas.

Jo (An Unexpected Bookish Geek) says

Now, this book, I'm finding difficult to rate. While I enjoyed quite a lot of what this book explored, there was some of it that was too much for me, and that, coming from me, is seriously saying something. Anais Nin, covers a variety of sexual subjects, some of those being exhibitionism, homosexuality, lesbianism, sadomachism and pedophilia. I have absolutely no preference to any of those subjects, and I feel easy reading about them, all except pedophilia. I was surprised that this book dabbled in that kind of area, and I skimmed the pages where that was present, as for me, it made for uncomfortable reading.

Apart from that, this book makes for sensual erotica, and considering it was written in the 40's, it was masterfully done. Anais Nin, is almost poetic in her writing, sometimes making the reader feel what the characters are feeling, and that takes talent. The characters are richly textured, and I could even connect to some of those characters.

Unfortunately, I did notice a sort of pattern with the stories, if you like. I felt like it was repetitive in the sense that a troubled, depressed but gorgeous female needs some male attention, and then happens to meet a headstrong, possessive male, and then for days they go into hiding, making love all day and night, lots of orgasms involved etc.. I could just tell that Anais Nin wrote this for entertainment and fulfillment for a male, and if you read this, it is highly evident.

Nevertheless, I still enjoyed this book, and appreciated the writing style immensely. I'm looking forward to reading more from this author.

Fabian says

A kaleidescopic array of tantalizing erotica. An "epidemic of erotic journals" that's indispensable to the most insatiable of aficionados. It is the best of its type; no doubt this may be the bible of this literary black-sheep

genre! It smolders, it quickens the pulse (even if you're gay, even if you're a prude, even if you believe that this is not "your cup-a tea").

The charm of this experiment, or, "seeing (of) sexual experience from a woman's point of view" lies in its Russian Nesting dolls "plot", in which stories are found inside stories within stories, and characters (artists, mostly) are met & their fates follow divergent paths of sexual contest, of sexual victory. Taboos/erotic proclivities include disguises, underwear, exhibitionism, rape, almostrape, homosexuality, bisexuality, unfaithfulness, incest, necrophilia, bestiality, child pornography... But this is not within the parameters of Sade Park. No. It's classy, it's dreamy, it's lush, and in a league all its own. Powerfully provocative, evocative, & because it's at once hilarious & heartbreaking. REAL.

Jonnie says

The following review contains little spoilers. Read at your own risk.

Delta of Venus by Anaïs Nin is a collection of erotic short stories. *Seriously amazing* short stories. I haven't technically "read" this book since I keep it on my bedside table and take little nibbles of it when I feel like it. I might reread some stories or skip ones altogether. Therefore, I'm going to be rating the stories individually.

The Hungarian Adventurer: ★★★

This one is disgusting. Rouging your vagina is one thing. Raping your children is a whole other thing I don't even want to read about. But I read it anyway and, as much as I tried to resist, found it fascinating. Eech.

Mathilde: ★★★★★

At midnight he asked if she liked cactus figs. She had never tasted them. He said that he had some in his cabin. But Mathilde wanted to heighten her value by resistance, and she was on her guard when they entered the cabin.

This one was a lot more sensual, if not a little terrifying. An intoxicating mix of drugs and group sex, and a peppering of a single violent fetish are ingredients to this perfectly erotic story. One of my favourites so far.

The Boarding School: ★★★★

Innocence and sexual perversion ft. Priests. With a side of non-con.

The Ring: ★★★★★

Bondage? Yes please.

Mallorca: ★★★★★

She swam towards the shore, and he followed. They fell on the sand. The waves still lapped them as they lay there panting, naked.

Artists and Models: ★★★★★

A beautiful model and her rendezvous' with two married men. Side stories about a nymphomaniac subby, a hermaphrodite in a perpetual state of sexual dissatisfaction, and a shy artist, all topped off with a delicious dollop of secrecy. Full of cheek, eroticism and sensuality. Another favourite along with Mathilde.

Lilith:

Marianne:

The Veiled Woman:

Elena:

The Basque and Bijou:

Pierre:

Manuel:

Linda:

Marcel:

Edward says

Delta of Venus is almost like a record of a writer's development over time: there is a clear progression from the early stories, which are very broadly painted (with something of a Borgesian flavour, strange as that sounds), to the later stories, which are much more detailed and explicit, more in tune with what you would expect from erotica. For all the fuss made in the introduction about writing from a woman's perspective, and capturing the emotional and sensual aspects of sex, I did not feel this intention was executed particularly well. The scenarios generally felt underdeveloped and emotionally flat, and the emotional accounts lacked plausibility, often coming across as forced and clichéd (there are exceptions). Overall, I wasn't impressed with the writing from a literary standpoint (which I recognise is not the primary objective).

I do appreciate the range of themes and perspectives presented in this collection, some of which are genuinely bizarre and shocking. There is a lot of variety, and there's likely to be something for everyone here both to arouse and to disgust, though overall, *Delta of Venus* didn't really do much for me.

Bradley says

Wow.

I mean, I had never heard of this until recently when I had been dared to read it, and yes, I knew that I was getting into heavy erotica, but I hadn't expected it to be so damn good.

Seriously. I'm not ashamed to admit that I was almost completely unable to stand up during most of the read,

and because I was using text-to-speech, that means being rather unpleasantly surprised as I was up and about during my day.

I wanted to scream out, "Oh, come on!" or "This isn't Fair!" at random people as I was reading.

And then, at various moments, I pondered the great mystery of why so many men don't read this kind of romance. It's very easy, my dear women. In fact it's extremely hard to hide the fact. Forget about all the scoffing and the hems and the haws and all the condescending humor that jerky men use to explain why they don't read this stuff. It's all baloney.

This book is full of really good stuff.

Extremely good stuff: from the pure writing, the interweaving themes and characters and the way that the individual stories make up a much grander story of sexuality, right down the purely expert and sensual eroticism of the sex acts themselves. I've never read better, but I'll admit that most of what I've read has really been quite horrible.

Even so, I'm amazed at how sensual she can turn all these kinds of turns, or even the direction she takes them. So many of my own sensibilities were shocked and disturbed as I read a few particularly difficult scenes, but as a whole, the entire book was truly amazing. Perhaps all that illicit and taboo material functions fantastically as the spice that tips us in and out of our complacency and into the deeper animal parts of us that love to be shocked, allowing us to enjoy the rest of the tales like we're getting away with something even more absolutely naughty than it really might be.

Seriously, if every erotic writer or if ANY writer including a sex scene might take a page out of her book, so many of the greatest crimes against sex might be rectified.

Seriously, people, this is Literature, plain and simple, with a freedom applied to women's sensuality that is really quite brilliant. It should be studied, applauded, and copied. Alas.

I hope her writing is always remembered. :)

Abubakar Mehdi says

Basically, It's a book about horny people doing Haraam things.
Like very, very Haraam things.

Ana says

What is, indeed, being "erotic"? Wherein lays its essence? Does it even *have* an essence, or a formula that one can follow and therefore achieve "eroticism"? Is it confined only to the feminine? Is age of any importance when it comes to it? Is there a difference between "erotic" and "sexual"? Are these two irrevocably intertwined? Is it the mind that is aroused, or the body? Can you achieve "eroticism" purely by matter of perception? What is considered erotic by an individual, and how has that been shaped by the culture in which he was raised?

This book doesn't answer any of these things. These are just my questions with regards to the subject, to which I think I found some true (or, in any case, plausible to myself) answers.

Not to say that this work, as have many others, helped with finding some meaning in this very shadowy field.

Anais Nin is one of the writers that leave you baffled from the very first pages. She's deep, witty in a very informal way while still keeping a very elegant demeanor, can write both porn and romance at the same time (quite honestly, in the same scene), and has a unique way of writing about women.

I have found myself in her writing. I have found the woman that I want to be, the woman that I know I can become. The woman who will not, for anything or anyone, deny her sexuality. And it's rarely that I see myself in writing, nowadays. I have read a lot for my supposedly "young" years. I looked for myself, found myself and lost myself countless times between the pages of vastly different books – but never, never in such a powerful way as when I read Anais Nin's writing on womanhood.

People confuse her writing with "erotica". That is a very cheap way to put it, in my opinion. Her books are not just about sex – not just about the physical act, anyway. They strive to rekindle the fire that we lost somewhere on the way. To take out the cheapness out of the action, it seems to me. We are animals, after all. We do mate, for reproduction purposes. However, there are pleasures that can be found in loving one another that far exceed the scientific meaning of it. That is, in some ways, our blessing and our curse, as human beings – we can find so much pleasure, at the cost of losing it and experiencing so much pain. Sex is one of our most important drives through life, and when done right it improves one's quality of existence.

Sex is, also, a force of destruction. It can rip one apart, given enough time to gnaw at one's core. Be it bad or good, it impacts so much on our lives that we even forget how complex and complicated it may be in its beauty, and we focus on the simplest form of it. I refuse that.

Anais Nin writes a prose worthy of awe that flows through the pages and allures the reader with its elusion. She writes a very feminine creation and redefines the concept of "woman". There is power in me, and there is also weakness. There is a highly dominant side to my sexuality, but also an excessively submissive one. Knowing this instinctively in yourself helps when reading such great works as this author's, because you find yourself explained in someone else's words. And you also find out how well your love's story can go when diving into her stories.

There's not much else you can ask for, is there?

Warwick says

I was rereading bits of this last night after seeing several one- or two-star reviews of it pop up in my feed recently. And scanning through some of the other GR reviews here, there's a lot of people objecting that it's 'icky' – one reviewer lists all the things that feature in *Delta*, things like incest, rape, paedophilia, and then just says, 'Ew, right?'

WELL NO NOT EW ACTUALLY. I mean yes, ew, if you like, of course a lot of these things may not be very appealing depending on your tastes, but more fundamentally I just think this is a misunderstanding of the genre. The whole point of erotica is often not so much to turn you on as to go to places that other writing

cannot – to break down taboos. Like other kinds of genre fiction, it should be mind-expanding. In the same way that, for instance, science-fiction or fantasy tries to conjure up other civilisations in order to contextualise our own, so erotica is the one genre which gets to look at social conventions one by one and imagine what would happen if they didn't exist or if they were systematically ignored. The idea is to open you up to new experiences, and it's often meant to be unsettling and challenging rather than arousing – although certainly one key motive is to prompt that unexpected jolt from the reader where an internal voice says, *Whoa, why do I find that idea so hot? I thought I'd dealt with all this in therapy.*

Having made the counter-intuitive case that good erotica isn't necessarily sexy – Exhibits A and B being de Sade and Bataille – I should say that Anaïs Nin is nowhere near as far along the scale as those two. Her writing is – well I won't say 'sexy', because that's so subjective (one man's boring theme exercise being another woman's dependable two a.m. go-to), but it is definitely rich and sensual and I think there is a lot to admire about her prose style. Here we go, let's check out some hot Pierre-on-Elena action:

He was in France without papers, risking arrest. For greater security Elena hid him at the apartment of a friend who was away. They met every day now. He liked to meet her in the darkness, so that before they could see each other's face, their hands became aware of the other's presence. Like blind people, they felt each other's body, lingering in the warmest curves, making the same trajectory each time; knowing by touch the places where the skin was softest and tenderest and where it was stronger and exposed to daylight; where, on the neck, the heartbeat was echoed; where the nerves shivered as the hand came nearer to the center, between the legs.

This is typical of her approach, which makes use of a lot of short, simple clauses, either separated into different sentences, fairytale-like, or strung together with semicolons into long, dreamy bouts of poetic description. She applies this ruthless sensuality equally to the sex and to the moments of violence or sadism that crop up in the book. I am far from the world's biggest Anaïs Nin fan, but I do think it is important that we have a woman finally writing about this kind of thing, rather than what we had for hundreds of years previously, *viz.* men guessing what women thought about it. I'm thinking John Cleland, Pierre Louÿs, *et* hundreds of *al.*

Nin always prompted a lot of varied reactions from other women, some thinking, *Finally someone is saying it*, and others being more like, *Whoa there, speak for yourself, sister*. Meanwhile men's excitement was split between the stuff they recognised ('women think like us!') and the stuff that seemed new ('women don't think like us!'). I do think it's interesting that you can draw a line from *Delta of Venus* in the 1940s right through to, let's say, Nancy Friday's *Women on Top* in 1991, and see that most of the themes have barely changed at all.

I don't think *Delta of Venus* is a great book, but I do think it's an interesting and important one and I have a real soft spot for it. Of course in real life Anaïs Nin was as mad as a box of frogs, but she was the right person at the right time and I like a lot of what's in here – as the reviews show, it still has the power to challenge people today, when you might think the whole thing would have seemed rather passé.

'Don't burn someone's genitals...it is NOT OK,' says one reviewer earnestly. Well, yes, fair enough...it's just as well then that *this isn't fucking reportage*, it's a piece of creative writing. Jesus. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll be in my bunk going over page 117 again.

Ian "Marvin" Graye says

Less Poetry!

Most of the stories in *"Delta of Venus"* were written under a quasi-Oulipean constraint: they were commissioned by a collector of erotica who specified, *"Concentrate on sex. Leave out the poetry."*

Anais Nin initially complied. However, *"I began to write tongue-in-cheek, to become outlandish, inventive, and so exaggerated that I thought he would realise I was caricaturing sexuality."*

Back came the response, *"Less poetry."* The collector was looking for explicit, clinically precise description of sexual activity.

Pandora's Box

Nin duly complied, within limits, and what we read on the page is the result. However, notwithstanding the brief, she wrote with a simple, economical elegance that qualifies as both literature and erotica. The intrinsic quality of her writing couldn't help but intrude.

Nin was trying to escape *"the clinical, the scientific, which only captures what the body feels"*. She wanted to go beyond the flesh into the senses and the heart, and via them into the essence and ecstasy of a sexually voracious woman:

"I had a feeling that Pandora's box contained the mysteries of woman's sensuality, so different from a man's and for which man's language was so inadequate. The language of sex had yet to be invented. The language of the senses was yet to be explored."

A New Language

Apart from any erotic appeal, what's stimulating about *"Delta of Venus"* is the sense that we're witnessing the invention of a new language.

There's also a different perspective on sex.

Only one story is written in the first person. As a result, in the remainder, *"they"* are doing this to each other, and therefore it's implicitly *"you and I"*, *"we"*, doing it, not an implied male *"me"* doing it to an implied female *"you"*. While the reader might be gendered, the writer allows us to witness both aspects of the one act, the two sides of the one coin. We don't automatically adopt the perspective of the male, we don't look through the peep-hole of the male gaze.

This Little Kernel

The stories as a whole focus on a woman's *"sex"*, the vulva, the delta of Venus (the goddess who was *"born of the sea with this little kernel of salty honey in her, which only caresses could bring out of the hidden*

recesses of her body").

For all the anatomical detail, much attention is still given to the surroundings within which sexual activity takes place and fantasies are realised:

"Just as you felt like making love on top of my fur bed, I always feel like making love where there are hangings and curtains and materials on the walls, where it is like a womb. I always feel like making love where there is great deal of red. Also where there are mirrors."

The characters are realistically drawn, not just caricatures, and we accumulate enough biographical detail over the course of the stories to feel we know them as well as any protagonists in literary fiction. We just know more about their sex lives.

Into the Groove

Whether inevitably or by design, more and more lyrical sentences slip past the embargo on poetry. Here are some of Nin's interjaculations that I noted on my journey through her sensuous world:

"His decisiveness in small acts gave her the feeling that he would equally wave aside all obstacles to his greatest desires."

"Talking together is a form of intercourse. You and I exist together in all the delirious countries of the sexual world. You draw me into the marvellous. Your smile keeps a mesmeric flow."

"The first time I felt an orgasm with John, I wept because it was so strong and so marvellous that I did not believe it could happen over and over again."

"She marvelled at the continuity of their exultation. She wondered when their love would enter a period of repose."

The Exquisite Torment of the Ecstatic Wound

Then there are descriptive phrases like these:

"ripe for the final possession...the sensitive opening...the little cry of the ecstatic wound...the core of her sensations...the shadowy folds of her sexual secrets...all the fluids of desire seeping along the silver shadows of her legs...a connoisseur, a gourmet, of women's jewel boxes...that first tear of pleasure...this gradual and ceremonious courtship of her senses...[an orgasm that] came like an exquisite torment...the full effulgence of their pleasure..."

Even if some of them sound familiar from more recent porn or sexually explicit fiction, what is special is that the style was created or appropriated by a woman for a woman's purposes over and above the male commission and the Oulipean constraint. Some of the artist remains in the output.

This is a ground-breaking and thoroughly enjoyable collection of stories.

More stories from this period were published in the sequel *"Little Birds"*.

Footnote: "L'Origine du Monde"

For anyone familiar with Courbet's *"L'origine du monde"*, the last story contains an interesting allusion:

"Courbet...painted a torso, with a carefully designed sex, in contortions of pleasure, clutching at a penis that came out of a bush of very black hair."

This version of the painting might well be apocryphal. However, whether or not it ever existed, it's a metaphor that gives equal weight to all comers in the contest documented by Nin's stories.

SOUNDTRACK:

Madonna - "Into The Groove"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52iW3...>

Hadrian says

What is the difference between porn and erotica? Somebody much wittier than me said it was the lighting, but I honestly don't know.

Mwanamali says

No rating.

Alex says

["And then the guy a

Steven Godin says

Tricky one...Is there any way to write well about sex? Too much metaphor and the words themselves are destroyed in an orgy of filth, too little and it can become cold and clinical. The issues of gender politics, the fluidity of sexuality and sexual identity, and different sexual kinks also come into play. It's a fine tightrope to balance on. And it disturbed me early on with the mention of children, oh God, this better not be anything like 120 Days of Sodom!, thankfully not, what follows are deeply engaging chronicles of interconnected sexual episodes, which I have to say took me by surprise as to just how explicit they were. I was expecting lines like "he fondled her breasts", or "he gently stroked her inner thighs whilst gazing into her eyes", yes there are indeed lines along these lines, two thirds of the time though it's mostly pornographic in detail,

which I won't go into detail on, I am sure we are all old enough to get the picture.

Nin—"the madam of a house of literary prostitution"—in the 1940s, was commissioned to write by an anonymous collector, who demanded that she "leave out the poetry" of sex. Thankfully Nin ignored him, and her stories contain a strong sense of the poetic mixed with the sensual, especially highlighted by her emphasis on the exotic, both in character and locale, another thing that surprised me was the fact just how well she wrote, it's dirty, but always engaging. This enabled Nin to present a sexual freedom which was incredibly forward-looking for the time, and especially revolutionary from a female perspective. Even now reading this in the 21st century still shocked me at it's content.

While the characters and their situations are fun and enjoyable, it only really worked for me on the longer stories, giving more of a chance to take the characters in, and Nin fills here and there with moments of pathos and yearning which are saved mainly for the second half of the book. The final episode, which deals with war breaking out and the dream coming to an end, even has a Fitzgerald like quality which definitely outshines what went beforehand. It's a bit over 200 pages in length but still felt overly long, maybe down to the fact it did have a repetitive nature, the word Penis seemed to get mentioned about a million times. The last third I felt it's strongest point.

For me a three star read, but when writing of sex at least the book did feature five star orgasms!.

Melissa says

I was first introduced to Anais Nin by my boyfriend, who bought me a first edition of Little Birds on Valentines Day a couple of years ago. I was surprised to discover that it wasn't raunchy or esoteric at all, but very accessible, very beautiful, and (naturally) very sensual. At an estate sale recently I came across Delta of Venus and picked it up partly out of interest in Nin's writing and partly because it was a vintage book and I love vintage books. Delta of Venus is far sexier than Little Birds to be sure, but the beauty of Nin is that no matter how racy she gets, it's never distasteful or off-putting like a lot of erotica can be, just for the sake of shock value. Nin's erotica is sensual not only because of the sex that the characters are engaging in, but because the entire time you're reading you're reminded that Nin was writing in the 1930s, when sex was relatively freer than the puritanical decades before, but not nearly as free as the sex we know (and are numb to) today. Thus there's an inherent tension created from the restraint of the characters as they toe the line of social decorum, taboos, and what was/wasn't acceptable sexually at the time, as well as attempt to understand and temper (or, most often, indulge) their lust and experimental curiosities. Nin's erotica isn't dirty or depraved at all...rather, it's beautifully written, imbued with surprising insights and psychology, and, best of all, is written from a woman's perspective...and not in an in-your-face "I'm an empowered, sexual female, hear me roar" kind of way. There's something for everyone here...unless you like your erotica to be more of the Hustler ilk. (Ew.) None of that here. I highly recommend any of Nin's work if you're at all curious about erotica (or even you're not...you'll like it, I promise).
