



Her

Lawrence Ferlinghetti , Vincent McHugh (Introduction)

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"To all those who have for several years sought to discredit the new American literature, Lawrence Ferlinghetti has just dealt a most powerful blow," wrote French critic Pierre Lepape in 1961 when *Her* was published in France as *La Quatrieme Personne du Singulier*. Calling it "a masterpiece of the young American novel," Lepape declared it was "the confirmation of a great American writer who, in the hall of American literary glories, takes the place left vacant by the death of Hemingway." Lepape went on to speak of the "incredible verbal virtuosity" by which the reader is led through this "laby-reve," and it is this image of the "labyrinth-dream" which relates *Her* to the anti-novels of the young French school of Robbe-Grillet and Butor.

Being thus very far from the kind of novels produced by Ferlinghetti's immediate contemporaries (whether Beat or academic) this book has met with little but bafflement among American critics. With well over 50,000 now in print *Her* nevertheless continues to make its own way.

Her Details

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Author : Lawrence Ferlinghetti , Vincent McHugh (Introduction)

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David says

only four chapters, stream of consciousness narrative that will pummel you with one powerful image after the other; surprising, involved, not for those who aren't active readers....

one big prose poem to say the least.

William Thomas says

This book, although published in english by an american author has all the awkwardness of a russian translation, as well as the russians' penchant for repetition. ferlinghetti seems to use this device unwittingly, however, and not because he is as the russians were, thinking that everyone else is too stupid to grasp the symbolism and imagery and metaphor and thus ramming it home to force the audience's understanding of their masterpiece. in her, it is more like a drunk who is trying to ram home a point in a conversation, although the conversation has changed topics numerous times. it makes the book damn near unbearable. i liked much of the imagery, however, and some of the word play is brilliant, but the fact of its awkwardness and unintentional repetition makes it a grueling task, unlike burroughs and kerouac in their stream of concious writing, their sub-concious writing, it is something to be read once and then never again, if not for the imagery, but for the lesson to other writers on how not to construct a piece.

Brett Francis says

Having been a fan of his poetry, I was curious as to his one longer work. Sadly, I was disappointed. I understand the idea of stream of conscious writing, but have never been a fan of it. The book started off with some interesting thoughts (maybe in the first 20 pages or so) and then dragged on and down for the rest. There were brief moments of interesting thoughts, but they were couched in with so much drivel that after a certain point I had lost all interest and sympathy in the narrator and his thoughts. I only give this two stars due to the language and the beginning of the book which I enjoyed. My advice, though, if you're looking into Ferlinghetti--stick wit his poetry.

Gabrielle says

Absolutely brilliant! A complete self-indulgent submersion into pure beatnik decadence, into sexy poetic prose that flows like wine through cobbled streets lined with artists and dreamers...

Eris says

This book is reading madness.

Andrew Dietz says

It took me a year to finish this book, ostensibly a novella, because it necessitated reading in great bursts followed by long pauses. I wish I had kept track of how many sentences were used, as I'm sure the answer would be around ten. Ferlinghetti, in my opinion, works best as a poet, and I'm loathe to admit that this book, largely tumbling gushes of stream-of-consciousness dreamlike passages (mostly pertaining to the horror and awe and beauty of Woman, All-Woman, the titular "Her"), punctuated by his wonderfully idiosyncratic and jokey word-play (I'm a sucker for alliteration, puns, and "unwords", and all three are used liberally) would have been better off edited down to a long-form poem, or collection of poems. Books like these read strangely, nearly suffering from an over-indulgence in post-modernism's disdain for linear plot or defined characters, and when I finally finished it I felt no real relief or closure. That being said, some passages are as great as anything Ferlinghetti's written, and I'll surely find myself opening to random pages and treat it like the book of poems it should have been. Then again, Ferlinghetti always insisted that his stuff be read aloud, preferably with musical accompaniment ("A Coney Island of the Mind" even includes a list of recommended jazz records to which to read the poems), so this book may deserve a re-read soon with rhythm and cadence strongly in mind, now that I've slogged through all the Words for the better part of a year.

Adam says

It begins as a surreal vision of sexual obsession, in which the outmoded conceptual dichotomy of form and content is dissolved, and in the resulting mire, the flesh, both of the Self and the Other, is conflated with Being. But it quickly abandons this subject and devolves into insipid free association, sequences of images devoid of emotional or intellectual content, tired mixtures of crudeness and flowery poetics. It's steeped in a tone of tepid worldliness, a self-awareness that avoids taking anything seriously, glibly reducing everything to superficial cliches (e.g. attraction to an ideal of femininity rather than to an actual woman). Abysmal and obnoxious.

Dana Jerman says

"Yet I'm still somebody, even if I'm nowhere.

I'm a painter in a shingle shack on a far spit at tide's end at nightfall, trying to produce a world's face from the composite face of many people painting one long picture all my life...

"The message of my eyes was a tongue stopping her tongue, my eyes were lips stopping her lips with kisses that were keys, and this was but the start of it, and I had another skeleton key, lower down, which I could insert in her keyhole, to turn the love of her.

2 parts scream-of-consciousness. Really beautiful work. And sexy.

Daniel Schechtel says

Great piece of work! Rather difficult to read, but illuminating for moments, humorous and visually and

iconically surrealist and impresionist, this novel (who owes much of its aesthetics to Beckett, I'd dare say) reminded me of the novels I always wanted to write but never did (or finished doing) because of their obscurity and the pervasion of seemingly random disconnected thoughts (or because what I take as readers' laziness, I'd dare say), even though in "Her" one can find a complex almost plastic (in the sense of painting) web pattern of motives, images and allusions which defy altogether the kantian categories of time and space. I also suggest reading it under narcotic mental conditions.

Doug Stanton says

Such beautifully written nonsense.

Ellie says

ah - Ferlinghetti! the 60's! NYC! Washington Square Park, David Peel and the Lower East Side, St. Marks and 2nd Avenue, Cheetahs!, Gwen Verdon and Chita Rivera... The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Steve Paul's The Scene.

Abbie Hoffman, Suzie and I on East 53rd.

Chris says

This "novel" reads as one long rambling sentence, and while that can be very trying and annoying as an experiment, the writing is beautiful and intriguing. It's sort of about how we make our memories or desires of people into objects, but then it's about everything else. Or it's really just about Ferlinghetti having some sort of masturbatory fantasy. Who's to say?

Tommy says

Loved this book. It's totally manic and confused. I can easily imagine Ferlinghetti writing this on a bunch of uppers or an absinthe binge.

Different from other beats like Kerouac, in that the story is much less clear. There is still action but it's just a continuous forward motion. Sometimes at a trudge and others at a full sprint. The story's all about feelings of longing, despair, clumsiness, ineptitude, and self-loathing. I liked the hazy and confused manic highs and lows, and am looking forward to reading more Ferlinghetti.

Lanny says

I think this is one of the earliest books I bought and still have. I can remember the smell of it. I can remember a warm Summer day reading this at a picnic with my girlfriend..

The distant strangeness of those fluid little run-on sentences
