

1 *Dec. 7: Kiss of the Spider Woman, chapters. 1-3*

2

3 -This book starts off exactly how *Beloved* does, in the middle of all the drama.

4 -We don't know who the characters are or how they got to that point.

5 -Just like *Beloved* we are given details but we have to piece the background of the story  
6 together.

7 -The story takes place in Argentina.

8 - If I didn't read the back of the book I would have guessed that Molina was actually a woman.

9 -What is the relationship between Valentin and Molina?

10 -Where are they? Why are they in cellblock 7?

11 -Valentin and Molina have an 11 year age difference.

12 -I wonder if the movies Molina picks to tell have any relation to their situation in any way.

13 -Why doesn't Valentin like talking about his girlfriend unless he wants to?

14 -What's going on in Argentina during this time?

15

16 >So far this book is confusing in a refreshingly new way. Morrison in *Beloved* was very  
17 complicated and convoluted in her story telling which had many speakers, some unknown  
18 speakers, tense shifts constantly, confusing images, and style that created a very layered  
19 through its lack of given information or misunderstood info. Puig is at least more  
20 straightforward with the plot when he decides to make things difficult for the readers to handle.  
21 He just has his characters not talk at all about certain things, names of significant others, or the  
22 character's abrupt start and finishes to conversations. Puig has Molina sometimes just forget  
23 what exactly happens in the stories, leaving the whole thing up to his and Valentine's own  
24 interpretation, sometimes seemingly influenced by their own lives. It is interesting to note the  
25 different technique employed by Puig to keep readers guessing or scratching their heads, or in a  
26 way, leaving them grasping for a sense of reality.

27 >In this novel the movies Molina recount foreshadow or allude to the plot. May I point out that  
28 creating a movie from a novel never quite works out. At this point I'm not too sure the reverse is  
29 going to work out too well either. I do find your comment on censorship interesting. I feel that  
30 Valentin censors Molina more than Molina censors Valentin. ( so far at least) Valentin is the  
31 typical macho man an dominates Molina and the conversation more than I would like. It is  
32 interesting that his role so far is the analyzer of the movies while Molina seems to be stuck in his  
33 own little dream world. The relationship with the waiter is quite strange. Why is Molina in love  
34 with a straight man? Is it love or more of a pet project?

35 > I like the way the novel proceeds -- it never gives more explanation than necessary. Yet at the  
36 same time it is confusing: the style. It could be my bad memory that keeps me from  
37 distinguishing the characters, but I feel that the (slight) confusion is Puig's intention to reveal  
38 the characters indirectly, as if the dim light in the cell was shed on them. I also really enjoy the

39 way Molina and Valentin talk to each other: it reminds me of the talk I always have with my  
40 friends.

41

42 >I was quite surprised at how the format of the book is set up, but my original hesitation soon  
43 disappeared once I discovered how relatively simple it is to follow. The different films that are  
44 spoken of are rather interesting considering under normal circumstances films are formed from  
45 stories; however, I'm not sure I understand the connection between the films. I understand the  
46 idea of the films being dreams, in a sense, but is there a connection between movies that I  
47 missed? The stringing out of these movies, in a way, gave them a reason to live each day. The  
48 stories helped them to relate to their lives before prison, which gave them hope for tomorrow.  
49 Furthermore, it was intriguing to discover the lives of these two men beyond the prison. The  
50 fact that neither wanted to, at first, tell the other the name of their lovers raises an interesting  
51 questions. Why is it that one gives in before the other concerning names?

52

53 >Embroidery and a Turn::

54 In discussing the motives behind the architects staying out with his assistant every night,  
55 Valentin asserts that if Molina can embroider the truth of the matter then he can too. To look on  
56 this claim with gender stereotypes in mind we see that Valentin demonstrates a noticeable  
57 degree of feminine curiosity here. Embroidering is an activity more gender typical to women  
58 and Valentin's participating in the activity, in any capacity, would suggest some form of  
59 experimentation or curiosity with something that is gender atypical. This could suggest, and  
60 forgive me if this is too far of a stretch, a possible turn in sexuality for Valentin. Apart from just  
61 this quote, the first chapter ends in him telling Molina, in a way that could almost be flirting,  
62 "You'll pay for this" (p.26). The significance in even telling the story of the cat woman could  
63 suggest a retelling of it's plot, to some degree, in this book. Valentin may well play the role of  
64 the architect while Molina his assistant, going behind the back of Valentin's girlfriend. I admit  
65 that these predictions rely heavily upon far too many loose assumptions but it will be  
66 interesting to see if any or all of it plays out.

67

68 >Upon reading the first part of the Kiss of The Spider Woman I was incredibly captivated. The  
69 writing style is incredibly confusing, yet it is also enthralling. It appears to be written almost as  
70 if it is a script to a movie just as it is describing a movie which makes the whole story suck the  
71 reader in. I also liked how the writer slips in tiny pieces of information that allude to the idea  
72 that the two men are in prison. On multiple occasions he throws out the term cell and talks  
73 about how sexual scenes and descriptions of delicious foods would anger the other inmate  
74 which would make sense from a prison setting. I also just really enjoyed the descriptions of the  
75 panther like woman. Absolutely captivating.

76

77 >I like this book a lot, more than White Tiger and much more than Beloved. Although I like the  
78 book I am thoroughly confused by the 7 page foot note on p59. Since there is no narrator who  
79 can be telling it? It doesn't really give character development since we don't know what  
80 character is talking about it. It's kind of random and doesn't seem to have much of an effect on  
81 anything. I don't know why it is there but it must have some reason and that fact is really  
82 ruffling my feathers. I am at a loss, maybe the the class has a better reason for the footnote's  
83 existence because I have nothing.

84

85 >Really like this book so far. The dialog keeps it fast paced and the relationship between Val  
86 and Molina is an intriguing one to watch develop. As always, here's what I got chapter-by-  
87 chapter:

88

89 ¶Chapter One: "How are they each other's prison keepers and potential liberators?" I felt like  
90 you sort of touched on the answer in your notes: The two characters obviously have very  
91 different values, Molina seems interested in the romantic nature of the stories, and seems to like  
92 applying them to his own life. Val, on the other hand, seems (at least initially) to listen to the  
93 stories with reluctance, and criticizes Molina for his 'fantasies'. They limit each other by keeping  
94 the other one in check; Valentin wants no part with the sexually explicit parts of the stories, and  
95 Molina does not seem interested in hearing Val's political idealism. However, both serve as  
96 liberators towards the other in that they introduce each other to concepts and thought-processes  
97 that they would have otherwise not known existed: Molina becomes more and more interested  
98 in Val's biography (particularly his girlfriend), while Val seems to become more emotionally  
99 drawn to Molina: becoming more dependent on his stories as a means of passing the time.

100

101 ¶Chapter Two: "Who cuts off the discussion at the end of this chapter?" In short, Val. Perhaps  
102 more interesting, is that this cut off seems to be the first of a "handing off of power" between the  
103 two (I'm opting not to say "power-struggle", because I feel that the ends of each dialog come up  
104 more as a result of mutual respect than competition). You had talked about the possibility of  
105 prejudices: I feel that this "handing-off" of power seems to prove the latter of your two theories -  
106 that Puig is simply showing how the spectrum of human qualities can be found in the human  
107 male. Neither one seems to consistently dominate over the other though out the first three  
108 chapters, and both seem to be presented by the author as likable characters.

109

110 ¶Chapter Three: Footnotes footnotes footnotes. I was taken aback when I realized that the first  
111 first-note in this novel dealt with the subject matter it did. Are they current with the time the  
112 book was printed ('78 or '79)? Val obviously seems to harbor nothing against Molina in regards  
113 to his sexuality. As for the footnotes being liberatory ("the truth shall set you free") I don't see  
114 how they could - All three of the theories are stated as being 'refuted', offering no insight as to  
115 what the 'truth' actually is. In all honesty, the appearance of these footnotes had me completely  
116 stumped as to what their purpose could possible be. Class-discussion?

117

118 >My first thought on Kiss of the Spider woman is that it is really confusing. Without names it is  
119 confusing to follow. Within the text, there are multiple sexual references due to the movie. there  
120 is a discussion between two characters involving whether "erotic descriptions" should be used.  
121 The discussion of the movie itself turns to the actress multiple times, however there are hints of  
122 homosexuality.

123  
124 >From the very start I found this book fascinating. Not only did Valentin's interjections crack  
125 me up, but the movies Molina tells are extremely interesting—he definitely bears resemblance  
126 to Scheherezade in Arabian Nights, leaving his audience in suspense, but he doesn't need to  
127 distract Valentin necessarily...it's just a way to pass the time. I actually didn't find it very hard  
128 to figure out who was speaking—even when starting a new conversation Puig immediately  
129 mentions something to cue us in to the speaker. I like the idea of a book that reads like a play,  
130 yet incorporates narration in the description of movies. The footnotes are a bit strange in that  
131 they make such a pointed contrast to the dialogue—it is a very scientific study retold by the  
132 author, whereas the conversations are direct quotes and very casual and personal.  
133 When Valentin begins to talk about his girlfriend and Molina names her Jane Randolph after the  
134 actress who played the assistant, the line between illusion and reality blur: Molina is  
135 incorporating the film into Valentin's reality, although admittedly a "real" aspect of film (the  
136 actors).  
137 Something I found interesting was a comment made during the conversation about Gabriel—  
138 how Valentin and Molina will be free one day, but Gabriel is basically doomed to live out his  
139 life in ignorance with an inferior job, and how his inferiority complex is a sociological  
140 construction. Physical prison is not as bad as being a prisoner of your social status or situation.  
141 Valentin and Molina seem to be complete opposites—Valentin represents ideals (specifically  
142 political) and the willingness to do anything for these ideals, even give up love, shown in the  
143 conversation about his girlfriend. He also doesn't believe in living for the present but for the  
144 future, to change the world. Molina, on the other hand, is an optimistic romantic who loves the  
145 simple pleasure of films, is completely devoted to Gabriel even if they shall never be together,  
146 and believes in enjoying the moment. Also, this may sound weird and be completely  
147 unfounded, but I feel like their names aren't appropriate. Molina is a strong, masculine name  
148 and Valentin sounds more artistic and delicate. I'd have them trade names.

149  
150 > This novel is quite interesting. It has two polar personalities, Molina, a gay man, and Valentin,  
151 a revolutionary. With these interesting characters, the dialogue isn't a bore. When Molina tells  
152 his stories he is constantly interrupted by Valentin and it's quite comical. I thought it was the  
153 most interesting when Molina told him about the first film and the woman finally became a  
154 panther. Valentin said that she was a psychopathic killer rather than a panther woman. Valentin  
155 always rejects the fantasy and puts things in real life perspectives. His role is to revert us to  
156 realism, but then again, his hope to change the world can also be seen as fantastical. Molina is  
157 our window to fantasy, or hope.

158 >At first I thought that we were reading this simply because it was going to be a story about  
159 two imprisoned men on their way to freedom. However, there are so many subplots in here that  
160 the stories of oppression are becoming quite numerous.

161

162 ¶In the beginning, Molina and Valentin describe what one of the movie character's mother  
163 would seem like, and at first they talk about her as if she were a typical woman, working in the  
164 home. Molina mentions how her husband keeps her "cooped" up in the house (possible  
165 reference to chicken coop?) and that she is treated like a slave.

166

167 ¶The story of the panther woman was clearly another one, but this time the victim was trapped  
168 within her own body. She could really only find freedom in death, and even that didn't seem  
169 like an ideal way to achieve liberation.

170

171 ¶The German movie is pretty self-explanatory for why it's a tale of oppression...I mean, come  
172 on; it's Nazi Germany!

173

174 ¶Gabriel and Molina's story line might also serve as an example, if only because Molina wants  
175 to be free with the love of his life, but because of unalterable barriers (i.e. Gabriel's being a  
176 straight man), he may never attain the liberation he desires. It's quite sad, and I think it's why he  
177 lives vicariously through his films.

178

179

180 > I find it interesting that Valentin tells Molina that he tries to avoid pleasures of the flesh, such  
181 as eating and enjoying wonderful food, because he is a political activist, struggling to make the  
182 world better. He says, "Social revolution, that's what's important, and gratifying the senses is  
183 only secondary." The importance is more emphasized when Valentin says that even her  
184 girlfriend is secondary to the cause of change. And he also says that she feels the same way  
185 about him. I am comparing it to Beloved which takes a different approach where the family is  
186 given pre-eminence and everything else revolves around it as opposed to Valentin's world  
187 where the revolution is pre-eminent and everything else including the family revolves around  
188 it.