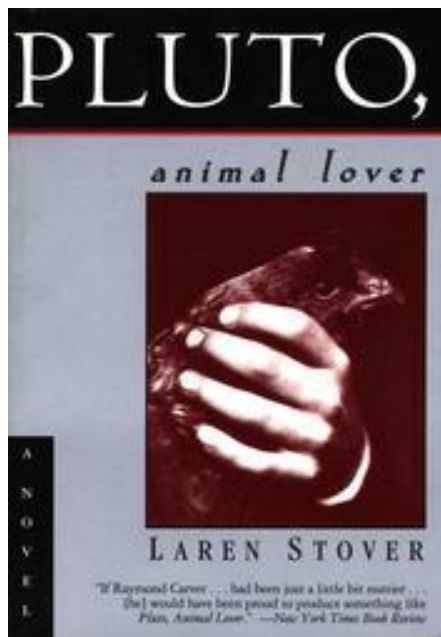




Pluto, Animal Lover

Laren Stover

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Pluto, Animal Lover Laren Stover

Meet the charming Pluto Hellbender Gerome, an ASPCA dog-walker, copyeditor of a pancreatic medical journal, and spin art artist. He is obsessed with cleanliness, his health, astrology, animals and whether or not they're being treated humanely, and with Wanda, a beautiful redhead and fellow dog-walker with a mysterious night job. Pluto's twisted sensibility, radical compulsions, despair at human behavior, and utopian dreams - realized with the help of his pet raven, Sunshine - drive the novel toward a climax that is as inevitable as it is surprising. At once dark comedy and psychological suspense, *Pluto, Animal Lover* introduces a character you will never forget and a writer with one of the most daring and distinctive voices in contemporary literature.

Pluto, Animal Lover Details

Date : Published August 24th 1995 by HarperCollins Publishers (first published May 1st 1994)

ISBN : 9780060926274

Author : Laren Stover

Format : Paperback 176 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Pluto, Animal Lover for online ebook

cj says

It's like JT LeRoy meets Weetzie Bat. Wonderfully screwed up.

Mizbelle says

I've read this book over and over. I love how no line is wasted. Almost every sentence in the book serves to show how demented Pluto truly is. Yes, it's violent towards animals, so the squeamish will be put up (I winced at two specific scenes) but it's not totally disgusting. A quick little read.

edit: Oops, I guess she has written other things! My mistake.

George Ilsley says

A strange little book that deliver a wallop as it develops. I found this book hilarious, but for those of you without a dark sense of humour, be careful, be very careful.

Debra says

This small novel packs a lot of punch... the visceral kind. It was amazing how the author got inside the mind of a psychopath. At times it was hard to turn the pages because I was afraid of what the next would have in store for me. Not for the squeamish, but not toooo bad considering the subject matter. Was like watching a derailed train reach it's inevitable conclusion. I still had hope... but alas... not a warm and fuzzy book with a warm and fuzzy ending.

Jon Blackwelder says

Weird but very good. And a quick read!

James says

Some viewers of *No Country for Old Men* will remember it as a film they didn't want to yield to, but couldn't resist; a similar current of emotions kept me clawing through the pages of *Pluto, Animal Lover*. More wry satire than sober psychological portrait, the more you want to rise above it, the more deeply it pulls you under. You find yourself feeling guilty for laughing at Pluto's perversities. I have long admired this debut by a hilariously wicked talent pecking her way into the literary preening order, and have long wondered what kind of mind could have hatched it. The book's greatest perversity is that Pluto's evil plots are so well

intended, fueled as they are by a species of idealism as strategic as it is naïve, a breed of cold-blooded compassion fearfully symmetrical with that of characters such as Julian Assange and his ilk. But there's more at work here than that: what really creeps one out are the moments of self-recognition one feels with Pluto and with the bemused-goddess psyche of his creator. This leads to flashes of self-recognition like one in the Yeats poem "The Grey Rock," just after the spirit Aoife (cool name), trembling with passion in the banquet hall of the gods, overflows with grief and rage that her lover, a mortal, has forsaken her divine protection and has thus been slain upon the battlefield.

She cast herself upon the ground
And rent her clothes and made her moan:
'Why are they faithless when their might
Is from the holy shades that rove
The grey rock and the windy light?
Why should the faithfulest heart most love
The bitter sweetness of false faces?
Why must the lasting love what passes,
Why are the gods by men betrayed?'

But thereon every god stood up
With a slow smile and without sound,
And stretching forth his arm and cup
To where she moaned upon the ground,
Suddenly drenched her to the skin;
And she with Goban's wine adrip,
No more remembering what had been.
Stared at the gods with laughing lip.

If *Pluto* has a moral, it's in the direction of *lectio divina*, of a reading that opens to a sense of divine detachment. As Yeats wrote of this poem, "The moral's yours because it's mine." That sense of bemused detachment was, for the poet, one of our deepest responsibilities.

Linda DiMeo Lowman says

A creepy story.

Beth Shields-Szostak says

signed by author

Rachel says

disturbing doesn't even begin to describe this book.

so disturbing, in fact, that i can't even decide if i liked it.

i am generally drawn to the creepy and bizarre...so it astounds me that this totally freaked me out.

so how to rate it? 2 or 3 stars...

i finally decided a book that can produce such a complex reaction probably deserved better than a "it was ok."

Almeta says

This is not a book about a detective “getting into the mind” of a sociopath or about authorities hiring a psychologist to profile psychotic behavior, in order to catch a criminal. It is a monologue of an attractive, charming, part-time dog walker. Narrated not by his voice but his mind.

Shamefully I feel that saying that I enjoyed this book is like revealing that I relish watching little boys pluck the wings off flies.

Laren says

The Pick

By Carlos Dews

Pluto, Animal Lover

(published on SMYLES & FISH)

Before she published the arguably less literary *Bohemian Manifesto: A Field Guide to Living on the Edge* (Bulfinch, 2004) and *The Bombshell Manual of Style* (Hyperion, 2001), Laren Stover published her first, and so far only, novel, *Pluto, Animal Lover* (HarperCollins, 1994). The novel came and went with little critical notice, with the apex of its publication a mixed review by Joe Queenan in the *New York Times*. Despite its lack of acclaim or sales success, the novel has haunted me ever since I first read it, holding my attention more than any other book I have read during the last thirteen years.

I remember everything about the novel, including where I sat while first reading it (in a Subway sandwich shop in Pensacola, Florida), the feel of the small hardcover book in my hands (4.5 inches by 6 inches, a size that was in vogue for a short while during the mid-1990s), the glamorous black and white author photograph that covered the back of the dust jacket. The front cover featured a faded photograph of a black chicken, a man's hand with dirty fingernails clutching its neck. But far more significant than these memories is the mood of the novel's dark story and the chilling narrator's voice and actions.

I have read the book at least once a year since it was published, and although a few things in it are beginning to seem dated, it continues to impress every time. Although I feel a pang of apprehension for admitting this about this book, given the numerous novels from writers with greater names and reputations that I have read since first reading *Pluto, Animal Lover*, it is, by far, the book I have most often recommended to both my students of literature and creative writing.

The novel's story is as simple as its narrator's personality is twisted. The novel concerns Pluto Hellbender Gerome, a volunteer ASPCA dog walker and the editor of a medical journal dedicated to the pancreas. He follows a twisted logic and philosophy from simple eccentricity to what I will call pathological, homicidal sympathy. The novel is written as an extended internal monologue in Pluto's voice; everything is tempered and filtered through his self-serving psyche. And everything we learn about the reactions to his increasingly strange behavior is filtered by his unique take on their responses.

Although they are not meant to excuse it (but perhaps to simply justify it) we do learn, through Pluto's own reflections, the apparent causes for his behavior. Born in New Orleans, the son of a woman who might have been a prostitute, Pluto's naïve, at times comic, descriptions of her life seem to inform his actions. And, perhaps more important, Pluto was clearly abused by an evil, sadistic stepfather.

Against the backdrop of early 1990s Manhattan, Pluto's admirable sympathy for the city's pets tips to a pathological desire to surreptitiously kill them to prevent what he perceives as their continued abuse. By the end of the novel it is apparent that Pluto is on the verge of applying the same logic to his fellow citizens of New York, whose lives he sees, in a spin of sympathy, to be not worth living. In particular, Pluto wants to end the miserable life of his co-volunteer, would-be composer, and girlfriend Wanda, whose life he learns is also, in his thinking, not worth living.

Nominated for a 1994 Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, Pluto, Animal Lover received little critical notice when it was published in 1994. Delilah Jones, reviewing the novel in the St. Petersburg Times, described Stover as "a really deranged, deliciously talented writer," from whom she wished to see more work, but called the book "silly." Another reviewer, Ron Rollins, in the Dayton Daily News, wrote: "Pluto is a sick little man, and Pluto, Animal Lover is a strange little book. But it's also compellingly readable."

Joe Queenan's review of the book in the New York Times proposes that Stover's efforts ultimately fail when she takes her macabre book into what Queenan calls her "Bret Easton Ellis mode" in describing Pluto's crucifixion of a live cat. Queenan unfortunately misses the point, and art, of the novel by passing judgment on the character's actions (he concludes his review with "All in all, Pluto is one sick pup") rather than on the technical and aesthetic successes of the novel.

The most important (and overlooked) aspect of the novel is its artful use of voice in monologue. While providing the gruesome details of the narrator's actions, the novel also builds empathy for what could easily be a contemptible, insufferable, non-readable character. Not since the immediacy and delusional honesty of Holden Caulfield's voice has an American writer, employing first person narration, captured with authenticity and unblinking courage the internal life (as well as pathology and eccentricity) of a character. The novel is a marvel for capturing the internal monologue of a psychopath as he degenerates from mere amusing quirkiness to homicidal empathy.

I wish there were a prize awarded to novels that, after perhaps ten years or so, are deemed worthy of renewed attention and consideration. I would nominate Pluto, Animal Lover for just such a prize so that readers and reviewers would give it a second chance.

[For New York readers, at last perusal multiple copies of Pluto, Animal Lover were on the shelves at The Strand and other second hand bookstores in Manhattan. For readers outside of New York, the book can be had on Amazon.com for as little as one cent (plus postage) and at ABEbooks.com for one dollar.:]

Carlos Dews was born into a world-class cockfighting family in East Texas but fled to the halls of academe where he received a Ph.D. in American literature. After ten years as a university professor he escaped the noose of tenure to write fiction and book reviews. He knows more about Carson McCullers's life and work than he knows about himself.

Angie says

The cover caught my attention (damn artists), and it's about the evolution of a psychopath.

Haley Williams says

ahahahahahahahahahahahhahahaha

Lori Whitwam says

My all-time favorite disturbing book is Pluto, Animal Lover, by Laren Stover:

"From Library Journal...

When the narrator of this quirky first novel introduces himself as Pluto Hellbender Gerome, animal lover, Stover's readers will immediately be transported to the private hell of a young man more aptly labeled an extreme misanthropist. From the outset, Pluto sets about perversely proving his love for animals in a fashion horribly reminiscent of any nightmarish narrator created by Poe. All the while, this immaculately dressed control freak obsesses about Wanda, the woman of his dreams, who possesses her own peculiar and secretive past and present. Stover's brilliantly dark humor may win readers over, but her depiction of the at times downright gruesome acts of this self-proclaimed animal lover is guaranteed to earn her low marks with PETA."

It was creepy, but Pluto is so bizarre, so twisted, yet his intentions and his beliefs are somehow still something that you can almost understand, at least from his perspective. He believes he is saving animals from exploitation and abuse. It is darkly comic, and his obsessions are so well-plotted that you almost become him.

Krystal Phillips says

Momma Mia, not what I thought it was going to be when I picked it up. It has its merits, I do see this, but it's not for me.
