



## New York City in 1979

*Kathy Acker*

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**New York City in 1979** Kathy Acker

*'INTENSE SEXUAL DESIRE IS THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD'*

A tale of art, sex, blood, junkies and whores in New York's underground, from cult literary icon Kathy Acker

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## New York City in 1979 Details

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Author : Kathy Acker

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## From Reader Review New York City in 1979 for online ebook

### **Jayesha says**

Picked up this book due to my usual longing for others' nostalgia. I love this edition (not sure if all editions of this story are published like this) as it's interspersed with unfocused yet arresting pictures that speak volumes about who Acker was as an experimental writer and artist. I also like the story's playing around with type and sentence cases and its disregard for grammar. True to the kind of literature that may have inspired this, it's quite explicit and there's little actual narrative, likely a contribution to the postmodernist style that had an impression on Acker. All the same, I feel that this book is an interesting experience and a small window into the thought of this time, in this city.

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### **Lee Foust says**

Well I came to San Francisco for the summer hoping against hope to find inexpensive copies of Acker's books to continue my project of reading her in order backward but, just like last summer's fruitless search for a dog-eared copy of *To the Lighthouse*--for fuck's sake--I've drawn a blank. Although I have found a nice copy of Gaddiss's *A Frolic of His Own*, the next of his I wanted to read, so I'm not complaining too much. This little gem was so compact, though, I had the foresight to slip into a side pocket of my suitcase just in case of Acker withdrawals. They came on strong this afternoon so I read it.

Scrumptious.

It has, in a super compact little gem, most of Acker's most interesting themes and techniques. The rapid-fire string of logical sentences burying us in the most radical politics. Useless descriptions of nothingnesses. A little autobiography. A bit of Baudelaire. The NYC scene. The Mudd Club. (I didn't even mind the photos and I like the single book format.)

I loved it. Just what the doctor ordered.

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### **Rashi says**

'New York city in 1979' is a raw, biting novella, loosely based on the said city in the year of 1979. It is an insight into the lives of the city's junkies, prostitutes and most of all- it explores the concept of desire i.e. sex.

The language is broken, keeping in mind the adulterated grammar of the city's street folk and is crisp to the core. The book showcases some photographs which've been shot creatively, capturing the essence of the text. One might think half the photos are blurred and unclear but if one looks closely, they can understand how it's elemental in deepening the plot and giving it a clearer meaning via euphemisms.

Kathy Acker has managed to capture the heart and life of the city in its true essence- whether it's about the rising temperature at 4 in the morning or about the prostitutes in jail talking about their pimps or even about the slight elite people contrasting against the poorer ones.

In all, it's a scintillating read, especially referring to the last segment of the story. It riles you up and makes one wanting for more than an abrupt goodbye.

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### **Neil Fulwood says**

Part montage, part reportage, part prose poem, Acker pulls no punches in her account of lives criss-crossing or diverging against a backdrop of poverty, jail and prostitution. The wannabe artist and the worn-out hooker come across as no different under the microscope of Acker's warts-and-all prose, which is by turns sad, sympathetic and grotesque. By the end of this little Penguin Modern volume, however, it was hard to shake the suspicion that, rather than building up to a valid point about the lovelessness of modern urban life, Acker was simply out to shock.

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### **Chenniee says**

That's new york city that's every city that's every human being

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### **David Årlemalm says**

Efter en stark inledning förlorade New York City In 1979 mig. Acker är pubertal där hon söker provocera, plump där hon vill chokera. Hade förväntat mig någon annat och bättre.

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### **Laurel L. Perez says**

If you don't know about Kathy Acker, and approach her work without knowing what her goals were, I think a lot can be dismissed and ignored. There is a lot to look at in this small book with thought provoking photography. New York '79, staged predominantly in a burlesque bar, explores, using the text as a guide, resisting traditional power structures while acknowledging the legitimacy of female heterosexual and heteronormative practices. At one point the character of Janey repeats, as if talking to herself or as if being directed to do so by the audience, that she must "lick (Johnny's) ear because that's what there is" as if she is a prisoner to normal accepted sexual practices or because this is indeed, all that there is.

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### **Apurva Nagpal says**

New York City in 1979 is a series of pieces by Kathy Acker about female sexuality, desire, exploring the meaning of what it means to be a lesbian, and the truth about the lives of prostitutes.

This also features a series of photographs by Anne Turyn, which were also a part when this was first published in 1981.

When I started it, I knew it was gonna be an impactful one but it slowly went down the slope. The initial excerpts and the conversation were disconcerting and written with so much truthfulness. The rawness of her writing and her experience totally sucked me in but the shifts in the telling did not hold my attention for long.

It was ????.75/5 for me but I really wanna get my hands on Acker's self corrected a typescript of the story (produced prior to it's publication) and see how she really wanted it to come through.

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### **Russio says**

New York City in 1979: a place full of sex and broken dreams. It is a feminist activity to have sex. Now bung in some photos and split the narrative into chunks showing the lived experience of prostitutes, of lesbians and of heterosexual women on heat. Burn your bras or just have sex - it's all the same. Written to shock - maybe of use at the time to some timid housewives. Largely irrelevant now - the discourse has moved on for most of us and if it needs this in this day and age the it is unlikely to shift again.

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### **Fede says**

This little book is a condensed literary monster. In fact it belongs to no genre and eludes any attempt to classify it.

According to most (Good)readers, it's total crap; according to Fede's humble opinion, it's good - in its own way. 47 pages of urban snapshots reminding of neon light and videoclips, sort of poetic prose fed with Freebase imagery and late 70s amorality, a concentrate of Acker's unique writing style.

I personally don't understand why people seem to dislike this book so much; maybe they expected it to be some kind of revolutionary milestone in literature and found themselves disappointed by its apparent simplicity?

It's basically a collection of short dialogues and even shorter random thoughts and aphorisms, plus some b/w pictures of New York. The subject? Hard to tell. Whores spending the night in jail, pseudo-artists discussing their questionable notions about feminism, the revolting description of an old woman's genitals, an existentialist / punk / intellectual / nymphomaniac who is seduced and dumped by an allegedly homosexual guy... and, around and above them, 'New York City in 1979': drugs, nightclubs, street-art, safety pins stuck through upper lips, green Mohawks, subculture, counterculture, the death of culture. The end of DecaDance and the beginning of decadence.

All in all, an interesting read and a good introduction to Acker's work - at least, not so shallow as many readers describe it.

An overwhelming sense of mental and physical alienation can be perceived in these few pages. Take these two excerpts, for instance:

"I am lonely out of my mind. I am miserable out of my mind. Now I'm going into the state where desire comes out like a monster."

"As soon as Janey's fucking she wants to be adored as much as possible at the same time as, its other extreme, ignored as much as possible.

This is the nature of reality. No rationality possible. Only this is true. The world in which there is no feeling doesn't exist. This world is a very dangerous place to live in."

This should have been a much longer book; I would have loved reading some 200 more pages of such

fascinating prose.

By the way, I read this with more painkillers than blood flowing through my veins and two thick swabs up my nose, so my judgement might be a bit unreliable at the moment. I enjoyed it: let's leave it at that.

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(Suggested soundtrack: Blondie, "Atomic", 1979)

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### **Tosh says**

Strange enough this is my first entrance into the world of Kathy Acker. Excerpt from her book published by Semiotext(e) "Hannibal Lecter, My Father" this is an enticing snapshot of New York City at a specific time (1979) - and it includes images which I imagine is from the original edition as well. They work well together.

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### **Kirsty says**

Aside from reading the first twenty or so pages of *Blood and Guts in High School* before deciding it wasn't for me and putting it down, I was quite unfamiliar with Kathy Acker's work. 'New York City in 1979' is a short story described in its blurb as 'a tale of art, sex, blood, junkies and whores in New York's underground.' Acker is referred to in the same blurb as a 'cult literary icon'.

This is the first Penguin Modern to include photographs in my ordered reading of the series, and these, which are by Anne Turyn, I enjoyed. I was not keen at all on the accompanying text, however. Its blurb makes it sound rather gritty, which I am fine with. I found the story vulgar, though. 'New York City in 1979', which was first published in 1981, is fragmented in its prose style and format, and feels rather cobbled together. There is little coherence here; rather, it feels as though Acker made a series of notes, connected only due to their New York setting, and published them without any editing. The tone is impersonal and detached, and the characters are so shadowy that it is difficult to feel anything for them. I felt as though Acker was shrieking her words at times, a fan as she is of random capitalisation. I found 'New York City in 1979' a very awkward tale to read, and the photographs were the only thing here which I enjoyed.

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### **Pippa says**

This was just...no. Not for me. I think part of the problem had to do with the fact that I imaged something completely different than what I was getting. I expected a critical collection of essays, but what I got was porn in a book. I can't even explain my thoughts in a coherent manner. For those that did like this little book, HOW and WHY? I mean, I get that there is more to it than at first glance may seem. For example the last "story" (let's be honest here, none of these things in here can be considered stories. They are more like little scribbles and notes someone made of a conversation they overheard in the train). I understand that this story is about the critics of one night stands and that people should be more considerate about the people they let into their lives and not just give their bodies away. However, would I have understood that same messages if the author would have chosen to write "she went home with him" in stead of a very detailed description about their night together? YES. So was it necessary she wrote it down like that? ABSOLUTELY NOT. Did she do it anyway? UNFORTUNATELY YES.

It can be concluded that I'm extremely frustrated and disappointed in this book.

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### **Lazaros Karavasilis says**

Ρεαλιστικ;, ωμ;, αληθιν;. Κοιν?ς πολ? καλ?.

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### **Nile says**

Overwhelming urge half way through to go up to my nan's flat on the 18th floor and absolutely launch it from the balcony and watch it swing with great jagged edges and stunning velocity into the unknown.

Not a judgement call on the material which sometimes made it up to \*\*\* and sometimes down to \*, just an inexplicable drive from someone almost universally too reserved to litter like that under normal circumstances.

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