

Chapter 1 : Miss Lonelyhearts Quotes by Nathanael West

Miss Lonelyhearts is Nathanael West's second novel. He began writing it early in and completed the manuscript in November of 1938. Published in 1939, it is an Expressionist black comedy set in New York City during the Great Depression.

Plot summary[edit] In the story, Miss Lonelyhearts is an unnamed male newspaper columnist writing an advice column for the lovelorn and lonesome, a duty that the other newspaper staff considers a joke. As Miss Lonelyhearts reads letters from desperate New Yorkers, he feels terribly burdened and falls into a cycle of deep depression, accompanied by heavy drinking and occasional bar fights. He is also the victim of the pranks and cynical advice of Shrike, his feature editor at the newspaper. Miss Lonelyhearts tries several approaches to escape the terribly painful letters he has to read: Doyle, a reader of his column. After his sexual encounter with Mrs. Doyle, he meets her husband, a poor crippled man. The Doyles invite Miss Lonelyhearts to have dinner with them. When he arrives, Mrs. Doyle tries to seduce him again, but he responds by beating her. Doyle tells her husband that Miss Lonelyhearts tried to rape her. In the last scene, Mr. Doyle hides a gun inside a rolled newspaper and decides to take revenge on Miss Lonelyhearts. Lonelyhearts, who has just experienced a religious enlightenment after three days of sickness, runs toward Mr. Doyle to embrace him. The gun "explodes", and the two men roll down a flight of stairs together. However, the novel is a black comedy, characterized by a dark sense of humor and irony. Miss Lonelyhearts is unable to fulfill his role as advice giver in a world in which both people and advice in the form of newspaper ads, for example are mass-produced. Lonelyhearts is unable to find a personal solution to his problems because they have systemic causes. West, who worked in the newspaper business before writing Miss Lonelyhearts, is also an advice giver of a sort as a novelist. The novel also condemns itself by condemning art, which is repeatedly derided by Shrike and compared to religion as an opiate of the masses. Moreover, the novel is particularly important due to its existential import. The characters seem to be living in an amoral world. Hence, they resort to heavy drinking, sex, and parties. Miss Lonelyhearts has a " Christ complex ", which stands for his belief in religion as a solution to a world devoid of values. He agrees for a hefty payment to use the column to recommend a line of medicines, but finds out they are actually harmful drugs when his mother dies. He then agrees to help the police track down the criminals. The movie ends with the main character happily married. It ran for only twelve performances. Although following the plot of the book more closely than Advice to the Lovelorn, many changes were made. Eric Roberts would coincidentally play the lead role in the unrelated film Lonely Hearts. The libretto was written by J. The opera, which received its premiere April 26, 28, and 30, at the Juilliard Opera Center, was commissioned by the Juilliard School for its centennial celebration. The opera was co-commissioned by two other schools: Both premieres were directed by renowned stage director and Thornton faculty member Ken Cazan. In popular culture[edit] The character of Guru Brahmin in the satirical novel The Loved One by Evelyn Waugh was inspired by Miss Lonelyhearts, [8] and the character also appears in the film adaptation. Miss Lonelyhearts is discussed by two of the characters of Philip K. Novels and Other Writings. Library of America, Affect, Slapstick, and Publicity in Miss Lonelyhearts. An Essay on Comedy, Laughter. Narrative and Mass Culture in Miss Lonelyhearts". Nathanael West, Bergson, Capitalism and Schizophrenia". Studies in Short Fiction,

Chapter 2 : SparkNotes: Miss Lonelyhearts

Nathanael West wrote four short books, of which two - Miss Lonelyhearts and Day of the Locust - eventually became minor classics. He died in a car crash at 37, ensuring a namecheck in JG Ballard's Crash.

On it a prayer had been printed by Shrike, the feature editor. Tears of Miss L, wash me. Oh good Miss L, excuse my plea, And hide me in your heart, And defend me from mine enemies. Help me, Miss L, help me, help me. He had gone as far as: The letters were no longer funny. He could not go on finding the same joke funny thirty times a day for months on end. And on most days he received more than thirty letters, all of them alike, stamped from the dough of suffering with a heart-shaped cookie knife. On his desk were piled those he had received this morning. He started through them again, searching for some clue to a sincere answer. Dear Miss Lonelyhearts-- I am in such pain I dont know what to do sometimes I think I will kill myself my kidneys hurt so much. My husband thinks no woman can be a good catholic and not have children irregardless of the pain. I was married honorable from our church but I never knew what married life meant as I never was told about man and wife. My grandmother never told me and she was the only mother I had but made a big mistake by not telling me as it dont pay to be innocent and is only a big disappointment. I have 7 children in 12 yrs and ever since the last 2 I have been so sick. I was operated on twice and my husband promised no more children on the doctors advice as he said I might die but when I got back from the hospital he broke his promise and now I am going to have a baby and I dont think I can stand it my kidneys hurt so much. I am so sick and scared because I cant have an abortion on account of being a catholic and my husband so religious. I cry all the time it hurts so much and I dont know what to do. Yours respectfully, Miss Lonelyhearts threw the letter into an open drawer and lit a cigarette. Dear Miss Lonelyhearts-- I am sixteen years old now and I dont know what to do and would appreciate it if you could tell me what to do. When I was a little girl it was not so bad because I got used to the kids on the block makeing fun of me, but now I would like to have boy friends like the other girls and go out on Saturday nites, but no boy will take me because I was born without a nose--although I am a good dancer and have a nice shape and my father buys me pretty clothes. I sit and look at myself all day and cry. I have a big hole in the middle of my face that scares people even myself so I cant blame the boys for not wanting to take me out. My mother loves me, but she crys terrible when she looks at me. What did I do to deserve such a terrible bad fate? Even if I did do some bad things I didnt do any before I was a year old and I was born this way. I asked Papa and he says he doesnt know, but that maybe I did something in the other world before I was born or that maybe I was being punished for his sins. I dont believe that because he is a very nice man. Ought I commit suicide? Sincerely yours, Desperate The cigarette was imperfect and refused to draw. Miss Lonelyhearts took it out of his mouth and stared at it furiously. He fought himself quiet, then lit another one. Dear Miss Lonelyhearts-- I am writing to you for my little sister Grade because something awfull hapened to her, and I am afraid to tell mother about it. I am 15 years old and Gracie is 13 and we live in Brooklyn. Gracie is deaf and dumb and biger than me but not very smart on account of being deaf and dumb. She plays on the roof of our house and dont go to school except to deaf and dumb school twice a week on tuesdays and thursdays. Mother makes her play on the roof because we dont want her to get run over as she aint very smart. Last week a man came on the roof and did something dirty to her. She told me about it and I dont know what to do as I am afraid to tell mother on account of her being liable to beat Grade up. If I tell mother she will beat Gracie up awfull because I am the only one who loves her and last time when she tore her dress they Joked her in the closet for 2 days and if the boys on the blok hear about it they will say dirty things like they did on Peewee Conors sister the time she got caught in the lots. So please what would you do if the same hapened in your family. Yours truly, Harold S. Christ was the answer, but, if he did not want to get sick, he had to stay away from the Christ business. Body of Miss L, save me. Although his cheap clothes had too much style, he still looked like the son of a Baptist minister. A beard would become him, would accent his Old-Testament look. But even without a beard no one could fail to recognize the New England puritan. His forehead was high and narrow. His nose was long and fleshless. His bony chin was shaped and cleft like a hoof. On seeing him for the first time, Shrike had smiled and said, "The Susan

Chesters, the Beatrice Fairfaxes and the Miss Lonelyhearts are the priests of twentieth-century America. He bent over the typewriter and began pounding its keys. But before he had written a dozen words, Shrike leaned over his shoulder. Tell them about art. When the old paths are choked with the debris of failure, look for newer and fresher paths. Art is just such a path. Art is distilled from suffering. In order to get there, it was necessary to cross a little park. He entered the park at the North Gate and swallowed mouthfuls of the heavy shade that curtained its arch. He walked into the shadow of a lamp-post that lay on the path like a spear. It pierced him like a spear. As far as he could discover, there were no signs of spring. The decay that covered the surface of the mottled ground was not the kind in which life generates. Last year, he remembered, May had failed to quicken these soiled fields. It had taken all the brutality of July to torture a few green spikes through the exhausted dirt. What the little park needed, even more than he did, was a drink. Neither alcohol nor rain would do. To-morrow, in his column, he would ask Broken-hearted, Sick-of-it-all, Desperate, Disillusioned-with-tubercular-husband and the rest of his correspondents to come here and water the soil with their tears. Flowers would then spring up, flowers that smelled of feet. He tried to break its fall by laughing at himself. Why laugh at himself, however, when Shrike was waiting at the speakeasy to do a much better job? Explain that man cannot live by bread alone and give them stones. Teach them to pray each morning: Suddenly tired, he sat down on a bench. If he could only throw the stone. He searched the sky for a target. But the gray sky looked as if it had been rubbed with a soiled eraser. It held no angels, flaming crosses, olive-bearing doves, wheels within wheels. Only a newspaper struggled in the air like a kite with a broken spine. He got up and started again for the speakeasy. He pressed a concealed button and a little round window opened in its center. A blood-shot eye appeared, glowing like a ruby in an antique iron ring. The bar was only half full. Miss Lonelyhearts looked around apprehensively for Shrike and was relieved at not finding him. However, after a third drink, just as he was settling into the warm mud of alcoholic gloom, Shrike caught his arm. Brooding again, I take it. Forget the crucifixion, remember the renaissance. There were no brooders then. He practiced a trick used much by moving-picture comedians--the dead pan. No matter how fantastic or excited his speech, he never changed his expression. Under the shining white globe of his brow, his features huddled together in a dead, gray triangle. To the brown Greek manuscripts and mistresses with the great smooth marbly limbs Show him the same respect you show me. He, too, is a comforter of the poor in spirit and a lover of God. America has her own religions. If you need a synthesis, here is the kind of material to use. Numbers, he explained, constitute the only universal language. Moya killed Joseph Zemp, an aged recluse, in an argument over a small amount of money. His actions shocked the bartender, who hurriedly asked them to go into the back room.

Chapter 3 : Nathanael West, Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust | John Pistelli

*Miss Lonelyhearts [Nathanael West, L.J. Ganser, Kevin Pariseau] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Set in New York during the Great Depression, Miss Lonelyhearts concerns a nameless man assigned to produce a newspaper advice columnâ€”but as time passes he begins to break under the endless misery of those who write in.*

To pass along praise or condemnation, write ingridnorton[at]live[dot]com. Meeting people, he habitually sorts between those who would be torchbearers and those who would simply scream encouragement and run alongside the ones brandishing fire. Much of the thwarted violence, however, turns out to be his own. Each envelope arrives on his desk containing a whole universe of suffering and despair. But the more feverishly he contorts himself to feel empathy and offer solace, the more hysterical he becomes. At a dreary bar he and his friend Ned Gates josh a sad and probably homosexual old man who followed them in. But for the columnist, the joking gets serious as he exhorts the old man to tell him his life story. Everyone has a life story. Tell it, damn you, tell it. Gates tried to tear him away, but he refused to let go. He was twisting the arm of all the sick and miserable, the broken and betrayed, inarticulate and impotentâ€”! The old man began to scream. This is the lurid world of Nathanael West, as unremitting as it is unforgettable. Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust are his masterful expressions of stunted dreams. The novels unfold between the two American centers of opportunity and, West suggests, illusion: Both are populated by hacks and has-beens, cynics and dupes, failures and oddballs lurking at the urban margins. Central figures include cowboys, dwarves, prostitutes, misogynistic newspapermen, and callow would-be starlets. A cripple growls like a dog to placate his wife. In Miss Lonelyhearts, a family of Eskimos comes to Hollywood to serve as extras in a film, decide to stay, and is seen in The Day of the Locust elbowing their way to the front of a viewing to see the corpse of an withered vaudevillian. In Miss Lonelyhearts, faults and inner contradictions are mercilessly exposed, while the characters in The Day of the Locust are grotesques, creating what F. The two short novels remain odd and ugly foster children of 20th century American literature. Originally from New York, West had come to California to live on screenwriting at a B-movie studio which Fitzgerald was also in Hollywood to do. Miss Lonelyhearts is a devastatingly concise novel of ideas as its protagonist triesâ€”and failsâ€”to find meaning amid relentless agony. The Day of the Locust, with its eponymous suggestion of biblical destruction, takes place in a vivid fever-dream, its characters sunk too deeply in lust, despair, and illusion to notice their insignificance. Instead, they emerge at violent cross-purposes with one another. Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust stand as masterpieces, intense and lyrical and hard to swallow. Of the two novels, Miss Lonelyhearts reaches deeper. As the columnist who is the son of a Baptist preacher tries to find an answer to his suffering correspondents, he cycles through and deflates all possible sources of meaningâ€”God, compassion, romance, art, alcohol, violence. The reason for his fierce desire to find answers is more selfish than compassionate. His belief in the power of a forgiving Christ has corroded and he seeks recourse from the meaninglessness and contempt that gnaw at him. As they appear in Miss Lonelyhearts, they are wrenching. I have 7 children in 12 yrs and ever since the last 2 I have been so sick. I am so sick and scared because I cant have an abortion on account of being a catholic and my husband so religious. I cry all the time it hurts so much and I dont know what to do. A 16 year old girl born without a nose has a father who buys her pretty dresses to compensate while her mother cries when she looks at her. Gazing at the big hole in the middle of her face in the mirror, the girl is repulsed. She asks if she should commit suicide. If I tell mother she will beat Gracie up awfull because I am the only one who loves her and last time when she tore her dress they loked her in the closet for 2 days and if the boys on the blok hear about it they will say dirty things like they did on Peewee Conors sister the time she got caught in the lots. So please what would you do if the same happened in your family. The coarse, ungrammatical entreaties are in marked contrast to the smooth metaphors that dominate the rest of the narrative. His editor Shrike and upbeat girlfriend Betty add to his misery. Suicide, it is only reasonable to think, must defeat this purpose. Ever-hopeful, Betty believes his funk can be cured with a trip to the country, or a bowl of chicken soup if he is sick. Her wide-eyed amiability inflames his existential

crisis. Her sureness was based on the power to limit experience arbitrarily. Moreover, his confusion was significant, while her order was not. Miss Lonelyhearts is a short novel, perhaps because it has to be: Miss Lonelyhearts struggles, however futilely, to scramble back up the precipice of existentialism. In *The Day of the Locust*, the overall absurdity is keener and more pervasive. Its Los Angeles is awash in outsize props and animal desires – Hollywood as a gaudy tilt-o-whirl, propelled by the duped and the malicious. In it, she wears harem clothes and clutches a beer bottle: She was supposed to look drunk and she did, but not with alcohol. She lay stretched out on the divan with her arms and legs spread, as though welcoming a lover, and her lips were parted in a heavy, sullen smile. Tod lit a cigarette and inhaled with a nervous gasp. He started to fool with his tie again, but had to go back to the photograph. If you threw yourself on her, it would be like throwing yourself from the parapet of a skyscraper. You would do it with a scream. Your teeth would be driven into your skull like nails into a pine board and your back would be broken. This is most wrenchingly true for Homer Simpson yes, namesake of the other , a middle-aged hotel bookkeeper from Wayneville, Iowa who is in Los Angeles to improve his shaky health. He too falls hopelessly in love with Faye. She takes advantage, and grows to loathe him. When he finally drops dead, Faye pays for his funeral by prostituting herself. Set together *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *The Day of the Locust* create a grimly complete picture of violent self-delusion, absurd as *Harry and Homer* but also as pathetically real. Morality plays they are, classified as comedies. They are indeed often funny. Funny as a crutch.

Chapter 4 : Miss Lonelyhearts, by Nathanael West : chapter5

Nathanael West first got his idea for Miss Lonelyhearts in when a friend who wrote an advice column for the Brooklyn Eagle showed him some of the agonized, pathetic, illiterate letters he received.

He was too excited to eat and afraid to go home. He felt as though his heart were a bomb, a complicated bomb that would result in a simple explosion, wrecking the world without rocking it. In the speakeasy, he discovered a group of his friends at the bar. They greeted him and went on talking. One of them was complaining about the number of female writers. She began writing for the little magazines about how much Beauty hurt her and ditched the boy friend who set up pins in a bowling alley. The guys on the block got sore and took her into the lots one night. About eight of them. They ganged her proper. When this hard-boiled stuff first came in, she dropped the trick English accent and went in for scam and lam. She got to hanging around with a lot of mugs in a speak, gathering material for a novel. They got her into the back room to teach her a new word and put the boots to her. On the last day they sold tickets to niggers. His friends would go on telling these stories until they were too drunk to talk. They were aware of their childishness, but did not know how else to revenge themselves. At college, and perhaps for a year afterwards, they had believed in literature, had believed in Beauty and in personal expression as an absolute end. When they lost this belief, they lost everything. Money and fame meant nothing to them. They were not worldly men. Miss Lonelyhearts drank steadily. He was smiling an innocent, amused smile, the smile of an anarchist sitting in the movies with a bomb in his pocket. If the people around him only knew what was in his pocket. In a little while he would leave to kill the President. Not until he heard his own name mentioned did he stop smiling and again begin to listen. Shrike says he wants to lick lepers. Barkeep, a leper for the gent. He wants to cultivate his interior garden. The Farm Board is a failure. He takes his shoes off to get the warm feel of the rich earth between his toes. Like Shrike, the man they imitated, they were machines for making jokes. A button machine makes buttons, no matter what the power used, foot, steam or electricity. They, no matter what the motivating force, death, love or God, made jokes. Through the light-blue tobacco smoke, the mahogany bar shone like wet gold. The glasses and bottles, their high lights exploding, rang like a battery of little bells when the bartender touched them together. He forgot that his heart was a bomb to remember an incident of his childhood. One winter evening, he had been waiting with his little sister for their father to come home from church. She was eight years old then, and he was twelve. Made sad by the pause between playing and eating, he had gone to the piano and had begun a piece by Mozart. It was the first time he had ever voluntarily gone to the piano. His sister left her picture book to dance to his music. She had never danced before. She danced gravely and carefully, a simple dance yet formal. As Miss Lonelyhearts stood at the bar, swaying slightly to the remembered music, he thought of children dancing. Square replacing oblong and being replaced by circle. Every child, everywhere; in the whole world there was not one child who was not gravely, sweetly dancing. He stepped away from the bar and accidentally collided with a man holding a glass of beer. Later he found himself at a table in the back room, playing with a loose tooth. He wondered why his hat did not fit and discovered a lump on the back of his head. He must have fallen. The hurdle was higher than he had thought. His anger swung in large drunken circles. And children gravely dancing? He would ask Shrike to be transferred to the sports department. Ned Gates came in to see how he was getting along and suggested the fresh air: Gates was also very drunk. When they left the speakeasy together, they found that it was snowing. He and his companion staggered along with their heads down, turning corners at random, until they found themselves in front of the little park. A light was burning in the comfort station and they went in to warm up. An old man was sitting on one of the toilets. The door of his booth was propped open and he was sitting on the turned-down toilet cover. Please let me alone. The old man looked as if he were going to cry, but suddenly laughed instead. A terrible cough started under his laugh, and catching at the bottom of his lungs, it ripped into his throat. He turned away to wipe his mouth. Miss Lonelyhearts tried to get Gates to leave, but he refused to go without the old man. They both grabbed him and pulled him out of the stall and through the door of the comfort station. He went soft in their arms and started to giggle. Miss Lonelyhearts fought off a desire to hit him. The snow had stopped falling and it had

grown very cold. The old man did not have an overcoat, but said that he found the cold exhilarating. He carried a cane and wore gloves because, as he said, he detested red hands. The old man tried to get them to drink coffee, but they told him to mind his own business and drank rye. When did you first discover homosexualistic tendencies in yourself? Scientists have terribly bad manners. Gates grabbed it from behind and wrenched it out of his hand. He began to cough violently and held his black satin tie to his mouth. Still coughing he dragged himself to a chair in the back of the room. Miss Lonelyhearts felt as he had felt years before, when he had accidentally stepped on a small frog. Its spilled guts had filled him with pity, but when its suffering had become real to his senses, his pity had turned to rage and he had beaten it frantically until it was dead. At their approach, the old man jumped to his feet. Miss Lonelyhearts caught him and forced him back into his chair. Every one has a life story. Tell it, damn you, tell it. Gates tried to tear him away, but he refused to let go. He was twisting the arm of all the sick and miserable, broken and betrayed, inarticulate and impotent. He was twisting the arm of Desperate, Brokenhearted, Sick-of-it-all, Disillusioned-with-tubercular-husband. The old man began to scream. Somebody hit Miss Lonelyhearts from behind with a chair.

Chapter 5 : Nathanael West - Wikipedia

Nathanael West was born Nathan Weinstein in New York City on October 17, , the first child of Max and Anna Weinstein. Both his parents were German-speaking Lithuanian Jews, who married in , shortly after their arrival in America.

It is unique in its elliptical development, its harsh realism verging on nightmare, and its emotional viciousness. I have read it three times, at least, and each time I have a slightly different reaction to it. In spite of its superficial similarities, it is a world--I almost said an ocean--away from the earnestness of the Great American Novel. He dropped out of high school, forged his way into Tufts; dropped out of Tufts, forged his way into Brown, where he continued to study little and read much. He had little patience for the staples of American fiction, favoring a literary diet of French surrealism and British decadence, enlivened with an occasional cup of Christian mysticism. After graduating university, Weinstein moved to Paris, began dressing like a dandy, and changed his name to West. He completed the novel he had been working on fitfully through college: *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, a deliberately offensive piece of surreal near-obscenity, filled with Freudian cliches and literary parody, which takes place entirely within the body of the Trojan Horse. It is helpful to see *Miss Lonelyhearts* as a continuation of the artistic aims of *Balso Snell*. Its jarring transitions, its disturbing juxtapositions of mystical visions with scatological and sexual themes is all part of a plot to assault the sensibilities of the reader and alienate him from the text of the work itself. Dear *Miss Lonelyhearts*-- I am sixteen years old now and I dont know what to do and would appreciate it if you could tell me what to do. When I was a little girl it was not so bad because I got used to the kids on the block makeing fun of me, but now I would like to have boy friends like the other girls and go out on Saturday nites, but no boy will take me because I was born without a nose--although I am a good dancer and have a nice shape and my father buys me pretty clothes. I sit and look at myself all day and cry. I have a big hole in the middle of my face that scares people even myself so I cant blame the boys for not wanting to take me out. My mother loves me, but she crys terrible when she looks at me. What did I do to deserve such a terrible bad fate? Even if I did do some bad things I didnt do any before I was a year old and I was born this way. I asked Papa and he says he doesnt know, but that maybe I did something in the other world before I was born or that maybe I was being punished for his sins. I dont believe that because he is a very nice man. Ought I commit suicide?

Chapter 6 : SparkNotes: Miss Lonelyhearts: Plot Overview

Nathanael West (born Nathan Weinstein; October 17, - December 22,) was an American author and screenwriter. He is remembered for two darkly satirical novels: Miss Lonelyhearts () and The Day of the Locust (), set respectively in the newspaper and Hollywood film industries.

Both his parents were German-speaking Lithuanian Jews, who married in , shortly after their arrival in America. His parents were cultivated people and both of them came from close-knit, large families. West attended grade school and high school in upper Manhattan and was always a poor student, preferring to spend his time reading books. He often skipped his classes and did not graduate from high school, but on the basis of a forged transcript, he was admitted to Tufts University in Massachusetts. There, he also neglected his studies and was finally forced to withdraw. West soon gained admittance, however, to Brown University on the basis of the transcript of another Nathan Weinstein. At Brown, West studied what he wished, participated in college dramatics and publications, and made a reputation for himself as a satiric cartoonist. He immersed himself in modern literature and art and read widely in what were then considered to be decadent books, as well as many other books about esoteric lore and religion and magic. He was rejected for fraternity membership because he was Jewish, which was one of the reasons why he eventually changed his name legally. In his younger years, West became notorious among his friends for his laziness, which earned him the lifelong nickname of "Pep" the opposite of his usual behavior. At Brown, West began many friendships with the young writers and artists on campus; then after graduating from Brown in with a Ph. Although West allowed his friends to believe that he was abroad for two or three years, he was really there for less than three months. He returned to New York early in and secured a job as a desk clerk in a second-rate residential hotel, a type of job which he held sporadically during the early s. At the Kenmore Hotel and, later, at the Sutton Hotel, West saw the seamier side of American life and enjoyed putting up his down-on-their-luck friends without charge. During these years, West wrote and rewrote his first novel, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* , which received little attention and sold poorly. As in his later work, he shows distaste for the human body and expresses doubts about the dignity of sexuality. Farrell, Quentin Reynolds, and Josephine Herbst, among others. His closest friend was the humorist S. West interrupted his menial hotel work with stays in the country, where he labored arduously on his second novel, *Miss Lonelyhearts*. This book, his masterpiece, on which West worked at the rate of about one hundred words a day, was published in and was recognized by friends and reviewers alike as a work of original genius. In , West began the first of several stints as a Hollywood scriptwriter, working on hack movies with various teams of writers. During this time he finished and published *A Cool Million* , a contemporary satire of the nineteenth-century Horatio Alger-type stories, those tales which chronicled the success of honest young workingmen â€” stereotypes that are still major myths in American culture. This novel tells the story of Lemuel Pitkin, a small-town boy whose attempts to gain success allow him to fall repeatedly into the hands of unscrupulous businessmen, wheeler-dealer operators, and politicians. Pitkin, who is literally dismembered as the novel progresses, ends up an unwilling martyr to the cause of an American Fascist-principled president. West had always been a man who had hid much of himself and who had presented many faces to the world. A bookish intellectual, he delighted in hunting and fishing expeditions and counted the novelist William Faulkner among his hunting companions. He loved dogs and open spaces, yet he was also a withdrawn observer-despite the fact that he could, if necessary, socialize with warmth and grace. Wittily satirical, West was also capable of being sensitive and tender. He was always inclined to exaggerate his own experiences, doubtlessly trying to act out his defenses against the world while, at the same time, satirizing its more faddish, empty enthusiasms. No other major modern American novelist is perhaps less autobiographical than West. Yet he did put certain aspects of himself into all of his fiction, especially into *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *The Day of the Locust*. Eight months later, in December, West and his bride were killed in an auto accident while returning from a hunting trip in Mexico. He was thirty-seven years old. In the decades after his death, he achieved an international reputation as one of the most skillful and original of modern-day novelists. His two best-known novels have sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and critics and

scholars all over the world have studied them avidly and exactingly. He was planning a new novel when he died. What striking departures he might have taken, however, can remain only a conjecture. Although the body of his work is small, the painstaking craftsmanship of his two best books, *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *The Day of the Locust*, has provided material for engrossing entertainment and serious thought. These short novels make a mirror for their times that is paradoxically both personal and impersonal.

Chapter 7 : About Miss Lonelyhearts

Nathanael West, Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust Miss Lonelyhearts / The Day of the Locust by Nathanael West. My rating: 5 of 5 stars Nathanael West's novella, Miss Lonelyhearts, has passionate defenders.

West displayed little ambition in academics, dropping out of high school and only gaining admission into Tufts College by forging his high school transcript. Although West did little schoolwork at Brown, he read extensively. He ignored the realist fiction of his American contemporaries in favor of French surrealists and British and Irish poets of the s, in particular Oscar Wilde. He became interested in Christianity and mysticism , as experienced or expressed through literature and art. West himself acknowledged and made fun of his lack of physical prowess in recounting the story of a baseball game where he cost his team the game. Wells Root, a close friend of West, remembers hearing this tale half a dozen times, recalling that everyone had placed bets on the game, which came down to the final inning with the score tied and the enemy at bat with two outs. The ball tore through, hit him in the forehead, and bounced into some brush. There was a roar from the crowd and [West] took one look and turned tail. To a man, the crowd had risen, gathered bats, sticks, stones, and anything they could lay hands on and were in hot pursuit. In telling the story he was convinced that if they had caught him they would have killed him. As Jewish students were not allowed to join most fraternities, his main friend was his future brother-in-law S. West barely finished at Brown with a degree. He then went to Paris for three months, and it was at this point that he changed his name to Nathanael West. His family, who had supported him thus far, ran into financial difficulties in the late s. West returned home and worked sporadically in construction for his father, eventually finding a job as the night manager of the Hotel Kenmore Hall on East 23rd Street in Manhattan. It was then that West wrote what would eventually become Miss Lonelyhearts Maxim Lieber served as his literary agent in In , however, two years before he completed Miss Lonelyhearts, West published The Dream Life of Balso Snell , a novel that he had conceived of in college. He published a third novel, A Cool Million , in Many of the films he worked on were B movies , such as Five Came Back It was at this time that West wrote The Day of the Locust. He took many of the settings and minor characters of his novel directly from his experience living in a hotel on Hollywood Boulevard. West and Ingster wrote the screenplay in seven weeks, with West focusing on characterization and dialogue and Ingster focusing on the narrative structure. RKO assigned the film, eventually released as Suspicion , to Alfred Hitchcock ; but Hitchcock already had his own, substantially different, screenplay. West ran a stop sign in El Centro, California , resulting in a collision in which he and McKenney were killed. Their deaths occurred the day after that of F. Day of the Locust was made into a film which came out in , starring Donald Sutherland and Karen Black. Auden to refer to poverty that exists in both a spiritual and economic sense. Jay Martin wrote an extensive biography of West in

Chapter 8 : Miss Lonelyhearts by Nathanael West

"But now let us consider the holes in our own bodies and into what these congenital wounds open. Under the skin of man is a wondrous jungle where veins like lush tropical growths hang along over-ripe organs and weed-like entrails writhe in squirming tangles of red and yellow.

I first read the novella in my teens, under orders from the aforementioned Bloom, but was moved to re-read it recently when a friend told me how hard it was to share in the classroom with the trigger warning generation. In his grimly comic indignation at the horror of human existence, West wants to squeeze every trigger in sight. The very conceit of the novella is a provocation: Miss Lonelyhearts a young male writer who is never referred to by any other name, not even by the impersonal narrator is the advice columnist for the New York Post-Dispatch. He is tormented by the letters he receives real letters that West actually appropriated from a newspaper job , to whose anguish there is really no answer. Take this one from a sixteen-year-old girl without a nose: What did I do to deserve such a terrible bad fate? Even if I did do some bad things I didnt do any before I was a year old and I was born this way. I asked Papa and he says he doesnt know, but that maybe I did something in the other world before I was born or that maybe I was being punished for his sins. I dont believe that because he is a very nice man. Ought I commit suicide? This is hard to read because you have to receive it both as unutterably sad and also as horribly funny. There are sensibilities for which this kind of thing can never be funny, but mine is not one of them. Miss Lonelyhearts stopped listening. His friends would go on telling these stories until they were too drunk to talk. They were aware of their childishness, but did not know how else to revenge themselves. At college, and perhaps for a year afterwards, they had believed in literature, had believed in Beauty and in personal expression as an absolute end. When they lost this belief, they lost everything. He tortures Miss Lonelyhearts by mocking and parodying every escape route from loneliness, despair, and violence. He systematically parodies religious belief, devotion to nature, love of art, and even the easier escapes of drugs and alcohol. The spirit of cynicism and sarcasm, he leaves no potentially redemptive discourse unmocked; he refutes nothing, but leaves every argument and way of life looking tawdry and ridiculous I would be surprised if no critic has compared him to such canonically suspicious hermeneutists as Lacan, Foucault, Bourdieu, etc. Miss Lonelyhearts, for his part, is described this way: Although his cheap clothes had too much style, he still looked like the son of a Baptist minister. A beard would become him, would accent his Oldâ€™ Testament look. But even without a beard no one could fail to recognize the New England puritan. His forehead was high and narrow. His nose was long and fleshless. His bony chin was shaped and cleft like a hoof. He is, in other words, a descendant of all those compromised goodmen and ministers in Hawthorne who wanted to be holy but in whose flesh the thorns of temptation and guilt left bloody lacerations. Shrike preys upon this: The novella is immensely impressive, and its pared-down imagistic prose and starkly allegorical energy seem to set a standard for modern American writing. For her part, Faye rejects Tod because he has no money and no prospects. Here is how Tod thinks of Faye: If he only had the courage to throw himself on her. Nothing less violent than rape would do. The sensation he felt was like that he got when holding an egg in his hand. Not that she was fragile or even seemed fragile. It was her completeness, her egglike self-sufficiency, that made him want to crush her. And here is how Faye thinks of Homer: His servility was like that of a cringing, clumsy dog, who is always anticipating a blow, welcoming it even, and in a way that makes overwhelming the desire to strike him. His generosity was still more irritating. It was so helpless and unselfish that it made her feel mean and cruel, no matter how hard she tried to be kind. The scenic descriptions in the opening chapter sound this theme: He reached the end of Vine Street and began the climb into Pinyon Canyon. Night had started to fall. The edges of the trees burned with a pale violet light and their centers gradually turned from deep purple to black. The same violet piping, like a Neon tube, outlined the tops of the ugly, hump-backed hills and they were almost beautiful. But not even the soft wash of dusk could help the houses. Only dynamite would be of any use against the Mexican ranch houses, Samoan huts, Mediterranean villas, Egyptian and Japanese temples, Swiss chalets, Tudor cottages, and every possible combination of these styles that lined the slopes of the canyon. When he noticed that they were all of plaster,

lath and paper, he was charitable and blamed their shape on the materials used. On the corner of La Huerta Road was a miniature Rhine castle with tarpaper turrets pierced for archers. Next to it was a little highly colored shack with domes and minarets out of the Arabian Nights. Again he was charitable. Their desire to startle was so eager and guileless. It is hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance, no matter how tasteless, even horrible, the results of that need are. But it is easy to sigh. Few things are sadder than the truly monstrous. This is satire, but more than satire: Made of paper, it will easily burn, but the artistâ€™s Tod, Westâ€™s is there to mark its passing, even if there is no other agency of redemption.

Chapter 9 : Miss Lonelyhearts - Wikipedia

Nathanael West's novels, including Miss Lonelyhearts (), A Cool Million (), and The Day of the Locust (), used black comedy to create a bitter vision of an inhuman and brutal world and its depressing effects on his sensitive but ineffectual protagonists.

Doyle with the wrongs he had suffered and Miss Lonelyhearts with the triumphant thing that his humility had become. They took a cab. As they entered the street in which Doyle lived, he began to curse his wife and his crippled foot. He called on Christ to blast them both. Miss Lonelyhearts was very happy and inside of his head he was also calling on Christ. But his call was not a curse, it was the shape of his joy. When the cab drew up to the curb, Miss Lonelyhearts helped his companion out and led him into the house. They made a great deal of noise with the front door and Mrs. Doyle came into the hall. At the sight of her the cripple started to curse again. She greeted Miss Lonelyhearts, then took hold of her husband and shook the breath out of him. When he was quiet, she dragged him into their apartment. Miss Lonelyhearts followed and as he passed her in the dark foyer, she goosed him and laughed. After washing their hands, they sat down to eat. Doyle had had her supper earlier in the evening and she waited on them. The first thing she put on the table was a quart bottle of guinea red. When they had reached their coffee, she sat down next to Miss Lonelyhearts. He could feel her knee pressing his under the table, but he paid no attention to her and only broke his beatific smile to drink. The heavy food had dulled him and he was trying desperately to feel again what he had felt while holding hands with the cripple in the speakeasy. She put her thigh under his, but when he still failed to respond, she got up abruptly and went into the parlor. They followed a few minutes later and found her mixing ginger-ale highballs. They all drank silently. Doyle looked sleepy and his wife was just beginning to get drunk. Miss Lonelyhearts made no attempt to be sociable. He was busy trying to find a message. When he did speak it would have to be in the form of a message. After the third highball, Mrs. Doyle began to wink quite openly at Miss Lonelyhearts, but he still refused to pay any attention to her. The cripple, however, was greatly disturbed by her signals. He began to fidget and mumble under his breath. The vague noises he was making annoyed Mrs. She rolled a newspaper into a club and struck her husband on the mouth with it. He surprised her by playing the fool. He growled like a dog and caught the paper in his teeth. When she let go of her end, he dropped to his hands and knees and continued the imitation on the floor. His wife kicked him and turned away with a snort of contempt. The cripple soon laughed himself out, and they all returned to their seats. Doyle and his wife sat staring at each other, while Miss Lonelyhearts again began to search for a message. The silence bothered Mrs. When she could stand it no longer, she went to the sideboard to make another round of drinks. But the bottle was empty. She asked her husband to go to the corner drug store for some gin. He refused with a single, curt nod of his head. She tried to argue with him. He ignored her and she lost her temper. He had not yet found his message, but he had to say something. Be kind to him. They could hear her slamming things around in the kitchen. Miss Lonelyhearts went over to the cripple and smiled at him with the same smile he had used in the speakeasy. The cripple returned the smile and stuck out his hand. Miss Lonelyhearts clasped it, and they stood this way, smiling and holding hands, until Mrs. Doyle reentered the room. The cripple pulled his hand away and made as though to strike his wife. Miss Lonelyhearts realized that now was the time to give his message. It was now or never. Holding your husband in your arms, you can warm him and give him life. You can take the chill out of his bones. He drags his days out in areaways and cellars, carrying a heavy load of weariness and pain. You can substitute a dream of yourself for this load. A buoyant dream that will be like a dynamo in him. You can do this by letting him conquer you in your bed. He will repay you by flowering and becoming ardent over you. With the first few words Miss Lonelyhearts had known that he would be ridiculous. By avoiding God, he had failed to tap the force in his heart and had merely written a column for his paper. He tried again by becoming hysterical. It was a stage scream, but he kept on. Man was lost by eating of the forbidden fruit. He shall be saved by eating of the bidden fruit. The black Christ-fruit, the love fruit. He had substituted the rhetoric of Shrike for that of Miss Lonelyhearts. He felt like an empty bottle, shiny and sterile. He closed his eyes. He knew that the cripple was doing this, not because of the things he had said, but

out of loyalty. When he had gone Mrs. When she went to the radio to tune in on a jazz orchestra, she waved her behind at him like a flag. He said that he was too tired to dance. After doing a few obscene steps in front of him, she sat down in his lap. He tried to fend her off, but she kept pressing her open mouth against his and when he turned away, she nuzzled his cheek. He felt like an empty bottle that is being slowly filled with warm, dirty water. When she opened the neck of her dress and tried to force his head between her breasts, he parted his knees with a quick jerk that spilled her to the floor. She tried to pull him down on top of her. He struck out blindly and hit her in the face. She screamed and he hit her again and again. He kept hitting her until she stopped trying to hold him, then he ran out of the house.