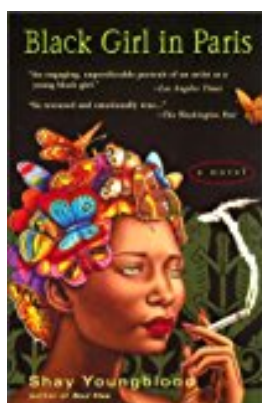


[PDF] Black Girl In Paris

Shay Youngblood - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Description:

Any writer who makes a writer the protagonist of a novel is just asking for trouble. If the protagonist in question is a young African American woman in Paris, following in the footsteps of such well-known black expatriates as Langston Hughes, Josephine Baker, and James Baldwin, it's double jeopardy. And yet in *Black Girl in Paris*, Shay Youngblood manages to avoid clichés even as she steers a course straight through them. In the fall of 1986, Eden, 25 years old and anxious "to be the kind of woman who was bold, took chances and had adventures," buys a ticket to Paris and arrives with \$200, determined to re-create for herself the life of a bygone era. She finds the requisite cheap and dingy room--in the Latin Quarter, of course--and low-paying job that all American expatriate

artistic wannabes from Hughes to Hemingway must have in order to live the dream. She meets a circle of like-minded compatriots, has an affair with a white jazz musician, and all the while keeps her eye on the prize: a meeting with Baldwin himself. What saves this novel from being a retread of all the portraits of artists as young men and women in Paris that have gone before is Youngblood's *conscious* invocations of Eden's predecessors, of the bohemian lifestyle, of Paris itself. These are not, she suggests, the things themselves, but rather the romantic imaginings of a young woman who has pinned her hopes and ambitions on stories she's read and heard thirdhand.

The reality of Eden's Paris soon sets in, however. Terrorists have besieged France; bombs are going off all over the city and the French don't seem quite as welcoming to people of color as they were back in the '30s and '40s. In fact, *this* Paris is a violent, frightening place: Policemen beat to death a twenty-year-old student Malik Oussekiine at the end of peaceful student demonstrations. I pray for the safety of my artist friend Malik and the soul of the student who had been murdered. To make the students seem dangerous and deserving of excessive force, the police had stood by looking on encouraging thugs to loot stores and burn cars. But Eden stays on, and everywhere she finds traces of James Baldwin in the recollections of people who have met him. The hope that if she meets him she'll "learn from him some kind of secret about love and life and writing" keeps her going. Memories of the past mix with hopes for the future, until in the novel's denouement, when Eden makes a surprising discovery about herself. *Black Girl in Paris* is both a loving homage to Shay Youngblood's literary forebears, and a subtle reminder to her contemporaries that while we may learn from the past, we make our own future. --*Sheila Bright* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Set in 1986, Youngblood's second novel (after *Soul Kiss*) is a bold if sometimes self-indulgent memoir-style account of an aspiring writer who moves to Paris. Eden is an orphan, adopted and raised by loving parents (themselves orphans), who has been inspired by her independent-minded Aunt Victorine's stories about the freedom that blacks like Josephine Baker and Langston Hughes enjoyed in Paris. Shortly after college graduation, Eden arrives in the French capital, striving to maintain her dignity while working at undignified jobs to pay the rent. Posing nude as an artist's model, and toiling as an au pair and poet's helper cum nurse, she discovers that the foibles of her employers make even the simplest tasks complicated. She feels most free when she is a thief, stealing coins from fountains and graduating to minor theft after hooking up with a nurturing West Indian woman, Lucienne. Luce introduces Eden to many of the hidden pleasures of the city, and when she tells Eden that she's about to move on, Eden realizes that she loves her. Meanwhile, the difficulties of day-to-day life make it nearly impossible for the would-be writer to work on a novel. For inspiration, she navigates the underbelly of Paris, trying to find her literary muse, James Baldwin (rumored to be staying in the city). Many people she meets--including Ving, an androgynous American jazz musician, with whom she has an ambiguous, sexually charged relationship--have anecdotal information about Baldwin, but an introduction to the man proves to be as hard to come by as a warm, clean, cheap apartment. Loose in structure and punctuated with lists of tongue-in-cheek advice for young expatriates, the novel does gradually build momentum, though Youngblood's heavy-handed cultural references weigh it down. Nevertheless, the author tackles well-worn themes with refreshing directness and infuses the novel with unabashed, sometimes unsettling sexuality. 8-city author tour. (Feb.) FYI: Youngblood is the recipient of numerous writing awards, including the Pushcart, several NAACP Theater Awards, the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award and the Astraea Writers' Award.

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