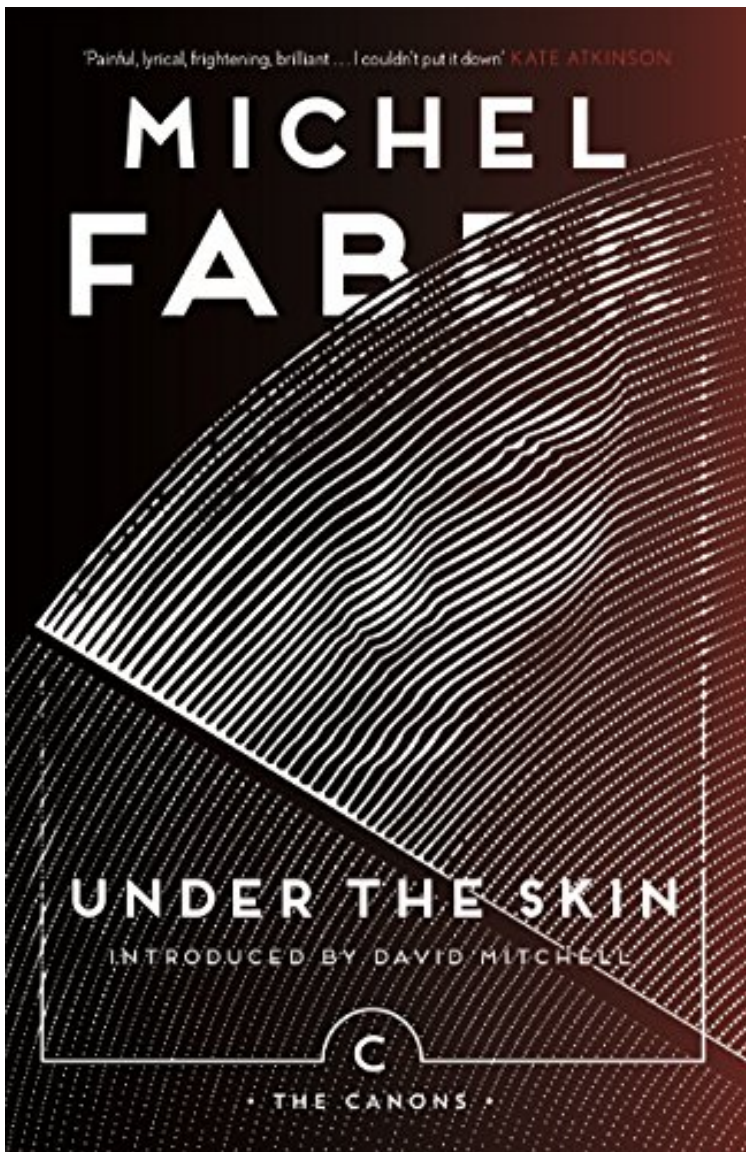


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Under The Skin



Par Michel Faber

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWith an introduction by David MitchellIsserley spends most of her time driving. But why is she so interested in picking up hitchhikers? And why are they always male, well-built and alone?An utterly unpredictable and macabre mystery, Under the Skin is a genre-defying masterpiece..comIn the opening pages of Under the Skin, a lone female is scouting the Scottish Highlands in search of well-proportioned men: "Isserley always drove straight past a hitch-hiker when she first saw him, to give herself time to size him up. She was looking for big muscles: a hunk on legs. Puny, scrawny specimens were no use to her." At this point, the reader might be forgiven for anticipating some run-of-the-mill psychosexual drama. But commonplace expectation is no help when it comes to Michel Faber's strange and unsettling first

novel; small details, then major clues, suggest that something deeply bizarre is afoot. What are the reasons for Isserley's extensive surgical scarring, her thick glasses, her excruciating backache? Who are the solitary few who work on the farm where her cottage is located? And why are they all nervous about the arrival of someone called Amlis Vess? The ensuing narrative is of such cumulative, compelling strangeness that it almost defies description. The one thing that can be said with certainty is that *Under the Skin* is unlike anything else you have ever read. Faber's control of his medium is nearly flawless. Applying the rules of psychological realism to a fictional world that is both terrifying and unearthly, he nonetheless compels the reader's absolute identification with Isserley. Not even the author's fine short-story collection, *Some Rain Must Fall*, prepared us for such mastery. *Under the Skin* is ultimately a reviewer's nightmare and a reader's dream: a book so distinctive, so elegantly written, and so original that one can only urge everybody in earshot to experience it, and soon. --Burhan Tufail

From Publishers Weekly

A strange woman named Isserley roams the Scottish Highlands in search of juicy, well-muscled hitchhikers in Faber's menacing but unfulfilling debut novel (after *Some Rain Must Fall*, a collection of short stories). The opening chapters are suffused with an almost palpable sense of dread: Isserley picks up one hitchhiker after another and engages them in conversation, measuring them against a set of criteria of which the reader, as yet, is unaware. Some of the men are discarded and some are kept; in the process the reader learns that Isserley herself is oddly shaped, with breasts too large, legs too short, and scars everywhere. Faber's pacing here is masterful, with clues precisely dropped and details ominously described. But once Faber reveals the reason Isserley is collecting the hitchhikers (and it's truly bizarre), the book turns from horror to allegory and begins to run out of steam. The central conceit of the allegory is repugnant, but also unimpressive; it feels like something animal rights extremists might have cooked up after watching *Soylent Green*. Faber possesses an undeniable gift for grotesque imagery ("He grinned so broadly it was like an incision slicing his head in two"), but his unsettling prose doesn't adequately flesh out the underdeveloped premise of the story. Still, the Dutch-born and Australian-raised Faber is a strange and promising new talent, and his next novel might better use the macabre skills he so unnervingly displays here. (July) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.