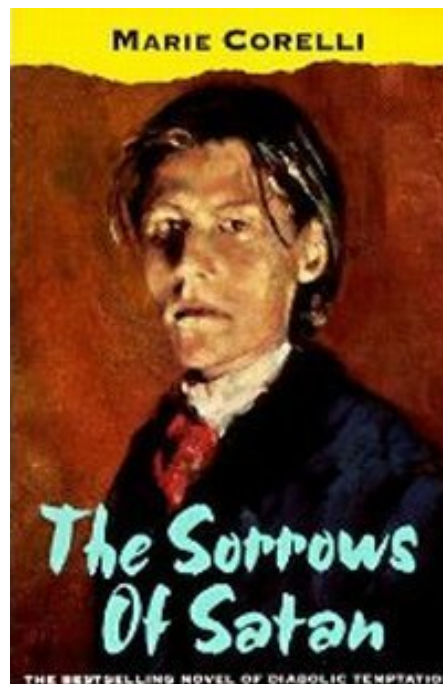




The Sorrows of Satan or The Strange Experience of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire

Marie Corelli

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The Sorrows of Satan was one of the first modern bestsellers and was influential in establishing some of the major trends in twentieth-century bestselling fiction.

The setting is London, 1895, and the Devil is on the loose. He is searching for someone morally strong enough to resist temptation, but there seems little chance he will succeed. Britain is all but totally corrupt. The aristocracy is financially and spiritually bankrupt; church leaders no longer believe in God; Victorian idealism has been banished from literature and life; and sexual morality is being undermined by the pernicious doctrines of the "New Woman." Everything and everyone is up for sale, and it takes a special kind of moral courage to resist the Devil's seductions.

The Sorrows of Satan or The Strange Experience of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire Details

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Bettie? says

Description: *The setting is London, 1895, and the Devil is on the loose. He is searching for someone morally strong enough to resist temptation, but there seems little chance he will succeed. Britain is all but totally corrupt. The aristocracy is financially and spiritually bankrupt; church leaders no longer believe in God; Victorian idealism has been banished from literature and life; and sexual morality is being undermined by the pernicious doctrines of the "New Woman." Everything and everyone is up for sale, and it takes a special kind of moral courage to resist the Devil's seductions.*

Jenn McCollum says

The "sorrows" of Satan are many in this text, as the fallen angel takes the form of Lucio Ramanez and is bound to carry out a pact with God based on an accusation that he uttered in haste. To the best of his ability, he must tempt man to surrender his soul, all the while longing to redeem himself in God's eyes. He tempts Geoffrey Tempest, who is an idealistic writer on the verge of starvation, with five million dollars (which he accepts). All the while that Ramanez pushes Tempest toward more sin, he secretly wishes (and at one point even provokes) Tempest to reject his services. When man rejects his offers Satan is closer to regaining his seat in heaven: a position which he desires very much -- so much so that Ramanez turns to brooding and consistently iterates his feelings: "Judge then, how, under the peculiar circumstances of his doom, this 'Lucifer, Son of the Morning,' Satan, or whatever else he is called, must hate Humanity!"

Rimanez may hate humanity very much for its constant indulgence in sin but his most violent feelings are directed explicitly toward a certain kind of woman: the "New Woman," like Sybil -- the wealthy and "soulless" lady who marries Tempest in order to get closer to her love interest, Ramanez. When Ramanez visits the Tempests after their marriage Sybil throws herself, shamelessly, on his person, begging for erotic love. He, in turn, is repulsed: "I hate you, and all such women as you! For you corrupt the world -- you turn good to evil -- you deepen folly into crime -- with the seduction of your nude limbs and lying eyes, you make fools, cowards and beasts of men!" He tells Tempest, earlier, about his deep anthropomorphic feelings toward women: "But do not forget why I hate them! It is because they have all the world's possibilities of good in their hands, and the majority of them deliberately turn these possibilities to evil."

In this way, clearly, Corelli polarizes Satan with woman. Ramanez detests "New" women who have been brought up on "French" literature and have given up their true calling, which is to guide men in moral practices. These new women are simply "the female of man [who] have no real soul save that which is a reflex of his, and being destitute in logic, she is incapable of forming a correct opinion on any subject."

Yet, Ramanez himself is very womanly -- even "New-" womanly. In the first place, Ramanez's defining characteristic is his attractiveness in Tempest's eyes. This is a point that Corelli never fails to repeat throughout the novel. When Tempest first encounters Satan, he has "a strong and singular attraction" to this "good-looking" man with his "wonderful eyes," "handsome presence," "extraordinary good looks," and "admirable build." Tempest goes so far as to compare his wife's -- Sybil's -- beauty to Ramanez's. In a word, Tempest finds Ramanez HOT (pun, yes?).

Ramanez, additionally, constantly fingers the "glittering beetle body" of what readers are supposed to understand is the soul of a sinful Egyptian woman. Later, when Tempest and Ramanez visit Egypt, Corelli

suggests that this grotesque bug is the soul of Sybil, whose mummy is excavated. Surprisingly, Sybil has been right all along. She doesn't seem to have a soul. That soul seems to be the "sprite" pet of Ramanez. He even refers to "the radiant bat-shaped thing" as "an Egyptian female mummy," with a "vampire soul" (he later tells Sybil that her "vampire soul" called to him), and is careful to identify it as "an evil creature."

Nevertheless, he clings to her as she -- the insect -- clings to him. They seem to have a kind of equal relationship.

Moreover, Ramanez admits time and again that he -- granted, against his will -- has the agenda of doing the precise thing that he accuses the new woman of doing: corrupting and misguiding men. He and Sybil are doing identical work.

In this way, the devil is a woman.

But then, there is one thing -- and one thing only -- that differentiates Ramanez from Sybil. His sorrow.

Perhaps nineteenth-century literature hasn't known such a pitiful Satan since Byron and Lamb. Corelli gives a new meaning to the Satanic hero: he is so sad. The scene that reveals the depth of his sadness is when his services are rejected by the ephemeral and morally-superior Mavis Clare who is, not surprisingly for Corelli, a popular yet critically-bashed writer of fiction. He tempts her. She rejects him. Then, he gets down on one knee before her and beseeches her to pray for his soul. His redemption is possible, here, through the sympathy of a pure woman.

Reading *The Sorrows of Satan* I felt bad for Ramanez. But then, too, Corelli does not want me to only feel bad for Satan; she wants me to extend my sympathies to Sybil as well -- because the predicaments of Satan and the New Woman are not dissimilar.

After she is rejected by Ramanez, Sybil decides to poison herself and write down her experience of death, as she dies. Her reflection reveals one very clear truth: that Sybil is not ashamed of her actions and that she is, despite her sins, an extremely truthful woman. For example, when Tempest courts her she tells him blatantly that she is evil and damaged and will not be the kind of woman that he needs. When Tempest catches her throwing herself at Satan she is forthcoming about her desire. She even goes so far as to tell Tempest on their wedding day that she will tell him who she loves very shortly (even though it isn't him). All and all, Sybil has the presence of mind and sharp critical awareness enough to articulate herself as a product of society. Corelli seems to want readers to pity her to some extent, especially since she earns the pity, eventually, of both Mavis Clare and Tempest: the novel's obvious heroes.

Yet, Satan is also heroic -- at least in the way that Sybil is heroic. Satan, Sybil, and women in general are pawns in the same game, apparently. For Corelli, at least, these figures are terrible but they are also products of male desire. The real demonization is of men and, ironically, the devil somehow comes out clean.

Muhammed Badr says

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Sara Abd el ma'aboud says

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Catherine Siemann says

I wouldn't call this book *good* but it is far too much fun. Finished, appropriately, in a Circle of Hell -- an Emergency Room in the middle of the night!

One of the oft-repeated themes of Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* is the jealousy and ill-nature of reviewers, who dismiss works out of hand because of their superior qualities, while praising morally harmful works. The Sorrows of Satan, Corelli's 1895 bestseller, was trashed by the critics and adored by many (she was apparently a big hit with both Queen Victoria and, rather more surprisingly, Oscar Wilde; perhaps more importantly, she sold, sold, sold), but to make things even more meta, the novel contains a (lovely, charming, deeply spiritual, and in fact all-around marvelous) character called Mavis Clare – M.C., get it??? – whose novels are routinely trashed by the critics, sell in vast quantities, and actually help with the moral reformation of her devoted audience.

Indeed.

I'm afraid that Corelli would append me to her chorus of detractors, although honestly, I find her work interesting – inadvertently humorous, but interesting. I'd been curious about her; she's been getting some attention from academics as an extremely popular Late-Victorian woman writer. And the title is irresistible. If you have a Kindle or other e-reader, you can find free copies everywhere; the one I read is fairly rife with amusing scanning errors, so consider your tolerance accordingly.

The novel's narrator is the gloriously-named Geoffrey Tempest (don't you wish you were named Geoffrey Tempest? I kind of do), a starving young writer who manages to sell his soul to Satan semi-inadvertently. Oh, all the warning signs are there – the thunderstorm, the eerie violin coming through the wall from next door, the saturnine good looks, the name . . . Prince Lucio Rimanez. Seriously. He does everything but wear a lapel pin that says "Sell your soul to the Devil: Ask me how." Nobody ever questions his origins – they're Victorian Britons and he's a foreigner, no need to inquire further. Our narrator manages not to realize that his sudden accession to five million pounds from a distant relative is not mere coincidence, but get this: his lawyers try to warn him. His *lawyers*. If your lawyers tell you that they think Satan might be involved in a financial transaction, do listen.

Geoffrey finds that large sums of money assist him in getting his novel published, and he's even able to purchase himself some good reviews, but it still doesn't sell particularly well. No, everyone's off buying the latest Mavis Clare, possibly because her writing has the odd side effect of making you temporarily into a good person. Or something. So he gives into his wealth, and courts the beautiful, gorgeous, words cannot do her justice, blah blah Lady Sybil Elton. Sybil has been groomed for the marriage market from an early age, and been encouraged to be proud, shallow, and dependent entirely on her looks.

Geoffrey manages to be surprised, after their wedding, that she's not that nice a person, something he'd managed to entirely ignore up to that point, despite the fair warning she too had given him. Nobody ever needs to deceive Geoffrey – he handles that part himself.

There's all kinds of lovely melodrama, with more thunderstorms, Sybil throwing herself at the Prince of

Darkness himself (he's just not that into her), magical entertainments at country houses, Geoffrey getting fatter (all those 12 course dinners) and Mavis Clare being her spiritual, wonderful self. She wears white dresses, has small dogs and a merry laugh, and lives in a charming place called Lily Cottage. She would. Mavis turns Lucio down flat, when he tries to suborn her, and he admires her all the more for it.

In fact, Satan's not such a bad guy. Lucio grants you your every wish, is charming, handsome, and deeply sarcastic, but he venerates the good and admires those, like Mavis, who he can't entangle. Unlike his society friends, he believes in God. (Well, um, yeah. He's met Him personally. War in Heaven and all that.) He keeps giving Geoffrey openings to redeem himself, offering to go away and leave him alone, but dependent (bromantic?) Geoffrey keeps ignoring them. And, oh, he quotes Milton sometimes. Seriously, people, how much harder does he have to hint?

But the real message of this book? Read more Mavis Clare, er, Marie Corelli. She will provide the moral uplift you need. The Romantic poets are suspect in their personal lives, but elevating in their works. Well, except for Byron, naturally. Zola? *shudder* And those late Victorian decadents? It is Algernon Swinburne who bears the brunt of Corelli's wrath. Embedded in a character's suicide note is a lengthy rant about the moral corruption brought about by reading modern novels, but more particularly, the poetry of Swinburne. Whatever else you do, DO NOT READ SWINBURNE, Corelli says. Just don't. Do. Not.

This book is an excellent example of the popular entertainment of an age, and it's still plenty entertaining, although not perhaps in the ways Corelli intended it to be. There's some good social commentary on class and economics, and mixed messages on women's rights (New Women and suffragettes are not to be trusted, but on the other hand, a woman who can support herself is much to be admired; the marriage market comes in for its fair share of criticism). There is a gloriously over-the-top climactic scene which is worth the price of admission alone. *The Sorrows of Satan* hasn't really stood the test of time but is fascinating as a period piece. I'm glad I read it, but now I'm off to read some Swinburne.

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Dina Hady says

The soul of a sinner is indeed a sight to look at, the delicacy it feels of how fragile it's in the absence of its great Lord and Master, thus the soul of a sinner is sorrowful, yet in its sorrow it dons the cloak the repentance which brings a human's soul to the utmost point of clarity, that we have the capability of both right and wrong, and we are in constant need of the our Lord to protect us from both, because the arrogance of superiority and the the illusion of not doing wrong was and is the ultimate sin of Satan. And here lies the rub; the difference between Man and Satan in this score, God guaranteed Adam another chance and graced him with repentance upon prayer, yet cursed Satan, why? Because Satan believed he is not wrong, he was superior, yes he believed in God, and resented being cursed, but he cannot fathom that Adam should be held higher than him, Vanity was his sin.

The story is rather philosophical in that score, well all fiction is, it tells perhaps of something that may never happened, but the idea is worth thinking and the tale around it was artistically woven.

A fearful thought, why should a novel that introduces a new concept in understanding the Evil one , be the creation of a woman? I would say she's got more imagination necessary to the task! :D

Heather says

I can totally see why this was hailed as one of the first bestsellers. It was fascinating, dramatic, and easy to read, even with all the Victorian language. A bit ridiculous in spots, but I love ridiculous, so it's okay. It also has amazingly drawn characters, something I think is often lacking in a lot of the that "high literary classic" genre. The characters of Mavis Clare and of course Lucio Rimanez were especially vivid. It also did a wonderful job of descriptive setting without bogging down the narrative, another pitfall of old timey lit. I could really picture the settings in all their Victorian glory, because Corelli didn't just assume I would know what she was talking about. Living 115 years after the publication of this book, I thank her for her attention to detail. It made the book absolutely come alive for me.

She also hit right upon the idea that seems so lacking in other Faustian works: that pure evil would, logically, be EXTREMELY good-looking. Who's honestly tempted by a hideous thing with horns and grotesque features?

Loved, loved, loved.

Undine says

This is one of those "lost opportunity" sort of novels. The premise of this book was a potentially clever and compelling twist on the Faustian legend. Unfortunately, Corelli, in her inimitable way, turned would-be Gothic tragedy into Monty-Pythonesque vaudeville.

Corelli's writing style--melodramatic, preachy and completely humorless, even for her era--makes it impossible to take anything in this book seriously. During the passages most meant to thrill the reader, one is instead left giggling at lines like, "when I recall those white leaves of days that were unrolled before me fresh

and blank with every sunrise, and with which I did nothing save scrawl my own Ego in a foul smudge across each one, I tremble, and inwardly pray that I may never be forced to send back my self-written record!"

However, what most sent this book into a foul smudge was the "heroine," Mavis Claire. Mavis is angelic, pure, noble, high-minded, author of novels beloved by the public (yay!) and disdained by those petty, un-discerning, foul-minded critics (boo!) This character would be utterly insufferable in any case, but when one realizes Mavis is meant to be a self-portrait of the author, she becomes completely unreadable. This is quite possibly the most jaw-dropping ego trip I have ever seen in print, and every time Mavis appears on the page it is enough to make you want to send the book...to the Devil.

"Sorrows of Satan" has a certain perverse amusement value, but it is the sort of book that I could not read for more than a few pages at a time before feeling smothered by the sheer narcissistic looniness of it all.

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Sadiqa Ismail says

The book was amazing. I felt the language and the vocabulary very enriching and all in all, I felt like i learnt a lot from the book. The meaning of the story was very propounding and it touched very very interesting and philosophical concepts and themes that not all of us have pondering on. The real impact of riches and Mammon is something that society portrays to be so desirable and fabulous. Until we see its real impact on all areas in our life. This story also touched the realms of Evil as it shows us how satan may not be our enemy but can pretend to be our friend. The devil has kind and noble ways of explaining and justifying things that aren't so kind or noble. Very interesting indeed and I agree and understand 100% with the person who said that it was, at times, very visual. Because it really was. For a person who loves to write descriptive writing, I found it very, very good. I would no doubt read it again for both excellence in writing, and in Moral significance/profoundness. The ending was just very meaningful and very conspicuous as it shows us that there will always be people who choose riches or righteous. I LOVED it.

Riham Adly says

wow, this book just left me speechless. Inspite of the traditional story of devil seducing man, marie coreili just managed to produce an epic story, superb and huge. the only drawback is the excessive wordiness but regarding that this book was written early on in the last century, one could get past that. wonderful plot, great style, very interesting.

Ibiso says

Imagination is what creates the world.

Sylvia says

oh my God!!!!!!!!!!!!

Ayat Mahmoud says

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Sandy says

The glowing reviews everywhere really hyped this piece up for me, but I'm sorry to say that this book is sorely disappointing by modern standards. Don't get me wrong, it started rather well, but it then quickly ran out of steam not terribly far into the story... almost as if there was a diminishing rate of return on the number of pages read.

Highlights:

- *Nothing but 1 dimensional characters who speak nothing but purple prose
- *There's a crazy obvious Mary Sue character
- *The novel spends more time as a criticism of the publishing industry of the day than as an actual story.
- *Plot is absurd and childishly transparent and predictable
- *If you were to sum the plot up, you'd realize it's pretty much a half baked short story stretched to hundreds of pages of pointlessly plodding plot details.
- *Descriptions are bland and unimaginative in that they "tell" rather than "show."
- *Antiquated quirks of speech are rampant... "I am the world's richest man with five millions of dollars!" and more, but are inexcusable when you realize that even her contemporaries and predecessors wrote in a clearer fashion.

"But wait, it was a best seller! How could it be that bad?" you might ask... only to Google it and realize it was a best seller because it was one of the first books around to benefit from the library systems newly adopted practice of buying books that sold more than a certain threshold per run.

Seriously, please avoid this book at all cost. I read it because I must neurotically finish any book that I start, but you hopefully won't have to do so. Life is short, if you own this book, recycle it and pick up something better.

Morten Schoubye says

This is one of those books that one comes across by accident. It is not featured in any of the anthologies or histories of English literature that the Tweed Mafia produces every year. A Faustian tale with a surprising twist at the end and a rather sympathetic Devil makes this a wonderful read. For those budding authors out there, Corelli's representation of how to deal with critics is both inspiring and funny. I will not tell you what it is, let us just say it involves keeping owls in cages.

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Victoria says

DNF 50%
Lucio overacted.

Teàrlach says

I borrowed this book from the library at my uni, and I don't remember why, since it hasn't been recommended to me or anything like that. Now I'm just glad it's a library book and not something I paid money for, because I'm just so disappointed by it.

It started out promisingly! (That seems to be a trend with books I pick up. Worrying.) The Devil is a handsome man with a secret! The protagonist is an oblivious author/jerk! I thought the book would be far more entertaining in how it revealed Lucio's true nature (and in the process, Geoffrey's true nature). Alas, it quickly became clear that Geoffrey was not to be sympathised with (until the very end, at least) and that Lucio would try to tempt Geoffrey into doing *good*, rather than evil, only to have his attempts thwarted.

I wish that Corelli had cut down on a lot of the unnecessary prose - like Sybil's letter, dear Lord, did I *have* to read the whole pointless letter - and also a lot of the preachiness. My personal faith is not so frail that it might get shaken (or strengthened) by Corelli's heavy-handed moralising, so all of that was not only lost on me, but also got on my nerves quite a bit.

All the blathering about 'immoral' literature made me roll my eyes on multiple occasions, and given that the author is a woman, the continuous misogyny came completely out of left field. Did Geoffrey go 7 pages before reiterating how dumb/useless/selfish/'sensual' women are? Don't think so. Did he ever show a hint of self-reflection? Nope. By the end I began to agree with Lucio that womankind has great potential, but so many women carelessly squander that potential; then I realised that that was just Stockholm Syndrome in action and was glad that I didn't have that much longer to go until the end of the novel.

There were also a few things that could have been explained in greater detail. I'm still not sure why Geoffrey was so sad and disappointed on his honeymoon. Is it because he and Sybil had furniture-smashing sex and she had - God forbid - orgasms, when he expected her to be virginal and/or a prude? Did Geoffrey expect to have to give Sybil the birds and bees talk and was hurt when she didn't need it? Because that's kiiiinda the impression I got from it.

In the end, though, I *did* actually feel sorry for Lucio, and I was glad that Geoffrey gave him that one hour of Heaven. I know that sounds saucy, but really, it's not. (Sadly. I expected more in the way of homoeroticism

from this novel, based on how beautiful Lucio is and how much Geoffrey waxes lyrical about him.)

All in all, I'll rate this book at an *ugh*.
