



Apocalypse Bébé

Virginie Despentes

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Valentine disparue... Qui la cherche vraiment ?

Entre satire sociale, polar contemporain et romance lesbienne, le nouveau roman de Virginie Despentes est un road-book qui promene le lecteur entre Paris et Barcelone, sur les traces de tous ceux qui ont connu Valentine, l'adolescente égarée... Les différents personnages se croisent sans forcément se rencontrer, et finissent par composer, sur ton-ton tendre et puissant, le portrait d'une époque.

Apocalypse Bébé Details

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Author : Virginie Despentes

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From Reader Review Apocalypse Bébé for online ebook

Amanda says

Wow this book was not exactly what I was expecting. It was described to me as a feminist road trip with a kick ass lesbian P.I. and yes it is exactly that. But it also a much darker side to it.

Lucie is a somewhat inept investigator who gets paid to watch rich kids and report back to their parents. When one of assigned kids disappears on her things get interesting. She really has no idea how to go about a missing person investigation so she invests the help of The Hyena. Enter the kick-ass lesbian P.I. They set off on a road trip from Paris to Barcelona and back to find Valentine. What they discover is that Valentine isn't your typical runaway and her motives are not at all what they seem. Things get really hectic in the last few chapters. This was a really fun read but it did have it's heavy moments. Really glad I read it.

Robert Mudas says

Lecture plaisante mais un peu décevante sur la fin. Le lire après Vernon Subutex lui fait peut-être défaut : si c'est un plaisir de retrouver la Hyène, la fin très similaire m'a surpris par son manque d'originalité. La galerie de portraits est encore un point fort pour Despentes, qui propose de belles scènes réussies. L'histoire manque cependant de rythme à partir de la moitié. En bref : j'aime le style de Despentes, mais on sent dans ce roman un peu de Vernon Subutex qui se cherche...

Clem says

3,8 stars.

Pour le coup, la fin de ce livre fait l'effet d'une bombe. J'ai eu l'impression de brièvement m'ennuyer durant l'enquête, mais alors je suis contente d'être allée au bout. J'aurais, de toute façon, continuer ne serait-ce que pour les nombreux thèmes, ET POUR LA HYÈNE ! (:D) qui captent notre attention et captivent du début à la fin.

J'ai juste adoré cette fin, complètement appropriée, colle parfaitement à l'intrigue (qui est d'autant plus étonnant, ce genre de fin sans réponse aux questions aurait plutôt le don de frustrer!).

Sahel says

Shocking and mind-blowing, this story leaves the readers to decide on their own. Respects the readers' weight of mind under all the pressure that it has them undergo. But, you have to read her King Kong Theory before reading this.

Judy says

For several years I've been following a couple blogs that deal solely in translated literature: Three Percent and The Complete Review. This year I set myself a challenge to read more novels translated from other languages by writers that live in other countries than the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, and Australia. How have I done so far?

Counting up I found that out of 92 books read this year, eight were originally written and published in another language. That is almost 9%, so not too bad.

Of those eight books, three had already become hot sellers in America: From Italy Elena Ferrante's *The Story of a New Name* and *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay*; Nina George's *The Little Paris Bookshop*, written in German but set in France. Three are classics written and translated long ago: *Independent People* by Haldor Laxness from Iceland, *Dead Souls* from Russia by Nikolai Gogol, and *The Marioka Sisters* by Junichiro Tanizaki from Japan. I also read Yannik Grannet's *The Goddess of Small Victories*, written in French but set in Vienna and America because it is about the wife of Kurt Godel.

Reading those books has been a good experience though what I really want is more books being written and set in the 21st century so I can get a grasp of what life is like now in countries I have not traveled to. *Apocalypse Baby* fit the bill.

It was written in French and set in Paris and Barcelona in about 2008 or 2009. Though I have been to Paris two times in my life, I only had the tourist experience. The two female private investigators searching for a missing teenage girl are beyond streetwise and operate far outside the tourist milieu.

Valentine, the missing teen, is from a somewhat privileged family but her mother Vanessa is of North African Arab descent, being the one sister who clawed her way out of the ghetto to marry a French novelist. After Vanessa deserted the novelist and her daughter, Valentine grew up to be a full participant in the naughtiest of youth culture pastimes.

One of the investigators is Lucie, over 30, a bit of a non-motivated loser who tends to do the least work possible. The other is a force of nature called The Hyena, a feminist lesbian with a secret agent for hire past which has pretty much caught up with her.

As they troll through Parisian youth culture and the Arab slums of Barcelona, the book presents a view of these cities not seen in tourist brochures or even on the news. Valentine is one of the more depraved teens I've found in a novel: groupie, slut, fearless narcissist. But as the reader is dragged through this miasma of lust and violence, an even more deadly political scene rears its head and leads to an almost unbelievable climax.

I found *Apocalypse Baby* an exciting read full of complex characters, wise commentary on current topics, humor, and nail biting suspense. For me, it painted a gritty picture of 21st century life in two European cities. I realized that any modern country has its own unique mix of situations made up of economic, ethnic, and other cultural factors.

Possibly the book should come with a warning sticker although the cover illustration may act as its own warning. I recommended it to one of my reading groups and it was just too much for two of the ladies. Virginie Despentes is an award-winning author and filmmaker in France. She has written nine novels, only

three of which have been translated into English.

One more thing: I found this book through Three Percent's 2015 World Cup of World Literature. I am working my way through the list.

everytimemydear says

bordel de merde
j'ai aucun mot

Bordel
De
Merde

Viv JM says

Wow! This book was quite a ride!

Lucie is a somewhat hapless private detective, paid by rich parents to keep tabs on their teenage kids. When one of her charges goes missing, she hires a legendary unhinged lesbian detective named The Hyena to help her find the girl. Their quest to find Valentine takes them from Paris to Barcelona, and the stories of those who knew the missing girl are gradually revealed. The story is told partly in first person from Lucie's POV, but also via chapters from the point of view of other characters. I thought this was really effective as the reader is constantly challenged to question their opinion on the various players.

I was pretty taken aback by the ending, not having known it was coming, and it did add a whole new dimension to this thriller. I won't put any spoilers here but do be warned that many of the reviews of this book do contain them!

My overall impression of *Apocalypse Baby* was that it was a highly readable and exciting novel, written with biting humour but also great empathy. I will definitely be seeking out more from this author.

Renita D'Silva says

Funny. Irreverent and yet poignant. A good read.

Mélanie says

Il s'agit ici de mon premier livre de Virginie Despentes. A en avoir trop entendu parler j'ai préféré pendant des années me réserver, attendre la fin de vague, mais celle-ci ne s'arrête pas et a fini par attiser ma curiosité. *Apocalypse Bébé* est une fable sociale noire, peuplée de divers personnages qui rythment le livre et s'approprient un à un les chapitres. Les détails des personnalités de chacun sont dévoilés, le sentiment d'une

noirceur et d'un malaise ambiant s'empare de nous au fil du roman, pour nous envahir complètement à la fin de la lecture. On est tenu en haleine jusqu'à la fin, qui pourrait sembler facile, ou "déjà vu", mais elle n'est qu'une pièce au milieu du puzzle de l'étrange mis en place ici par l'autrice.

Je comprends que l'on puisse dire d'elle qu'elle prend aux tripes par ses romans, *Apocalypse Bébé* en a été la belle illustration.

Marina Sofia says

This book just whacks you on the head and takes you for one hell of a ride, sparing nothing and no one about French society (even Catalan society) in the process. Quite an exhilarating experience, though I tend to prefer my novels more measured and less direct.

Rebecka says

Well, my timing for reading this book was pretty good, I must say. >_>

I was not quite sure whether to give *Apocalypse Bébé* 3 or 4 stars, but I settled for 3, since I found the book a little bit too long. Even though I really enjoyed reading it, there was something missing -- and a little bit too much of something else, notably side characters.

Despentes always has interesting characters, perhaps just a couple too many this time around? I particularly like La Hyène and Valentine. It's just a shame that for quite a long time, you don't understand what the thing about Valentine is. Since the book is narrated through the eyes of all the different characters (in turns), it takes a hell of a long time until it's Valentine's turn to show her side of the story. For the longest time, I just saw her as a chubby misfit, and then it turns out that's not at all what she is.

Partly, I think the whole story with the world's worst private detective, Lucie, is a bit funny. She's just plain worthless, *knows* she's worthless, and has more or less given up... everything. But - she occupies a whole lot of space, space that could have been better used on Valentine and on the grand finale. (view spoiler)

At times, I was confused by all the different characters, and having seen some other reviews, it seems there are some errors with the names? That would explain a lot. However, what's most confusing in this book is why everyone is helping Lucie in the end, and why she inspires sympathy in people in general.

Saïdeh Pakravan says

Like a number of her contemporaries (Anna Gavalda, Amelie Nothomb, etc.) in present-day French literary fiction, Virginie Despentes is incredibly talented. Her prose flows without a snag, the characters, losers one and all, frustrated would-be authors, PIs, teachers, adolescent rebels, draw us in instantly. There's a great love of fiction here, and a look of compassion and humor at humanity with all its failings. These people are us, we so understand them. Great book

Tofu Sauvage says

Apocalypse bébé, énorme.

C'est rare que je finisse un livre en me disant que, en sachant autant à quel point, j'ai pris du plaisir à le lire.

J'adore son style, précis, affuté, à la fois sans détour et sophistiqué. Immanquablement, cette langue qui claque, la bonne phrase, la bonne tournure au bon moment. Fulgurance de la pensée ultra débridée et pourtant, ultra maîtrisée

Despentes est également une super portraitiste : ses personnages sont attachants, retiennent très vite l'entièvre attention du lecteur. On passe de narrateur en narrateur, explorant différentes visions du monde, d'un même monde vue de personnages très différents, et au final, tout s'emboîte, s'imbrique, trouve son sens sans qu'il y en ait réellement besoin d'un.

J'aime également comment, d'une situation simple ou alors glauque, vécue par ses personnages, elle place très justement ses réflexions, au-delà de la narration, sur la société actuelle, les femmes, les classes sociales... entre autre !

L'intrigue est quant à elle plutôt palpitante, bien ficelée à mon goût. Même si elle laisse toujours au lecteur des pistes et que ses révélations ultérieures résonnent parfois d'un "je t'avais prévenu", on est rapidement emporté par l'envie de dévorer les pages de ce livre jusqu'au bout pour tout découvrir, chercher le "vrai" sens, et au final ça n'est même plus si important que ça.

Reste un style terriblement efficace, une vision, une empreinte de V. Despentes dans l'esprit de son lecteur. L'envie que le livre ne s'arrête jamais ?

Hertzan Chimera says

I don't like the title.

I don't like the cover.

I certainly don't like the hit-n-miss English translation of this French novel from the writer and co-director of the excellent Baise Moi book/film.

But I still give this 'where is she and what's she up to?' travelogue-roman FIVE STARS. A very laid back style. Excellent narrative slips and slides, switchbacks and concealed junctions. The perspective shifts are what really make this novel for me, the view from the other side of the storyline. Nice.

Lovely, poignant, haunting.

K. says

3.5 stars.

Chosen for France in my read around the world challenge.

Lucie Toledo is a woman working for a PI agency who is moderately good at her job. After "botching" a job tailing a teenager named Valentine, she is then promptly hired to *find* Valentine by the girl's grandmother. Lucie is out of her depth, having never worked missing persons, so she turns to someone who she has only ever heard of, a legend in the PI/unofficial LEO circles: the Hyena, an unrepentant hardass and lover of women. Lucie is unenthused about being dragged all over various parts of Paris and then Barcelona on a job she didn't even want - until she meets a woman who changes *all* her thoughts on lovin' the ladies.

To be honest, Lucie was the least interesting part of this book - after reading her impression of Valentine and then as they investigated and got dozens of opinions on the girl, I wanted to hear more from her perspective. In the end, we only got a single chapter that culminated in something pretty damned explosive.
