



Hera Lindsay Bird

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this impressive debut has established Hera Lindsay Bird as a good girl.....with many beneficial thoughts and feelings.....

with themes as varied as snow and tears, the poems in this collection shine with the fantastic cream of who she is.....juxtaposing many classical and modern breezes

Bird turns her prescient eye on love and loss, and what emerges is like a helicopter in fog.....or a bejewelled Christmas sleigh, gliding triumphantly through the contemporary aesthetic desert.....

this is at once an intelligent and compelling fantasy of tenderness.....

heartbreaking and charged with trees.....without once sacrificing the forest.....

Whether you are masturbating luxuriously in your parent's sleepout.....

.....or pushing a pork roast home in a vintage pram.....

this is the book for you.....

heroically and compulsively stupid.....

.....whipping you once again into medieval sunlight.

Hera Lindsay Bird Details

Date : Published 2016 by Victoria University Press

ISBN : 9781776560714

Author : Hera Lindsay Bird

Format : Paperback 112 pages

Genre : Poetry, Glbt, Queer

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From Reader Review Hera Lindsay Bird for online ebook

which lena says

initially, this reminds me of dorothea lasky and maybe a little maggie nelson. ask me about my complicated feelings about whitegirl poetry and feminine performative humiliation and gimmick. #life #is #complicated

update: I hate it. i'm sorry. i do. i hate the kind of self-conscious un- self consciousness people are calling 'millennial', i think it is boring and twee in a bad way. bird has a good ear, and i appreciate explorations of technology and gimmick as much as the next poet, but i didn't see enough here to excite me.

Heather says

This was amazing. It was so irreverent and bold and the images were genius, perfect and hilarious all at once. So delighted to have found her. It's so rare I fall head over heels in love with a poet.

Warwick says

This was absolutely fantastic. The first collection from New Zealand poet Hera Lindsay Bird, it's funny, sexy, wildly imaginative and full of melancholy...it took me completely by surprise. I suppose my expectations when it comes to new young poets are fairly low – too many of them just seem to
consider poetic form
as no more than a literary weaponisation

of line breaks

...and that is true here as well, but she makes up for it by packing every line with more startling imagery and productive disorientation than most poets manage in a whole book. You never find yourself wondering how something should be interpreted, or how to give the author the benefit of the doubt over whether something is trite or profound. Instead it all just washes over you in little bursts of aesthetic pleasure.

Bird's primary tool is the simile, which she wields with disarming flair and confidence. At every turn you find thoughts expressed by means of comparisons that make you laugh, take you by surprise, or give you strange new angles on familiar ideas. She describes the heart, for instance, as being 'like a cold sleigh drawn / again & again / through the dark avenues of spring', says that her bisexuality is 'like turning your back on God.....but in a risqué halter neck', and writes about

how the past illuminates the present
still swinging from the heart's rafters
like a chandelier in an ambulance

Elsewhere, a sexual partner's O-face puts her in mind of 'an athlete winning a prestigious sporting tournament at the exact moment he realises his wife has been cheating on him'. Writing about one

enthusiastic sexual encounter, she says:

You are a denim tree and I'm the world's fastest autumn.

...which is the kind of line that makes me put a book down and stare around me in delight, at a world newly-changed. I mean, the book's worth the price for that alone. This particular poem, 'Ways of Making Love', is one of many in here that are, on a formal level, not much more than lists of similes, strung together in overwhelming profusion and in such a way that the technique is triumphantly justified. It begins:

Like a metal detector detecting another metal detector.
Like two lonely scholars in the dark clefts of the Cyrillic alphabet.
Like an ancient star slowly getting sucked into a black hole.
So hard we break sports, leaving the conveners of the Olympics
with a generous redundancy package.

The images come and go, succeeding each other so rapidly that you're left only with lingering impressions, floundering in some weird subjective space where they all intersect. The same can be said for the litany of rhetorical conditionals in a poem like 'If You Are An Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh':

IF YOU ARE AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PHARAOH

I am carving dirty hieroglyphics
into the wall of your tomb
If you are a dead French aristocrat
I am the suspicious circumstances
surrounding your death
If you are a shape-shifting wizard
I am the shape you are shifting into
If you are a fast-moving cloud
I am an entire field of deer
looking up

(She goes on in this vein for three more pages.) Bird has a good ear for well-handled swearwords, an affinity for playful titillation, and an engagement with pop culture (one poem is all about Monica from *Friends*), but she is definitely not a 'pop poet' in a dismissive sense. There are serious linguistic tricks going on in here, and surprisingly deep thinking, too. She likes the eye-catching glare of sex as a subject – but it's usually there to smuggle in something much more serious about mortality, loss, the transience of interpersonal relations.

I'll close by leaving you with my favourite from this collection, a poem that somehow manages to live up to its title of 'Keats Is Dead So Fuck Me From Behind':

Keats is dead, so fuck me from behind

Slowly and with carnal purpose
Some black midwinter afternoon
While all the children are walking home from school
Peel my stockings down with your teeth
Coleridge is dead, and Auden too
Of laughing in an overcoat
Shelley died at sea and his heart wouldn't burn
And Wordsworth.....
They never found his body
His widow mad with grief, hammering nails into an empty meadow
Byron, Whitman, our dog crushed by a garage door
Finger me slowly
In the snowscape of your childhood
Our dead floating just below the surface of the earth
Bend me over like a substitute teacher
& pump me full of shivering arrows
O emotional vulnerability
Bosnian folk-song, birds in the chimney
Tell me what you love when you think I'm not listening
Wallace Stevens's mother is calling him in for dinner
But he's not coming, he's dead too, he died sixty years ago
And nobody cared at his funeral
Life is real
And the days burn off like leopard print
Nobody, not even the dead can tell me what to do
Eat my pussy from behind
Bill Manhire's not getting any younger

Bex says

just go and read it already :')

Virga says

Labai gera. N?ra tas, k? nor?t?si vis iš naujo paskaityti, bet t? vien? kart? skaitant - gražu, nes n?ra nei kažko dirbtinai gilaus, nei universalaus. Viskas asmeniškai ir viskas patirta kuo nors - k?nu, akimis, ausimis, kalba - užtai atpaž?stama. Dar gražu, kad neperkrauta, nesutirštinta, nesudramatinta.

Michael Livingston says

Sometimes funny, sometimes silly, sometimes beautiful, always meta.

Simon Sweetman says

One of the better books of poems I've read in a while - there's hype threatening to crush this and angry backlash telling others it can't at all be good but most of this is very, very good, and even in its weakest moments its intriguing. The best thing this does is urge you to read it over and again. I'm looking forward to diving right back in - and though that should seem an obvious hope for poetry I don't often feel that way. The language here in this book most often is funny and wise and thoughtful. It's a joy to read this - to image the poet's mind working as she put all of these pieces together. I really loved it.

Laura says

I will definitely need to take another pass at her work because it is so packed with metaphors either that they initially have nothing to do with the subject and that you're going absolutely crazy - which, to be honest, I think is the intention.

I really enjoyed 'Having Already Walked Out On Everyone I Ever Said I Loved' for how it made me think back to the slightly scary and quite surprising truth of that every relationship that you get into will either end or last forever - and the fear and delight that that realisation elicits.

Hate was quite a revelatory ode to the emotion. As someone who struggles to feel hate and sometimes wishes that I could just let go in that way it was nice to see how freeing and "human" and flawed Bird seemed to feel when she experienced it.

Also - thanks to the brilliant and celebratory and empowering experience that was Naked Girls Reading another one of my favorites was 'Keats is dead so Fuck me From Behind'. It was an incredibly well chosen poem that offers up the opinion that we have a new generation of romantics and that that they are almost 'anti-romantic' in their approach to the flaunting of prescribed social rules of dating and the way that they reveal in their explicit queerness.

Timothy Andrew says

Hera is one of those poets who remind you of a magician who stands on stage and explains exactly what they're doing, explains slight of hand, perception and showmanship. Despite all this transparency you're still left thinking "witchcraft! Where did these powers come from!?" after the performance. One of my favourite collections in years.

Emma Makes says

I read this in a five star hotel between crisp white sheets and it was glorious. That was in July and it's stayed with me until December.

A great work that at times felt unbearably painful. I know Hera and I felt like I'd stumbled into reading her emails yet couldn't look away.

Rich, smart and so clever as to be intimidating. I just felt that because I'd read the poems in quick succession they became a bit same-samey towards the end.

Pick at it is my recommendation. A little afternoon delight.

Travis Cottreau says

This is one of my favourite books of poetry of all time.

I don't say that lightly, and this isn't the first book of poetry I've read either, in case you are wondering. :)

It is twisting, funny, raw and oh, so clever. I understand why it is getting all the attention in New Zealand (and I hope elsewhere soon).

I am reading bits and pieces out loud to other people - and if I don't have the book with me, summarizing salient pieces to my friends. It's a rare and wonderful book that can do that to anyone.

Her metaphors and similes are taken out back and beaten into submission, which makes them all that much more enjoyable, to know that they are bleeding and bruised from Hera Lindsay Bird's poetry craft makes me happy.

Marcus Hobson says

There are some real gems in here, although it is not a collection for the faint hearted or those that get annoyed by something weary.

For example, this took me by surprise:
"because writing poetry about fucking
when you could be fucking
is the last refuge of the stupid."

There are some classic titles in this collection - for example 'The dad joke is over' 'Keats is dead so fuck me from behind' and 'The ex-girlfriends are back from the wilderness'. 'Pain Imperatives' runs to twenty-nine pages, with mostly four lines on each page, and containing thought-provoking classics such as;
"I write this poem like an obituary in Comic Sans
I write it like suicide hotline hold music"

The first verse from 'The ex-girlfriends are back from the wilderness' is one of the most pleasing for me:
"The ex-girlfriends are back...
emerging once again from the tree shadows...
into the primordial burlesque of autumn
with their low-cut...
reminiscences... and soft dubious ironies...
trembling once again into their
opulent...
seasonal migration patterns
a corsage of wilting apologies

tethered to the bust..."

The imagery and the language combine beautifully to hint and suggest at themes which Bird tosses back and forth in the rest of the poem. It is a poem of strength - she is not letting those ex's intimidate her.

One final gem from the bright sparkly box of trinkets. From 'Planet of the Apes' come the lines;
"I've always never felt this way about anyone
but the way in which I've never felt about you
is a way of never feeling so new it's somehow old
like a cave painting of a fax machine."

Harold Coutts says

listen... read this fucking book

Carol She's So Novel?? says

And Ms Bird is perched on the cover like a...bird.

If the cover is somewhat enigmatic, the poetry isn't. Hard hitting, honest, sometimes funny and sometimes shocking my daughter (who played with Hera when they were both very tiny children) describes this as poetry that speaks to millennials. I am well out of that age group, but I was still intrigued by Hera's ability to play with words.

The red hot favourite to win the poetry section of this year's Ockham's (New Zealand's main book awards)

Bridget says

Well, it has taken an age, but I'm done. I didn't love this book, but I did think it was a deeply intimate, quirky and very personal book of poems. I know she is considered the bright young thing of New Zealand poetry right now, and I did really enjoy some of these immensely, but some of them were not my cup of poetry at all. I like that she makes me feel uncomfortable, I like that she takes risks. I want new voices in poetry and I like it that the book made the bestsellers lists, how often does it happen that poetry is on the top sellers lists, not very often.
