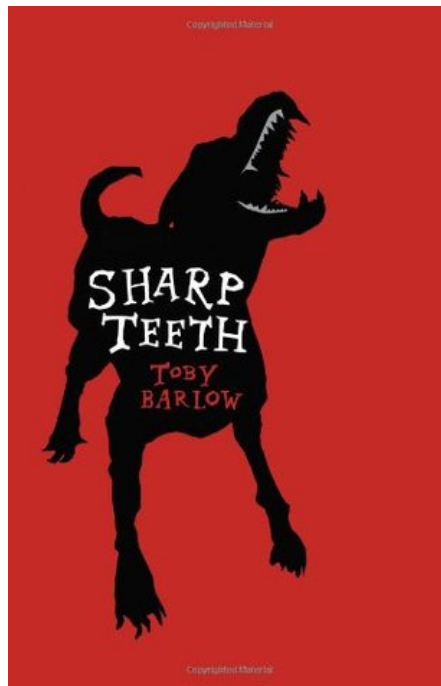




Sharp Teeth

Toby Barlow

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Toby Barlow

Sharp Teeth Toby Barlow

An ancient race of lycanthropes has survived to the present day, and its numbers are growing. Bent on dominance, rival factions are initiating the down-and-out of L.A. into their ranks. Caught in the middle are Anthony, a kindhearted, lovesick dogcatcher, and the object of his affection: a female werewolf who has abandoned her pack.

Sharp Teeth Details

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Author : Toby Barlow

Format : Hardcover 312 pages

Genre : Poetry, Fiction, Horror, Fantasy, Shapeshifters, Werewolves, Urban Fantasy, Paranormal

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From Reader Review Sharp Teeth for online ebook

Ben Loory says

this is an epic free verse poem about rival werewolf gangs in modern day los angeles. the first couple pages were absolutely fantastic, and the writing was great throughout. really clean, fast, hard, emotion-driven poetry-- the kinda stuff that makes you say, "oh yeah, the majority of so-called 'literary fiction' really does suffer from a clichéd sense of lyricism!" but then the story itself kicked in, and all of a sudden it was werewolves playing bridge tournaments with old ladies in pasadena? and mysterious strangers with briefcases and stuff? and a hundred different characters i couldn't tell apart? and suddenly it was like a tarantino movie, only one of the later ones, where i don't care about anyone (unlike reservoir dogs). i almost stopped reading halfway through, but i kept going and after a while it did pick up again, by the end i was back to enjoying it, though i was no longer blown away and i wasn't crying at the resolution or anything like that. i think overall i'd give it a 3.5, but i just can't round up to four because-- given the originality of the approach-- the TV-style plotline just wasn't enough. but still, it's great to see someone doing something different, and i'll definitely keep an eye on toby barlow.

Chris says

This a type of book that shouldn't work, but does.

Barlow tells the story of werewolves, drug dealers, pounds, and true love in free verse.

The craziest thing is that it works.

While not as good a poet as say Coleridge or Browning, there is something powerful in some of Barlow's verse.

"Anthony in love is unlikely/in its grace/like a drunk with a magic trick./There's no reason it should work, but it does."

Strangely in book that shouldn't work, Barlow comments deeply on the human condition.

Greg says

*He wanted to strip away the pain but not the sadness,
he wanted to breathe real life into every memory
but still somehow let go,
he wanted to become something else
while holding onto everything he had.*

Maybe it is because I wasn't really expecting too much from this book that I was as blown away by it as I was. *Sharp Teeth* sort of reminded me of *The Suitors* (Karen's review of *The Suitors* is much better than mine for a feeling of the book).

At first the format of the book felt a little gimmicky. The book is written in verse, and really there isn't necessarily a reason for the book to be in verse. It felt like an easy way out of flushing out the writing. Sort of like an outline instead of a novel. It wasn't like the prose was written in some formal style, or none that I could decipher. But then I stopped paying attention to the style and starting just reading the story. And it is quite good.

The book is about werewolves living in Los Angeles. Various packs that are running their own games, coming in competition with one another. You get the standard things that gangs, or packs would be concerned with. Drugs. Revenge. Making a place in the world, non-traditional forms of community and belonging.

I was thinking when I started to write this that maybe the answer to the 'gimmick' of writing this in verse would have been to resort to a James Ellroy sort of minimalism, but that probably would have read even worse. Could you write an LA story in that sort of style and not just make it feel derivative to Ellroy? Also there is too much emotions to cull down to the form that Ellroy revels in. I guess I mean to say that the verse form won me over, it allowed for the feelings of the characters to be distilled and all of the extra verbosity and certain elements you would need to have present in a prose writing to be removed to leave the basic structure and atmosphere left standing alone in the book. Loneliness is at the heart of this book.

*Knowing someone isn't coming back
doesn't mean you ever stop waiting*

Maybe I liked this book so much because it was so different from the fairly realistic urban/suburban stories I'd been reading lately. I've been enjoying those novels and short stories, but they haven't necessarily been blowing me away. They aren't getting me excited, even though they have been mostly enjoyable. But maybe I'm just making up excuses for why I haven't been writing many reviews lately (and now I'm realizing that I'm sort of whitewashing that I've been reading lately, only about half of the books that I've read could fall into the modern realism sort of category, and those many of them were solid 'four star' books). I have so many books that I've been meaning to read, maybe this fairly un-inspired review for a great book will help to unclog whatever it is that is keeping me from writing more of these reviews lately.

(view spoiler)

Daniel Polansky says

Gritty LA werewolves, Urban fantasy/modern horror by someone with legit prose chops. The peculiar stylistic conceit is maybe a little on the nose in terms of staking out ground as literature, but basically, I thought Barlow had the skill to pull it off, and anyway apart from that it's pretty resolutely unpretentious. Top shelf genre stuff, well worth a read.

Becky says

I am not
a fan of verse even free verse. I like proper grammar and
paragraphs and commas. So I was wary
about
reading this book when I saw
crazy staggering lines of text wandering around my nook screen.

But
a friend's review made me reconsider
and so I read the book and I mostly liked it.
Mostly.
Mostly because I still don't like verse
even when it's free. Also because I want to see the picture that is
being painted not just be told
what it's of. I feel like too much
of Sharp Teeth was
telling
telling
telling
and not enough showing. And the book is kind of schizophrenic
jumping here and now there and then
somewhere
else randomly. Is it now? Or is it then? When is then?
Who is she?

I liked
the love story and
Anthony
on the beach and vulnerable. I liked the dog
angle and the brutality
but a single dog cannot eat an entire human and then have human
dinner too. It would
'splode.

Not bad
but I was ready for it
to end when it did.

I'm getting a dog.
Know any good shelters?

Maggie says

Toby Barlow's version of Los Angeles is one that teems with werewolves who run in rival gangs, challenge Mexican crystal meth kingpins, change form at will and regardless of the moon's cycle, and manage to go largely unnoticed by the human population. They infiltrate the city's animal shelters, play bridge, surf, battle one another for dominance, build and destroy crime empires, and fall in love. And inexplicably, Barlow chooses to tell their story entirely in blank verse.

If you're anything like me, this all sounds way too good to be true; however, it's fortunately not.

When I first heard about *Sharp Teeth* – a book being simultaneously likened to *The Sopranos*, *The Iliad*, and *An American Werewolf in London* – I knew I had to read it. However, being a realist I approached it with a certain amount of hesitation; after all, to actually pull off a werewolf book written in verse and set in East LA with any semblance of seriousness would be quite an achievement. Miraculously, Barlow managed to avoid any number of possible pitfalls, and instead wrote the most original, fun, and unexpectedly beautiful books I've read in some time. It rocked my sock off, but if you're still hesitant to believe that Homer and Lycanthropes can both comfortably provide points of inspiration for the same book, here's a taste that will hopefully allay those fears and whet your appetite:

Annie had never promised him anything more
than a change, which was honestly all he wanted,
a new skin.
He wanted to strip away the pain but not the sadness,
he wanted to breathe real life into every memory
but still somehow let go,
he wanted to become something else
while holding on to everything he had.
All he had, it turned out, was love.
She was gone, but her love was still alive inside him.
It was the only thing keeping him on this earth,
the only reason he could find to continue,
to protect that one part of her that
still remained, her love for him,
the small ray of light that lay
within the shadowed hollows of his heart.

But he couldn't live without her,
so he took on another kind of life.
It was that simple.
So now he is simply something more
and nothing less.

See? Werewolf books can be eloquent, understated and beautiful. Who knew?

Algernon says

Werewolves legends have been around for a long time. Like vampires, they are a staple of horror novels and movies, creatures of the night, thirsty for blood, feasting on our fear of the dark and of the unknown. And just like vampires, they have become collateral victims of the rise of the supernatural teen romance genre, becoming recently cute, angsty and smouldering sexy. I hesitate now to pick a modern werewolf story, doubly so when I heard that Toby Barlow has written his novel in free verse form. It's not that I don't like poetry, but it seemed to me initially like a mismatch with the horror subject and the gritty noir style of the plot.

I should have paid more attention to the opening quote chosen by the author:

Poetry is a way of taking life by the throat.

Robert Frost

and remember that Charles Bukowski found diamonds in the gutter and that Raymond Chandler would spin metaphors around a whisky glass or a bloody knuckle. I'm not throwing these names out at random. Both writers/poets found their inspiration on the mean streets of L. A. , the dream factory where the glitzy, glamorous world famous rub shoulders with the flotsam, the misfits and rejects of a predatory society. As Toby Barlow puts it:

*38 percent of the country's homeless
live in L A, and a lot of them prefer the beach to the concrete. [...]
If you're scrounging for driftwood souls,
this isn't a bad place to look.*

At the top of the food chain in the alternative L A of **Sharp Teeth** is Lance, an alpha male in the feral interpretation of the word, a leader of the pack of werewolves that hide among the 'toothless' and compete for stray souls with a couple of other packs. Lance is a strategist, planning for long term, organizing business ventures and security details, trying to build up the strength and the security of his team, while infiltrating his rival's organizations, very much like a Mob Boss that tries to fly under the radar of the police while aggressively defending his turf (safe house) against upstarts.

*Here, they move, attack, eat, sleep,
the lucky ones fuck, but they are all
ever unsettled and edgy.
These creatures may be among
the most superior predators in the world
but in the end,
as any toothless soul will tell you,
it's a dog's life.*

It's a dog eats dog world, and Lark soon finds himself a fugitive, forced to play the house puppy to a lonely lady while trying to put back together the pieces of his broken dreams. The plot swings moods from the loneliness of the long distance running dog, to the bizarre comedy of a couple of beasts enjoying a contract bridge tournament with old ladies with blue-dyed hair, beach pups having a wild vacation in Mexico that turns from carefree escapism to 'villagers with pitchforks and torches' horror, raids on home based meth labs and illegal dog fighting circles, with a detour into a city council shelter for stray animals and a sideline investigation of a serial killer by a standard hardboiled detective named Peabody.

Bone, love, meat, gristle, heat, anger, exhaustion, drive, hunger, blood, fat, marrow.

Fifteen men lying in one house.

To keep their packs under control, the alpha males rely on that other staple of pulp detective stories – the ‘femme fatale’. In her mutant form, the unnamed heroine is more dangerous than the male of the species, acting as Lark second in command and private executioner. In her ‘fangless’ shape she is trying to escape her conditioning, her pre-established role in the pack. She falls for one ordinary guy, working at said city council shelter, who is laidback, considerate, kind and, of course, hot between the sheets.

*There in that embrace, she feels something
shuffling around, moving warily
fumbling through the dusty rooms of her heart
and, one by one, turning on the lights.*

The complicated plot and the free verse presentation was occasionally confusing, but after fifty pages or so I got the hang of it and was able to enjoy the ride, often forgetting that I am actually reading poetry until I came across a particularly good spot, like the one above. I was a tad disappointed in the rushed and (view spoiler) finale, but in the end I added one star for the originality of the concept.

Kind of disappointed also that Toby Barlow didn't follow through with a sequel or with a new setting. He sure has the talent to surprise me again.

Eric K. says

Toby Barlow writes
about the good things in life
and the bad.
Oh, you know:
Blood, sex, death, hunger, frenzy
But his
conceit!
His
gall!
Is to structure his story
as 308 pages
of free-verse poetry
whose style this preview crudely mimics.

But wait!
Oh gentle goodreads friend
I haven't even told you
the best part.
For Barlow's
book?
poem?
experiment?
What do you call something
that defies all genres?

Anyway, Barlow's..
product
follows the lives
of A PACK OF FREAKIN' WEREWOLVES
raping, feeding, and pillaging
in present-day Los Angeles.

Cool.

Steve says

Writing in verse has its drawbacks in that some people instantly recoil when they see something that reminds them of some poetry class where they got their heart smashed apart and the instructor didn't care because he/she demanded that they interpret some form of verse which they didn't want to not because they couldn't but because it was too close to heart and they couldn't go on....

Or they don't like things that rhyme unless it's rap or some children's story, which of course means they like it but can't admit it. Or they've never read verse and are intimidated by words that are arranged in a different and unfamiliar way that intimidates them and they make some crack about how poetry sucks.

Whatever. Read this book. Especially if you're into werewolves.

Yes, it's a book written in free verse (no rhyme schemes) about werewolves in Los Angeles and it is good.

This debut from Toby Barlow has great pacing (starts fast and never slows below a trot) great turns of phrase and cool story that is L.A. from the docks to the Westside to East L.A. to the "South" to downtown and back again, Barlow does a great job in keeping you focused "on the ball".

He doesn't go as far as Anne Rice did in re-inventing the genre but he makes it palatable to current tastes and shoehorns his Lycanthropes in a very real city with real people and honest emotions.

What Barlow does, to great effect, is place the canine society (packs, heat, hunts, etc.) in the bloodstream of a human city and watches the fights for territory, the struggles to become the "Alpha" dog and the constant conflicts within the humanity of each individual for survival.

I don't want to give too much of the story away. It doesn't read like a movie, although it has its moments, and doesn't sound like play, even though parts could be performed on stage. Free verse is perfect, first, for a California tale, second, a fantasy, and, three, a tale that works through the head to get to the heart just like real poetry.

I'm confident you'll polish it off in one sitting. Check it out. You won't be disappointed.

max says

Judging by Toby Barlow's popular debut novel set in Los Angeles and crafted in free verse, the occupation of advertising executive is reasonable preparation for writing long poetry, and probably not a handicap in publishing the results. Our ad man first pressed his epic in the UK, where he built enough buzz to overcome us verse-averse Yanks. Equipped with quip-length lines and slogan-strength strophes, Barlow furiously tears down the page with more elan than poise, but this is perhaps befitting his subject: Werewolves, specifically were-housedogs.

While Barlow could have had plenty to feast on in the realm of satire (I was hoping for rabid poodles devouring the head of Cesar Milan), he sticks exclusively to action movie dialogue and exposition, wielding stock characters like the bumbling police detective, the honorable and unwitting boyfriend, the slick Mafiosos, and the bewildered yuppies. The plot involving rival dog packs almost makes sense at certain junctures but Barlow must continuously remind us through his protagonists that, in so many words, something is in the air tonight.

While not a masterpiece of the long verse form, the breeziness, accessibility, and cheap fun attests to the flexibility of poetry and will hopefully demonstrate to American publishers that contemporary verse comes much closer to satisfying the desires of the young graphic novel crowd than bloated old prose.

Stephanie says

Like many who have reviewed this book, I was in love with the book cover without ever opening the book. I loved the red linen-y cover with that slickery black dog imprint... so cool!

Then I opened the book and thought "Poetry? WTF? I thought this was paranormal-romance-ish book about werewolves... Oh well, I'll give a try."

And I am glad I did. The story is fairly typical but the style in which it is told makes this book rate so highly with me. The free-verse format reminded me of the Ellen Hopkins YA books that my daughter loves, and I read through this one with the same speed as my dear daughter devoured the Hopkins books. I was frankly surprised when I got to the end. I was reading along, the pace and the action kept me turning pages and then I realized I had come to the end. I was satisfied, even happy. Thanks, Toby Barlow, I enjoyed it!

D. Pow says

Toby Barlow's *Sharp Teeth* is weird, beautiful, and audacious beyond measure. Not only is it about tribes of warring werewolves tearing into each other up and down the coast of Southern California and into Mexico, it is also written in free verse. No joke. And it works. It works in spades; it's a pleasurable, deep read filled with sex, death, longing, betrayal and revenge. And yeah, fucking werewolves and werewolves fucking.

They are not really werewolves or at least they are not your daddy's werewolves. They don't need no stinking full moon. Through the focus of will and practice they learn to transform on demand. And they are not really wolves either. More like the biggest, most beautiful, smartest dogs you've ever seen. When they

are not in dog form they still hang together and the way Barlow tells his tale, these tribes of dogs are also master criminals, roving beach bums and bad-assed bridge players.

So free verse: who in their right mind is going to read this stuff? I saw it on a display table at the Long Beach B&N and read the premise on the back cover. Fucking cool shit, thought I. I opened up the cover to sample the prose as I often do, when I am moving towards the seal the deal moment when I am thinking of plucking down my ducats for a book and I was just blown away. Not only is it written in verse, it's verse of a very high order. It sings, shimmers, moves. It captures the thwarted joy of needful violence, the senses altering, life embracing quality of good sex and even flirts with some success at capturing the true essence of that most gossamer of things-true love. The intimate scenes between the central characters, Anthony the dogcatcher and 'She' his lovely lycanthrope ache with the real bittersweet hurt of young, fresh love and when Anthony thinks he loses his woman forever, you can see how that would send him hurdling into a downward spiral and you feel the pain too, of that moment when incredibly good things become fucked up and broken beyond measure. Like every great genre writer since Homer, Barlow gets that you got to make the day to day stuff as real as can be in order for your reader to latch onto the fairy tale and he delivers that twisted verisimilitude over and over.

There is even in this book something like a primer for living, a 'Zen and the Art of Being a Werewolf' as it were. Lark, the most bad ass of the werewolves, owns an almost shamanic presence, works his other wolves like a Dojo Roshi or a drill instructor and earns their loyalty not so much because he is the most Alpha of Alpha Dog's but because there is something like wisdom for life he is teaching these young beasts. And that is the essence of Barlow's trick as well. Dressed up in the vivid rags of hoary, outdated genre he has created something firm, lasting and not only worthy of reading but of savoring deeply for the light it casts on all our more mundane transformations.

Who needs a fucking full moon?

Janine says

Everything I have read lately has been sort of lackluster for awhile. Good, but not great. Disappointing in some way.

This book, despite being one randomly grabbed off of the "staff picks" shelf at work, mostly because my eye was drawn to the bright red cover, was impressive.

Sharp Teeth is so many things: fierce, beautiful, unexpected. I have read books with werewolves before, and always with a bit of hesitation. This book was full of werewolves, but also full of humanity. It really explored what drives people, what we are looking for, and what we are willing to become when we feel like we have nothing else.

I wasn't sure the free verse style of writing would work for me, but it just made the storytelling that much more stunning. It forced me to slow down a bit as I read, thinking about the words on the page, and reading a line at a time, deciphering the meaning and the characters slowly. It worked SO well.

The actual plot of the story also worked well, with the various moving pieces slowly, slowly coming together until the full picture revealed itself.

I'm glad I picked this one up on a whim, and stayed up to finish it tonight. 4.5 stars.

Wart Hill says

This review can also be found at [Things I Find while Shelving](#)

Mr. Barlow, I applaud you. You wrote an epic poem about *werewolves*. Well done, sir. Well done.

This book is really weird, but I really liked it. I suppose "epic poem about werewolves" is, by definition, going to be bizarre. So I'm not terribly surprised that it was weird. It was also really well done - there's a lot of great imagery and lines that really stuck with me. It didn't always read like a poem, but it didn't bother me in the least.

I'm definitely going to read more by Toby Barlow.

J.K. Grice says

Barlow's approach to the werewolf myth was pretty original, I thought, but I wasn't overly impressed with the story.

David says

Los Angeles has always disturbed me. All that sunshine. Those über-toned bodies. Packs of werewolves roaming the canyons and arroyos. It's enough to make any catlover nervous.

In this awesome, exuberant, first book Toby Barlow strips away the city's thin veneer of civilization and lays bare its raw, violent, lycanthropic underbelly. It's the cross-species love story between dogcatcher Anthony and his damaged werewolf lover, which unfolds against a backdrop of drugs, murder, revenge, and the battle for pack dominance. It's noir, funny, riveting, tender, completely over the top, and by rights it shouldn't work at all. But it does - it's completely addictive and unexpectedly moving.

Part of its power is a consequence of Barlow's choice to write it in free verse. The resulting rhythm give the whole story a driving momentum that keeps the reader riveted -- I read the whole book in two sittings. The plot, which seemed inextricably complicated at the halfway mark, is resolved neatly by the end, though I do feel that I need to give the book a second reading to figure out the various strands.

Another reviewer made the perceptive comment that the sheer momentum built up by Barlow's writing works against a careful reading, so I anticipate that a second reading will bring further rewards.

Depending on how my second reading goes, I may yet have to give this most excellent book a fifth star.

If you have time for only one lycanthropic love story this summer, then look no farther than "Sharp Teeth". Toby Barlow can be proud of this totally impressive debut.

Miriam says

I got this book because 1) awesome cover 2) who could resist at least trying a novel in verse about werewolves in Los Angeles? (Lots of people, apparently, because no one I mentioned it to wanted to read it. Oh well.) C'mon, the author is described as "If Ovid had been raised on a steady diet of Marvel Comics, Roger Corman, and MTV," that doesn't make you want to at least open the book?! Once I got used to following the plot I thought it was well-constructed, and the characterizations are amazingly good for being so briefly presented. I thought the poetry was a little uneven (although that may just be my resistance to blank verse) but showed considerable skill and, at times, real inspiration. There are some great passages, wonderful metaphors and twists of expression, such as

"Their love is eternal because time
seems to have fled, embarrassed
to be sharing such a small apartment
with so much dumb affection." (xv)

Suzanne says

Dog-owners, you may never look at your little canine friend the same way again.

I sure hope Quentin Tarantino is not too busy the year they decide to make this movie, because this is perfect for him. What the movie will lose – the book's musical language – Mr. Tarantino could replace with his intense visual rhythms. It could be awesome. A noir-ish tale of werewolves in L.A., crime bosses and drug lords, a kindly dogcatcher, rival gangs (not human), and some sociopathic revenge. Lots of violence, and also tenderness, all told in free verse. And it works! Against all odds, but it works really well. I loved it. And it's set in L.A., always a plus for me to follow a story around my home town.

This is more gruesome and crime-focused than my usual reading fare, and I might not have finished it if the writing weren't so great and the characters so well drawn. But it is and they were.

Anthony in love is unlikely
in its grace,
like a drunk with a magic trick.
There's no reason it should work,
but it does.
Sitting at the kennel, driving in his truck, handling the dogs,
he's a man in a musical.
He steps light on the balls of his feet, moving
to a melody that oils his joints, loosens his stride.
Just watch him open a door or turn a key, it's that evident.

When people cannot tell the difference between dogs and lycanthropes (the technical terms for the werewolf types in the book), all kinds of interesting things happen. The book has lots to say about group dynamics, community, loyalty and betrayal, ambition, being completely undone by loss, the redemptive

power of love, communication, and lots of other things you wouldn't expect to find in a book of this sort.

Afterward he rests, listening to the vet
on the phone carrying the weak end of a fight that slowly escalates.
"No, I can't pick that up. It's your prescription."
Lark thinks, people have a tougher time working as a group than dogs do.
People make for messy packs and awkward teams.
"And I picked up the laundry last week and the week before that."
Perhaps because people don't resort to the decisiveness
of violence quite as quickly as dogs do.
"Listen, I have a full-time job too."
Perhaps because they don't submit to their leader as completely.
"That's not what I mean. You don't understand."
Perhaps being free of a language is a blessing for dogs.
"Why do you say that, why do you always have to hurt me."
Since dogs aren't continually surprised when those soft and easily broken tools called words fail them time
and again.

The author, Toby Barlow, is from "Detroit and Brooklyn," according to the thumbnail bio, but he's clearly spent some quality time in L.A. How else would he know the nuances of individual neighborhoods like San Pedro, where the descriptions rang very true. Officer Peabody on a stake-out on a street full of bungalows notices a blond surfer type and knows the kid is out of place. San Pedro is one of the few (or only?) SoCal beachtowns where a blond surfer type would be out of place, being, as it is, a very ethnic neighborhood of Croatians, Italians and Latinos. And the Mexican woman gardening in her yard—I've seen her around. She was perfect.

I'm tempted to keep sharing quotes, there are so many good ones, but instead should probably just encourage anyone with a love of good writing and a tolerance for the edgy to try this and discover all the great passages for yourself. A great thriller with many insights into relationships and the modern condition.

Nancy says

Posted at Shelf Inflicted

Change

*The pack feels something's up
things feel different, shifted*

Loneliness

*Knowing someone isn't coming back
doesn't mean you ever stop waiting.*

Complex relationships

*He would follow. He would, honest,
but when he held her, dancing,
everything felt good but
not everything felt right.*

Love and hunger

*Her appetite has become tremendous in every way
they make love in the kitchen, the living room,
and she eats huge plates of pasta.*

Violence

*Her teeth hit his neck
The last things he sees are her eyes.*

Tacos

*Some carne asada tacos,
six bucks he can't spare*

Having read a couple of Ellen Hopkins' books, I was not at all intimidated by the free verse style. There's much in here to like. At times the atmosphere was charged with action and violence, and at other times there was a quiet beauty and sense of loneliness and loss pervading the story. There were lots of characters, some who stood out, while others were completely forgettable. For a novel about werewolves, there is a lot of humanity here. Yet, it left me vaguely unsatisfied. The pace was excruciatingly slow, the plot meandering until it all crashed together in the end, making me scratch my head in bewilderment. What should have taken me two days to read ended up taking longer than a week.

I'm wondering if reading it a second time would make me appreciate its brilliance more.

Anna (Bananas!) says

Oh Toby Barlow, when will you write something again? There just aren't enough epic poems about weredogs to quench my thirst.

What I love about this book: There's nothing better than a weird-ass premise. This one is sublime. The beautiful flow of words drew me right in. I like that it begins with a song and ends with a song. I enjoyed the characters, every one, and related to them despite their foreign circumstances because you made them human.

What I love best is the poetry itself. A writer can make you devour their words in the exact way they intended. You can turn a sentence into an explosion or make it pause, hanging letters on the edge of a page. You can end a thought with purpose and a period. A lack of punctuation can allow words to drift on and on, birthing endless paragraphs from one idea. There's something forceful and yet relaxing about good poetry and I found it here. Thank you for the fun read.

I also thought the Robert Frost quote at the beginning was a perfect touch. It really sets the mood. "Poetry is a way of taking life by the throat." Who knew Robert was such a savage?
