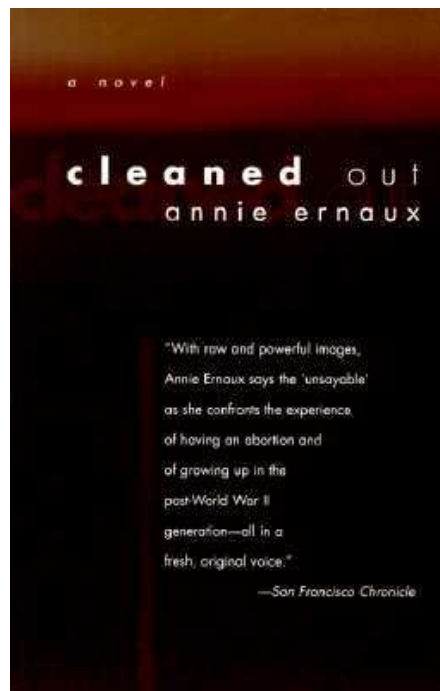




Cleaned Out

Annie Ernaux

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Cleaned Out tells the story of Denise Lesur, a 20-year-old woman suffering the after-effects of a back-alley abortion. Alone in her college dorm room, Denise attempts to understand how her suffocating middle-class upbringing has brought her to such an awful present. Ernaux, one of France's most important contemporary writers, daringly breaks with formal French literary tradition in this moving novel about abortion, growing up, and coming to terms with one's childhood.

"Written with raw and powerful images, Annie Ernaux says the 'unsayable' as she confronts the experience of having an abortion and of growing up in the post-World War II generation—all in a fresh, original voice." (San Francisco Chronicle 12-16-90)

"Without romanticizing or moralizing, Ernaux imaginatively and artfully presents a universal theme: the hopefulness and hopelessness of life." (Library Journal 12-90)

"*Cleaned Out* is more than a powerful evocation of the class system in France in the 1950s and of one woman's struggle to move up in the class hierarchy and forget her past. It is also a novel that serves as a haunting contribution, both in subject matter and literary form, to the project of the culturally disenfranchised speaking in their own voice." (Bloomsbury Review Jan-Feb 93)

"Raises social and cultural issues that are addressed with uncompromising gut-level emotion. . . . Denise flounders between self-hate and resentment of her family's heritage as she mimics the new role model of bourgeois schoolmates while also confronting the shame she feels for deserting her parents and their set of values." (Booklist 11-1-90)

"Cleaned Out is a tough story of a young girl's coming-of-age in postwar France, a story filled with the spirit of Elvis, Sartre, jazz and the nasty little verities of adolescence." (Publishers Weekly 12-9-96)

Cleaned Out Details

Date : Published September 1st 1996 by Dalkey Archive Press (first published 1974)

ISBN : 9781564781390

Author : Annie Ernaux

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From Reader Review Cleaned Out for online ebook

Gravity says

Wandering writing reminiscent of Jean Rhys. It's hard being a woman.

piperitapitta says

L'odio.

*** e mezza

Esordio letterario di Annie Ernaux, che sotto forma di romanzo propone i temi della sua esistenza.

Il romanzo si apre con l'aborto clandestino che Denise Lesur, ventenne, figlia unica di bottegai di Rue Clopart, misera periferia parigina (nella realtà Ernaux, anch'essa della stessa estrazione sociale, proviene da un paesino dell'Alta Normandia), studentessa universitaria nei quali i genitori ripongono orgoglio e speranze di riscatto, sta subendo nella squallida stanza di una mammana.

Dalla sua paura di morire, attraverso le contrazioni e il dolore fisico che l'accompagnano nella solitudine fin nel suo alloggio universitario, scaturisce un lungo monologo interiore, pieno di rabbia e di odio, che ripercorre la sua giovane esistenza: odio verso la sua condizione sociale di origine, odio verso i genitori, odio verso chi l'ha accolta con distacco e derisione.

Vomita veleno, Denise Lesur, la bella bambina viziata e cresciuta al piano terra della sua abitazione, fra il bar del padre che ospita i vecchi dell'ospizio e gli abituali clienti alcolizzati del quartiere e la gretta clientela della madre nella drogheria; vomita veleno e rabbia sui sacrifici dei genitori, sulla sua appartenenza a una classe sociale della quale, sin dai primi passi mossi nella scuola dell'obbligo, cerca in ogni modo di liberarsi e disinfettarsi; vomita veleno su tutto e tutti, ma soprattutto sulla paura che tutti i suoi sforzi possano finire come quel feto raschiato via.

È una pulizia radicale, la sua, un tentativo di fare tabula rasa del proprio vissuto e delle proprie radici, una pulizia che parte sin dai genitori (ma è anche attraverso tutto l'odio e la rabbia che l'autrice riversa sul padre e sulla madre che affiorano, nonostante tutto, contrastati, l'amore che pur nutre verso di loro e la paura di deluderli), dalle amicizie, dalle parole, con una metodicità e una perseveranza che soffocano e lasciano sgomenti e infastiditi. Ed è proprio nel linguaggio, e nei comportamenti, che Denise trova il punto maggiore di forza e di frattura, perché capisce che è attraverso le parole che le si aprono mondi nuovi, attraverso i gesti che viene accolta nei salotti, e per mezzo del suo corpo e della sua grazia glaciale che viene desiderata dai giovani rampolli delle famiglie bene che può ora frequentare.

È una Ernaux dirompente, questa della sua opera prima, che non ha ancora raggiunto la sintesi stilistica e la maturazione che ho trovato durante la lettura de *Il Posto*, non ancora capace di condensare le tematiche del proprio vissuto nella scrittura bianca e nella forma autobiografica che adotterà successivamente, ma che in questa opera prima, che precede di molti anni tutto il resto (*Gli armadi vuoti* pubblicata nel 1974, *Il Posto* del 1983), modella uno spaccato sociale che all'epoca era sicuramente più vicino alla realtà e più sentito dai lettori francesi, e si scaglia, infrangendoli, contro vecchi tabù e pregiudizi consolidati.

Insomma, da leggere, per chi vuole approfondire e percorrere la produzione letteraria dell'autrice, sicuramente non un titolo imprescindibile.

Splendida in esergo la citazione di Paul Elouard da *La Rose Publique*:

«Ho custodito falsi tesori negli armadi vuoti

Un'inutile nave che unisce l'infanzia alla noia
E i giochi alla stanchezza»

«Cosa fa tuo padre? Il droghiere, carino, devi mangiarne di dolciumi, tu.»

All'inizio gentili e affettuose perché uno non sa nulla e allora i sente fiero e felice.

Poi, all'improvviso, parole come pugnate, che mi si ripercuotono dentro per ore, che mi fanno morire di vergogna.

...Abaco, abbassalingua, allegorico, era solo un gioco, e io recitavo, leggendo le pagine rosa, la lingua di un paese immaginario... Era tutto artificiale, un sistema di parole d'ordine per entrare in un altro ambiente. [...] Le parole dei miei genitori, laggiù, lontanissime, quelle che evito di usare o che ho dimenticato, magari nemmeno volontariamente, sono sepolte sotto migliaia di altre [...]

Zei says

Alors après le fameux J'étais Là Avant de Katherine Pancol où elle relate sa relation compliquée avec sa mère et les effets néfastes que cette dernière avait sur sa relation avec les Hommes, j'ai retrouvé un livre qui par passages me pousse à crier "Mais c'est pas possible c'est de moi qu'elle parle!!"

Une petite pseudo-intellectuelle provenant d'une famille "lourde et paysanne..sans manières et malpropre" se rebelle intérieurement contre sa naissance basse en se confrontant au monde extérieur plein de filles bien-nées, légères et sûres d'elles-mêmes et se rendant compte qu'elle porte sa croix depuis son tendre âge. Elle se démène comme un effrénée pour fuir une ombre morose qui n'est autre que sa conscience et sa malchance.

Une narration saccadée comme l'halètement d'un athlète courant vers un point d'arrivée qui ne cesse de s'éloigner à mesure qu'il s'en approche. Remords, culpabilité, dégoût et fureur se mêlent à la pire tare de l'être humain; son égoïsme. A couper le souffle.

Brooke says

I don't know. I really wanted to like this. A woman's story about an illegal abortion told by a woman and a blurb that states "autobiographical". What I got was a stream of consciousness whinge from a girl trying to work out when she started hating her parents. Yawn. If I want angst, I'll talk to my students. Perhaps the poignancy of the work gets lost in the translation.

Jukka says

Cleaned Out - Annie Ernaux

Astonishingly good. A young woman rages about her life and the world. It is stunning. I highly recommend this.

Sarah Margaret says

I expected more, after the enthusiastic review

Tanya says

Cleaned Out is primarily the story of a girl's life. It's very stream of consciousness. In a weird way, it kind of reminded me of a feminine *Catcher in the Rye*, in that it paints a really accurate portrait of what adolescence feels like. The accuracy, of course, comes at the cost of likability. Still, it was really good.

Lizzie says

I'm getting a lot of great to-reads from the book list *500 Great Books By Women*, which got set up as a Goodreads group. There are cool demographics in the list, and I've been tracking them in my reading with a spreadsheet (and so can yoooo).

Aubrey says

3.5/5

The problem with groundbreaking books is the ground that it breaks may not stick around, leaving the plot and prose and narrative voice to fend for itself. Before this work, I encountered both *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* and *My Brilliant Friend*, and the sordid details of a cis female body weren't enough to overcome my feeling of redundant *deja vu*. I recognize the precursors of Bourdieu mentioned in the afterword, but I encountered the sociologist first, and what was concisely brilliant there was overwrought here. It's sad to describe pedophiles and compulsive lying brought upon by class pressures, and the intricacies of menstruation as typical, but they are in my reading circles, along with added concerns of race, sexuality, and postcolonialism, so to see a random Arab thrown in as an Orientalist threat at the end made this whole exercise rather dated and uncreative. I appreciate experimental messiness that embraces more of the real world than is accessible to the typical white boy, but too much of this has been done better in more complicated forms for this particular work to shine through much.

Isolating your child for the sake of academic success is a great way to create a stunted neurotic who is somehow supposed to transcend a beginning spent away from social interaction practice and dive successfully in the wonderfully capitalist world of networking and heterosexual propagation of the species. I should know. The main character of this novel breaks free of this in her own way, but when it comes to autobiographical material, not everyone's story makes for a compelling narrative, however many metaphors are piled upon it. I'm sure not many pieces of lit were talking about backstreet abortions in the 1970's, but there was far less of that and far more of a typical class structure scenario with twists of materialism and vulgarity as viewed through a cis female lens. Less than kindly put, this was a rant, and when successful, rants are very very good, but when they are not, they keep on chugging long after the reader has decided to simply twiddle their thumbs and wait for them to burn themselves out.

It's really sad that this is a Dalkey Archive book and the only one by a woman featured in the back catalog but this is, again, typical. All the women are nicely white with nicely fit middle class concerns and perhaps a tad of grossly described taboo in the mix, all the men of color value the patriarchy in more "exotic" settings, and all the women of color are nowhere to be found. All the more reason to move past the labels I used to obsess over and still have an inclination towards. Being provided with a road map into the "experimental" that looks a whole lot like the mainstream of yesteryear is worse than worthless.

Chaussette says

Très bon livre sur le parcours de l'auteure personnel;

J'ai vraiment aimé suivre son aventure, je lirais sûrement ces autres livres car ils sont tous liés.

J'ai juste un peu de mal avec la façon dont elle écrit !

Mais on s'y habitue ^_^

Daisy says

Tedious, unfortunately.

Stephanie says

I have actually not read the English translation, only the original--Les armoires vides--in French (with the assistance of a dictionary!).

Despite (or maybe because of?) my herky-jerky pace through the novel, I was totally engrossed. Now I need to get my hands on the translation.

The Reading Bibliophile says

Le choc des cultures.

Sarah says

Books of women going through an abortion are surprisingly hard to come by. Such an intense subject, so emotionally powerful, yet very few authors seem to want to deal with it. I've yet to find one where abortion is the central or sole topic. In this novel the abortion only had a very minor role & no real emotions were discussed in reference to it. But the novel itself was wonderful. I just adored the storyline, was sucked in completely by the writing, the imagery, the social commentary that I still found relevant even 30 years since the book was written. I admired how the narrator was allowed to be brutally honest about her feelings, feelings about her family, her life, her self & her place in life which especially then were probably frowned

upon. One of my favourite books, I want to devour her other works.
