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The author of *The Fortress of Solitude* turns a keen, affectionate eye on the paradoxes of love and art in this romantic farce set among the members of an aspiring rock band in Los Angeles.

You Don't Love Me Yet Details

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From Reader Review *You Don't Love Me Yet* for online ebook

Ryan says

I would hate if my boss always compared my successes to my failures. Luckily my boss doesn't. If he did, I would quit. What he usually says when I make a mistake is 'Ryan, you screwed up, don't do it again'. Unfortunately most of Jonathan Lethem's readers don't give him that much respect. As an author of tremendous talent, he constantly gets compared to his greatest works. A comparison that is a waste to both the author and to any critical reader.

That said, at its best *YOU DON'T LOVE ME YET* is like a really bad Scholastic Reader novella version of *REALITY BITES* that was written after the popularity of the movie to capture any residual fondness. Y'know, it is kind of like when you were a kid and you bought *Karate Kid* at the book fair after already seeing the movie. Realizing that this analogy is confusing even for me, it seems that Lethem wrote the book with, even if only tongue-in-cheek, nostalgia for the art/music/art music/art music slacker scene of early 90s Los Angeles -- a nostalgia I am not sure that exists.

The characters have no depth and the story was boring, unfunny, and uninteresting. So to Lethem I wouldn't say 'This book is no *FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE*' because I don't want him to rewrite that book -- if I wanted to read an author that rewrites the same book, I would read Clancy or Grisham. What I would say to him is 'Lethem, you screwed up, and don't please don't do it again'.

Gregory says

From the wikipedia page: "*You Don't Love Me Yet* (2007) is a comic novel about alternative music from Jonathan Lethem, set in modern Los Angeles"

& now for my review: this book is a comic novel about alternative music in LA and that sucks. The music parts were so cringey bad to the point where one guy opens the door to his loft wearing a big star t-shirt and there is "drama" at a KEXP Seattle type interview and it is so uncomfortable. There are some endearing and charming qualities about this book and some interesting developments, but for the most part it was just kinda awkward and clumsy? This seems like it might make a cute and kinda quirky long-form portlandia sketch, but as a book? It's pretty soft.

Halley Sutton says

I mean, technically well-written, because I like Lethem's writing, but I think I prefer him at his weirdest/most speculative. This was like, just, why? Left it in the back of the airplane seat.

Jon says

I actually dont see what Lethem could have done to make people happy with this book. All the reviews here

pretty much slate it but I think it was written as a conscious detachment from *Motherless Brooklyn*/*Fortress of Solitude* and offers a nice relief. A bit more of a disposable pop riff than a layered, carefully constructed piece of art like his other two most famous books. Yes the characters are hateable, and yes the plot meanders a bit but if anyone out there has actually moved in band circles such as the ones described in the book, they will recognise some pretty horrible truths in there.

For me there is nothing worse than a big serious novel trying to describe music culture and youthful energy. I don't think it can be done. I would have given it 4/5 but I'll give it 5 just to be contrary to the other mediocre reviews here.

Christen says

I'd give this two and a half stars if Goodreads would let me.

I chose this in a far more hurried manner than usual. I was in the airport, knew I was likely to finish my book in flight, and knew I'd need something to get me through the rest of the trip. I dashed into the mini-Powell's at the airport, ran my eyes over the Literary Fiction/Classics section, saw Lethem's name, though, "Hey, I've heard good things and been meaning to check him out," and arbitrarily picked this from among the titles offered.

Turns out people who love Lethem's other work found this a great disappointment, so I'm probably not insane. Thing is, the prose was beautiful, and Lethem's descriptions of Los Angeles (the city I happened to be traveling to) were beautiful and spot-on. All the more disappointing that such a perceptive writer should take us on such an uninteresting journey.

You know how Delillo's characters are kind of fascinating and sophisticated but also kinda flat and sometimes obnoxious and his dialogue is sometimes impossibly clipped and abstract? You know how that kind of annoys you but then the ideas just completely deliver and at the end of the day it's completely OK with you that he's far more talented as an essayist and aphorist than as a fiction writer? Except when he really doesn't deliver? Well, Lethem opens this novel with two impossibly beautiful Angelinos meeting at a gallery to break up. Except he doesn't say that and they don't say that -- the dialogue (which I'd quote if I hadn't already gotten rid of the book) is implausibly clipped and abstract. Then there's band practice, and nobody can tell if the band in question is completely shitty or really onto something. Then there's one character's absurd job taking calls at the Complaint Line, an art installation -- and she's inexplicably fascinated by a particular caller's self-possessed complaints that she pursues a relationship with him in real life. It turns out he's an honest to God aphorist -- and while a few of his lines are compelling, most of them are just annoying.

Then there's a subplot involving one character's creepy decision to abduct a kangaroo from the zoo where he works/has been fired. That made me hopeful that this whole stupid milieu would turn into some kind of madcap mystery, but no, that subplot resolves itself with disappointing tidiness. As does, for that matter, the relationship with the complainer, and pretty much everything having to do with the band.

None of this matters much, because I had pretty much nothing invested in the characters or their outcomes. And I really tried. Before their ages were revealed to me, I imagined the characters were in their early 20s and maybe-educated, maybe-not, which would explain why they do such stupid things and seem so desperate to impress. Turns out, no, they're all supposed to be on the precipice of 30, and they are all educated. Now, I'm 27, and I can scarce imagine anyone I know behaving as stupidly as the characters in this book. Maybe I

give my friends too much credit, or maybe I choose them well enough to avoid this -- but seriously, any reasonably intelligent, experienced 29-year-old woman should have seen right through the complainer.

Spoiler alert -- the unnamed band disappears to the void they spend all but 20 pages inhabiting, which makes perfect sense, because apart from a few passages describing the chemistry at their first show, the only thing you know about the band's sound is their lyrics (appropriated from the complainer's aphorisms), which are so bad you assume the music has to be fantastic in order to carry them. This is, in fact, suggested at one point in the book, and it's the only explanation that makes any sense to me.

Since the two major storylines involve theft (the kangaroo and the complainer's words), I assume Lethem's Big Ideas -- you know, the ones that should make it worth our while to tolerate the stupidity and shallowness of the characters -- have something to do with, like, the transmutability of intellectual property. This is an issue he's written about quite eloquently elsewhere. It's handled with embarrassing clumsiness here. I'll give the man another shot, but I can't recommend this particular work to anyone.

Michelle says

Audio book experiment II failed.

I am pretty sure this book would have blown even if I had read it on the page. I listened to it while driving back and forth to Santa Clara from my home office for a project I was working on. I was sick of my iPod so I thought I'd try audio books. (I have since learned from friend recommendations and personal experience that it is not the best idea to listen to fiction while driving.)

Anyway, as far as I could surmise, this book is about a young band trying to break into the music business. Some weird shit happened with a kangaroo in a bathroom, but I had totally lost track of what was going on by the time I realized there was a kangaroo in a bathroom. There was a sex scene which almost made me drive off the road, so that accounts for the second star.

Why I didn't like this book:

1. The writing is poor. It was read by the author himself so I thought it would at least sound the way he intended, but even that didn't help.
2. The title of the book is ripped off from a Roky Erickson song. It bums me out that this crappy book is named after such a beautiful song. Erickson wasn't even acknowledged anywhere in the book. So I am here to tell you (for what it's worth): No, Jonathan Lethem didn't think of the title on his own.
3. And this is my biggest pet peeve. The band eventually gets a gig and rocks the house with their single. The crowd chants for them to play their single a second time, so they do and they rock the house *again*. **THIS WOULD NEVER HAPPEN!** NO ONE likes it when a band plays a single twice in one show! **It never, ever** sounds as good as the first time and it's totally lame and it kills the moment. It's like telling the audience you have no additional material and you'll never be more than that one song. It is the lamest move a band can ever make. I can't believe Lethem actually put that in his book.

Trin says

Oh my *god*. I'm actually shocked that a book by a respected author like Lethem could be this bad. Because it is *so bad*. It's full of whiny, painfully hipstery characters with names like Fancher Autumnbreast tooling around a fake L.A. that makes no geographical sense (even less than the real L.A., I mean) and having lots of deeply unpleasant-sounding sex that made me lock my legs at the knee as I read. Fine. That's just bad. But what launches this book into the stratosphere of shockingly, appallingly bad (or perhaps drilling it down into the hot, cramped hell thereof) is the fact that Lethem's plot involves taking a cool, independent female bassist and making her completely subservient to an obnoxious, controlling, and—Lethem seems to take great joy in telling us—physically repellent man. Meanwhile, female friendships exist in this book apparently just so they can be tossed aside like a crumpled tissue when the right man walks into the room. I just... This is really the best you can do for me, 2008?

Despite all the things I've read about how wonderful Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude* and *Motherless Brooklyn* are, this book makes me never want to read a single word of his again.

Jill Golden says

I loved *Motherless Brooklyn* and Lethem's book of essays, *The Disappointment Artist*. *You Don't Love Me, Yet*, however, has almost ruined my faith in contemporary fiction. Because I don't want to spend more time writing about this book than I have to, I will list some of the things about it that annoyed me:

1) The Characters' Names:

Bedwin

Falmouth Strand

Vogelsong

FANCHER AUTUMNBREAST (I actually had to stop reading for a few days after that one)

2) The contrived sex that made me never want to have sex again:

Sex in a museum dollhouse

Tangentially related line that annoyed me: "She'd meant to masturbate, was pretty sure she'd failed."

3) Indie-rock love declarations:

"I love that you're skinny."

"I puked because I'm in love with you."

Lethem, in general, is a pretty inventive and interesting author, but he fails in this one by trying to write the quintessential hipster novel. It comes off as ridiculous and sad.

Joe Kraus says

For most of the last 15 years or so, I have been one of Jonathan Lethem's biggest fans. I think *Chronic City* has a claim on being the best novel of its decade, and I think *Motherless Brooklyn* is an almost perfect ironic tribute to the noir tradition. Add in the flawed but gorgeous *Fortress of Solitude*, the quietly beautiful *Dissident Gardens*, and the sci-fi comedy of *Gun with Occasional Music*, and he has as varied, funny, and brilliant a bibliography as anybody going.

My assessment of him as arguably the best writer of his generation has taken a couple hits in the last year, though. For one, his *A Gambler's Anatomy* struck me as the first work I'd read of his that wasn't deeply inspired. Part of the joy of reading him is that anything seems possible, that he's always restraining one flight of fancy or another to give us the choicest pieces of his imagination. *A Gambler's Anatomy* felt heavy, even contrived at times. It left me sad.

In addition, as I reflected on the disappointment of that novel and thought more about my students' reactions to *Chronic City* a couple years ago, I started to understand what some of the Lethem-haters have been saying for a while: that the major chink in his armor is that he focuses too much on hipsters, on characters who live in the surface of things rather than in any substantial way. I understood – mind you, I did not agree with – that claim and began to glimpse how it might annoy some readers to hear so much about such self-satisfied characters. There was, maybe, a little bit of the supermodel complaining about how hard it is for to feel thin in the way these often-wealthy taste-making young people grasped after some meaning to their lives.

All that said, I am happy to report that I loved this novel. It doesn't crack my top four all-time Lethems, maybe not even the top five, but that still leaves plenty of room for this to be really good. Yes, it concerns hipsters and beautiful artist types. Yes, it assumes a familiarity with pop culture that can make you feel a little like an aging Midwesterner. And, yes, it's simply less ambitious than *Chronic City* or even *Dissident Gardens* in the way it tries to make sense of the way art defines and then confines us.

Instead, this is a novel that works from the premise that, as a number of characters repeatedly say, you can't be deep without a surface. Lucinda seems to have it all. She's the bass player for a band about to break. She's got that heroin chic look. She goes from dating the band's lead singer to falling for a strangely compelling "complainer," and she has a network of interesting (though odd) and talented people willing to give her light employment or free housing.

But the complainer sets something off inside her with his capacity for articulating his own – and the zeitgeist's – dissatisfaction. When she recycles his complaints into lyrics for the band, there's real power. The premise is sound, but it would fall flat without Lethem's deep skill. You really need someone with the power to manipulate language and to see others with "monster eyes" – someone like Lethem himself – to make it all work.

Part of the joy of the novel is that the music seems really to come through. I can hear these songs, and I like them. They do what the best rock does, which is a privileged and white version of what the blues do: take frustration (or, as Jagger and Richards said it so memorably, "no satisfaction") and make it something you can dance to.

That would be enough, but Lethem takes it even farther. The complainer, Carl(ton), is not a real rocker. When he joins the band, he's both a lousy musician and a lousy exemplar of what it means to rock. He simply can't let go of his complaints, as witnessed in the band's big break live radio performance where he

wants to recast their most popular song as a dirge. If hipsters define themselves against convention, then he defines himself against hipsterdom, never accepting his good fortune, never allowing himself to dance. It's great that [SPOILER] he winds up in love with the all-business middle-aged zoo administrator who has also foiled Matthew in his wonderfully demented effort to rescue, and perhaps fall in love with, a kangaroo. He deserves an ending where he's held in check, where someone directs him toward what he has to do.

In the middle of all that, Lethem retains his skill at sketching characters quickly and effectively. It still seems to me that he can make a character come alive more fully in 270 pages than Jonathan Franzen can in 600 and that, as he does so, he brings into play the same "postmodern" reflections of how we can understand ourselves outside a contemporary culture that consistently tries to shape us in its own image.

I can see this feels a little dated – I'm sorry I didn't get to it when it first came out – but it serves for me as evidence that Lethem remains one of the most distinctive and entertaining voices we have. I've just learned that he has another one due out in the fall, and I'm already excited for it.

Ben says

I adore Jonathan Lethem. Ever since *Gun, with Occasional Music*, he's remained one of my favorite authors. His science fiction was fascinating and stylish and, though I was tepid about it, his shift to traditional fiction kept much of the flair and panache of previous work. To me, Lethem is what happens when you take Chuck Palahniuk and add literary talent.

You Don't Love Me Yet is a clever book. Though the book's main character is the bassist for a band, the true star of the novel is the Complainer, a character who pens witty quips. Because of this, the book is filled with witty quips. The first time I ran across one, I smirked and got excited, but soon I found myself rolling my eyes as each pithy saying jumped from the page.

Unlike *Motherless Brooklyn* or *The Fortress of Solitude*, *You Don't Love Me Yet* lacks depth. It's a page turner filled with self-absorbed New Yorkers playing with themselves among the art-house elite. Under normal circumstances, that might be the touch of death, but the cynical and humane way in which Lethem treats the characters turns them into unwitting tragic comics.

You Don't Love Me Yet reads quickly and can be devoured over a weekend or on a long plane ride. And while it shouldn't be remembered as one of Lethem's greatest works, it's certainly worth picking up and reading if you're a fan of his.

Jenni Lunde says

I saw this book and immediately knew I'd hate it as something from the pretentious "Rent" vein. But it was on my required reading list, and school begins soon, so I picked it up and read it all in a sitting, and am now ready to digest it.

If I read it all in one sitting, it couldn't have been that bad—right? Wrong. I just wanted to get it over with. The basic premise is this: a struggling band of slightly (but no more than that) misfit characters gets their big

break via an inspirational (somewhat) old man named Carl. No joke. Then, predictably, Carl wants a spot in the band and winds up breaking them up. The band's songs are pretty bad, even after they get their Carlspiration(TM). Think the "Joe lies/when he cries" song from "Say Anything" and you'll arrive close to what I mean by that. That the story's set in holier-than-thou Los Angeles and has a number of artist-types (I add the -types because I couldn't possibly call them artists) whose take on art is to make every situation, no matter how ordinary, into something it's not only adds to the sort of snooty atmosphere the author builds throughout. (Who talks the way these people do? Stoners? Apparently so.) Lucinda, the unworthy and decidedly uninteresting heroine of the story, meets her inspiring Carl whilst working as a receptionist taking complaints in one of these orchestrated situations.

The band's most "inspired" song is called "Monster Eyes." Yeah. I laughed too. A lot. Then I just thought it sad. The title refers to what happens when the one flaw you see in a person mushrooms so that it becomes *everything* you see in them. The Monster Eyes amplify the flaw until they devour everything you once saw that was good about someone. Obviously, the author has never heard that the absence of a flaw in beauty is itself a flaw. Or, perhaps, he's heard of it but doesn't believe it. Whatever. There was an ideological disconnect between the story and I there—one of many, as it turns out.

It's often hard to tell when the author's trying to be funny or trying to be serious. Some people have attributed this to his "witty irony" (from the front matter), but none of it seemed very witty or ironic to me, just kind of baseless and disorganized. It didn't help that I really couldn't make myself care a rat's ass about any of the main characters. Much as I kept thinking, "What makes you think you don't have to pay rent?" all throughout "Rent," I kept thinking, "What about you as people makes you so special?" throughout this novel. And so I got caught in a vortex-like loop from which thought and time cannot escape. The insights to be gained from this book are banal; like "Girl, Interrupted," the novel pretends at profundity but only plumbs new levels of, well, pretension. Shove your book up your arse, Mr. Lethem. That is, presumably, where it came from.

All right. . . I'll admit that last bit was a little harsh. But I'm still not taking it back.

"You can't be deep without a surface." Yeah? And you can't be deep if you don't sink beneath that surface, either, and find something worthwhile there. "He touched the lowest depths to attain the highest heights," as Dante wrote—my Latin's a bit shaky, so pray forgive the translation if it's wrong. There's no depth here. Pretending to be profound is not deep.

As to the writing style: when I began the book, it interested me immensely. Certain register shifts are common, from the lofty to the bathetic to the seedy and filthy: from Shakespeare to Danielle Steele, as you will. And, as I said, it interested me for a while. But then the shifts just became jarring and erratic: decidedly very off-putting. Mr. Lethem also is fond of a sort of nitty-gritty realism in his novel, which leads to rather pointless descriptions of what Lucinda happens to be wearing at the moment and even more pointless descriptions of oral sex. Now, the book gods know I'm no prude—I'm a staunch supporter of "In the Cut," after all—but the descriptions of here were to me a little bland, mindless, and out of place. There is no reason for them: no deep psychological need is filled by the sexual relationships, nor do they drive the plot forward in any necessary sense. (Am I the only woman left in America who thinks falling in love and having sex in all of five minutes is wrong?)

I'm chalking this book up to a culture shock experience, though not in the good way of trying new things, but in the bad way of understanding why I do not try new things more often. Is it interesting? Sure, if you like this sort of thing. Is it brilliant? Not really. It's a decent example of modern fiction, I suppose. Just because I don't care for it doesn't mean other people won't. *sigh*

"Rent" and all your ilk, stay far away from me. You are making me nauseous.

jeremy says

no, i most certainly do not, and if you keep writing like this, i never will. reads like an overreaching first attempt at fiction. the only thing worse than whiny hipsters is an entire novel about them. the only thing worse than that, is a poorly written one.

Havva says

Read on train. I liked the beginning better than the end.

Bjorn says

Jonathan Lethem always wrote books in much the same way that Yo La Tengo make music; a reference here, an influence there, an irresistably charming fusion of twee pop, disco, free jazz and aggressive punk. Or in Lethem's case, some pop cultural journalism, some Austerian New York/Brooklyn, some satire, some Woody Allen sex and characters just overdone enough to be both funny and believable. All of it ever so slightly transparent so that you can see the layers underneath where he tries to work out how society and culture work and go together... if they even do.

He did that perfectly in *Fortress of Solitude* and *Motherless Brooklyn*, two novels that simultaneously deconstructed and reconstructed the world while touching on music, art, movies and literature as reference points. Not to mention *The Disappointment Artist*, which starts out as a collection of essays and ends up as a frank autobiography describing growing up and his memories of his parents by kicking off from things like the films of John Cassavetes, Philip K Dick's non-SF novels, the subway station where they filmed *The Warriors* and others. In Lethem's books there's no high and low culture, just a world teeming with impressions.

A lot of that carries over to *You Don't Love Me Yet*, but this time he's taken the logical step and done what many male (and, sure, some female) authors do sooner or later: he's written an if-I-were-a-rockstar novel. You know, one of those novels where an author who's always loved music writes about what it might be like to be in a band, comes up with cool song titles with no pressure to actually turn them into songs, smart ways to handle record companies, etc. (It's a genre of mixed success; for a truly pointless recent example, check out Douglas Cowie's *Owen Noone and the Marauder*. Or rather, don't.)

Of course, Lethem wouldn't be Lethem if he didn't a) make his "rockstars" a struggling indie band who have never played live, never recorded, and can't even come up with a band name that's obscure enough, and b) took it as an excuse to philosophise about some other thigs as well. *You Don't Love Me Yet* is a kindly satire of the American independent music scene, and our four heroes – Lucinda, Denise, Michael and Bedwin – your archetypical around-30 slightly dysfunctional types you may see hovering around the Pavement section of your local "alternative" record store. At its best, it's something like a novelization of the delightful webcomic *Questionable Content*. But at the same time, he seems to want to say something about the debate

within culture today, especially for collage artists like himself: the very concept of owning, of immaterial rights. Who can rightfully claim to own a piece of music, a person, a word, a heart... or why not a kangaroo. (Don't ask.) How we all run around trying to find that missing piece, complain to complete strangers (what's an alternative rock audience but the songwriter's personal therapists, paying for the privilege?), how we all tell ourselves that if we can just get that one thing right everything will fall into place...

"Seems", I wrote. Because unfortunately he doesn't quite manage. One scene at the beginning feels symptomatic; two of our anti-heroes go to a gallery and semi-ironically look at a large white cube titled "Chamber Containing The Volumetric Representation of the Number of Hours It Took Me to Arrive At This Idea" – the ultimate self-reference, the snake biting its own tail. They crawl inside the cube and have sex. And part of me almost thinks the book could have ended there, because far too often I find myself wondering if the correct summary of *You Don't Love Me Yet* should be something like "Book About What Happens Over The 224 Pages It Contains". Just like so many struggling bands, Lethem this time has all the riffs and effect pedals he can come up with but he can't quite find that hook, that chorus that makes a song more than just 3 minutes of drums and guitar. Not completely unlike the equally disappointing *The Brooklyn Follies*, the book ambles around amid confrontations, love scenes and film geek discussions without ever really moving. The snake bites its own tail, *panta rei* and at the end we've had a few laughs, a few questions and a few good song titles, but not much more. Lethem is a brilliant stylist and that gets him far, but those vertigo-inducing perspectives from both high and low that his last few books brought me never really appear. *You Don't Love Me Yet* is easy enough to like, but I never find myself loving it.

Gabriel says

Man, I heard this was not great, but I didn't really expect it to suck THAT much. I figured I'd give him the benefit of the doubt since he's written some things I loved, especially the . Oh well. At least it was short.

Overwrought prose, boring and/or unlikeable characters, not to mention the ever-dangerous task of writing about music and not sounding like a total douche.

Upon reading some of the other reviews I felt I should add that I don't have any problem reading about hipsters or sympathizing with them. They're not evil, they're just people. Living in LA or Brooklyn and playing in an indie rock band and cutting your own hair does not make you a bad or vapid person. This, however, is a bad novel. That stands if it's supposed to be taken as written or if the entire thing is supposed to be a great big satire on how stupid hipsters are.

Cflack says

Pretentious and ultimately extremely annoying. The names of the characters alone was enough to make me dislike this book. But ultimately I didn't like this book because other than Bedwin, who was a fairly minor character (see, what did I tell you about the names) there was not one believable character in this book. It's not just that most of the characters were unlikable - that is neither here nor there, it was just they were such empty stereotypes of music and art hipsters. Maybe this book was supposed to be a huge parody and I just didn't get it. Could be.

Mattia Ravasi says

Video-review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYcGX...>

Featured in my Top 20 Books I Read in 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X6OQ...>

If this book were a record, it would be a 40-minute New Wave album from the late seventies. A good one, not an excellent one (not *Fear of Music*, not *Drums & Wires*). Upbeat, imaginative, hilarious, odd in a way that makes it hard to read behind its cool. Always fun to listen, hardly anyone's favorite record.

It's not especially ambitious and it will hardly change your life, but then again, it talks masterfully about music and sex, which are both things it's pretty fucking hard to write about.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

This short work seemed more like two novels to me - the first half was this charming, quirky story of a band and this woman who works for a Complaint Line that is really more of an art installation than a public service, and the second half is the story of the still unnamed band in Los Angeles as they go through the far-reaching effects of Lucinda meeting one of her callers, as well as the often unsuccessful merging of high concept art with a band.

During the first half, I was constantly reflecting on all the reasons I love Lethem, but he kind of lost me on the second half. I do love the interesting turns the conversations would take, and his analogies are always thought-provoking. The astronaut food people one will probably stick with me for a while. Part of me is still waiting to hear the band.

Brian says

After days of marinating in the text of *Women and Men*, reading this short Lethem book (which is basically a L.A. based romcom) felt like hitting golf balls on the moon. I had forgotten what it was like to turn pages often enough to numb my index finger. Sweet, sweet dialogue and pages with less than 600 words.

I keed, I keed because I really like Lethem. Whatever the subject matter he can make his characters real, relatable and even fun(ny). Conversations aren't forced, discussions end properly and people don't constantly say one another's name when speaking to each other (huge personal pet peeve). And Lethem can throw-down some bon mots, just to make sure we are paying attention:

"I guess the best secrets from yourself are the ones that even if someone else tells them to you, you still don't know them."

or

"You can't be deep without a surface."

how about

"All thinking is wishful."

For those new to Lethem I wouldn't recommend this as the first book to sample (that distinction goes to *The Fortress of Solitude*, hands down). Maybe not even the second or third. Rating it somewhere between 3 and 4 stars, but I'm rounding down because this is my *Women and Men* rebound book. My written word sorbet to help me clear my literary palate.

Jason Pettus says

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com].)

Longtime followers of my creative projects know that in general I don't like publishing bad reviews; that for the most part I see it as a waste of both my time and yours, in that I could be spending that time instead pointing out great artists you may have never heard of. However, since one of the things this website is dedicated to is honest artistic criticism, I also feel it's important to acknowledge books that I found just too bad to bother finishing, as well as give you an idea of why I found them that bad to begin with. Hence, this series of short essays.

The Accused: You Don't Love Me Yet, by Jonathan Lethem

How far I got: 99 pages (about halfway through)

Crimes:

1) Asking us to give a rat's ass about the truly miserable indie-rock characters on display -- possibly the most untalented, pretentious, snotty, empty-headed, naval-gazing Los Angeles losers the world of contemporary literature has ever given us.

2) Reminding us of just how many of these circle-jerk losers end up internationally famous as part of the indie-rock scene, in many cases because of some postmodern media-celebrity-slash-performance-artist who is usually snottier and less tolerable than even them. Yeah, thanks, Lethem; like being an underground artist isn't f---ing depressing *enough*.

3) Positing a world where an attractive, empowered female bass player would become obsessed with one of the most obviously misogynistic woman-hating literary characters I've come across in years; so obsessed, in fact, that she starts creating lyrics for her band around the obliquely sexist things the man tells her during their anonymous phone-complaint sessions, which of course are part of a super-*duper*-pretentious conceptual-art installation piece that the bass player has been hired to be a part of (don't ask, seriously, SERIOUSLY, don't ask).

4) Living in Brooklyn. Yeah, you heard me.

Verdict: Oh, **so** guilty.

Sentence: A five-year exile from the traditional literary industry, writing snotty CD reviews instead for Pitchfork. Seriously, Doubleday -- you need to start peddling this crap to pretentious 19-year-old indie-rockers who don't know any better, and leave us intelligent people the f--k alone.
