



Eyes Full of Empty

Jérémie Guez , Edward Gauvin (Translation)

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The son of an Algerian immigrant, Idir is a disappointment to his doctor father. Torn between his wealthy school friends and his neighborhood pals, who range from petty thieves to professional criminals, Idir operates easily between worlds, and yet is at home nowhere. Without much effort, Idir becomes one of the Parisian upper crust's most sought-out private dicks, thanks to his understanding of the needs of his privileged clients. The only thing standing in his way is Idir's unfortunate habit of crying uncontrollably.

Things change when Oscar Crumley, a wealthy media scion that Idir knew at university, reappears in Idir's life, hiring him to find his missing younger half-brother, Thibaut. Idir assumes it is an open and shut case. But when Idir discovers that Thibaut was hiding his homosexuality from his conservative family, his disappearance takes on sinister connotations.

Distracted by his intense affair with the wife of a wealthy friend, Idir ultimately becomes embroiled in a war of lies and corruption between two of France's most powerful media conglomerates. Inspired by Chandler and the American greats, Guez uses the familiar tropes of noir to create an entirely new language.

Eyes Full of Empty Details

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From Reader Review Eyes Full of Empty for online ebook

William Kirkland says

If walking the dark streets of Paris, mayhem around every corner, learning skulduggery from residents of the *banlieues*, is your idea of pleasure then *Eyes Full of Empty*, the third volume of Jeremie Guez' Paris noir series — the first in English by Edward Gauvin— is for you. For me, the gore gets more attention than the noir, and spoils the appetite.

Idir is a petty criminal about to get out after six months in the slammer. His good friend Tarik brings him some blow for his birthday.

“This joint has fried my brain. Hash so bad you have to squeeze the glowing end till your thumb blisters, just to break it up. ... the fucking piece-of-shit hash has done time in plastic wrap, pockets, socks, probably even someone's ass, before getting fobbed off in the yard.” So there you are: opening page.

- See more at: <http://www.allinoneboat.org/#sthash.j...>

Maren says

Skylight Books, went to his reading to get out and do something that sounded fun. Evening reading, Fall heat finally going away, small crowd. James Elroy was loud and funny and Jeremy Guez was open and friendly.

Tiffani says

Idir celebrates his 24th birthday in prison. Ten years later Idir is something of a private detective and fixer. His latest cases come courtesy of the wealthy friends he made during his university days. Actually friends might be stretching things a bit. First, Oscar Crumley asks Idir to find his younger half-brother Thibaut who went missing two months earlier. The second case comes from Eric, the father of one of Idir's college friends. Eric tells Idir that his very expensive car was stolen and he does not wish to report the theft to the police but wants Idir to find it instead. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that something shady happened involving the car, but when Eric offers to pay Idir one-third of the car's value (the car is worth 150,000 Euros) Idir can't bring himself to walk away. So Idir finds himself with two separate cases from two wealthy clients that quickly begin to intersect.

Eyes Full of Empty is the third novel of French author Jérémie Guez and the first of the three to be translated into English. It is set in Paris. Although I am aware that Paris is a big city with complicated big city problems and regular people just trying to live their lives, I tend to overly romanticize the city. Thoughts of Paris bring to mind a city of a thousand museums, of sidewalk cafes and romance, of Hemingway and the Lost Generation, of a City of Light. Of course, there is so much more to Paris than that, as Guez makes clear. There's not a lot of art or strolling down the left bank in *Eyes Full of Empty*, but there is plenty of blood and violence.

Idir has footholds in various worlds but is an outsider in all of them. He secured a foothold in Parisian white, moneyed society while attending college with the city's wealthy elite, but being of Algerian descent, not poor but certainly not wealthy, and now a criminal, he is an unlikely candidate for full fledged membership in that

society. He is no more at home with his family, picking a fight nearly every time he comes into contact with them. Having immigrated to France and become a doctor, Idir's father is a success story. Idir, in turn, went to prison for assault. However, despite the violent nature of his crime, Idir is no hardened criminal and is uncomfortable when he finds himself among those who are very comfortable with violence.

If anything Idir came off as incredibly naive at times, or maybe he is just bad at his job. For instance, his initial assumption that Thibaut simply left town to get away from his conservative family seemed like a lazy conclusion from the beginning. He was constantly getting into fights and other sticky situations but yet was always surprised when other people brought out weapons. And it took Idir way too long to catch on to the potential seriousness of the shady business surrounding the missing car.

As a mystery, Eyes Full of Empty is nothing new. The answer to the question "who did what?" was not in the least bit surprising. Seriously, you've read this story before or seen the movie, probably both. Nevertheless I enjoyed the ride. I enjoyed being exposed to this seamier side of Paris. From what I've read Guez is a big deal in France. Hopefully more of his books will be translated because my French skills aren't good enough to read his work in their original language (though I am working on that).

Gina says

Idir is an Algerian-French private investigator in Paris. He has been asked to solve two cases from his past. The first case involves a missing person and the second involves a stolen car. The only way he will be able to solve the cases is with the help of old friends who have criminal backgrounds. The author offers a view of the non-tourist side of Paris. It involves a cast of characters from the super wealthy to a more criminal element. Although the morals of both are not much different.

Mike McAdam says

I received this book free through a giveaway

I really liked this book! I had no idea what to expect when I got it in the mail (refreshing!) and I jumped right in. The story was interesting from the beginning (rather than books that take a few dozen pages before it gets good) - no spoilers. It takes place in Paris (my favorite city) which is all I will say. It is a quick read with some interesting characters and plots and I recommend it! Worth reading!

Mark says

trop cool, mec!

Kaitie B says

Received as a complimentary advanced reading copy. Quick, short read that held my interest throughout. Loved seeing the different layers of Paris. I really liked the main character, Idir, though not everyone will find him relatable (he reminded me of Libby from Gillian Flynn's Dark Places). Here's to hoping more of

Jeremie Guez's books get translated.

Larry says

Not a huge fan of "detectives" who are so incompetent that they endanger others through their blundering around.

Carol says

Very well done Paris noir

Mark says

A very solid mystery if you like them dark, brutal and short. Idir, a troubled "fixer" of North African descent (the type of guy who breaks Ramadan fast with a stiff drink), takes on a missing persons case as well as a stolen car case. Your ideas about the cases and the motives of the clients constantly shift. The plot is adequate, but it's the atmosphere that makes the novel, as the protagonist navigates a Paris underworld of drug dealers, sexual perversion, professional criminals, and powerful businessmen/gangsters. Racial issues are subtly in the background as the largely assimilated Idir is at times abruptly reminded of his real place in French society.

A message to anyone from Unnamed Press who may be reading this review - Please publish the earlier episodes of this series.

Marina Sofia says

Unremittingly dark, a portrait of a Paris divided by class and colour, money, sex and drugs, where it's never quite clear who the real criminals are.

Fabulitas says

These are some lovely bones of a novel, would do with a bit more meat.

Nancy Oakes says

3.7 rounded up

for more, I've posted about this book at my reading journal's crime page.

This novel is dark, and I do mean dark, sort of a noirish thriller that plays out in the streets of Paris. Before anyone says "I thought you don't do thrillers," let me say that there is a huge difference between the same old same old poorly-written, action-packed crap and a novel like this one, which is intelligent, well written and one that above all, made me wonder once again who the true criminals in any society actually are. This is not also not the average crime novel set in Paris that celebrates the finer things about the City of Light -- most of the action in this book takes place in a Paris where much of life happens in darkness and shadow.

The main character is Idir, who had been sent to prison and who had served six months. After he got out, some ten years before the present story begins, his father, a prominent physician, had wanted him to come home and "rebuild" his life, but Idir realized he just couldn't do it. Now he works as a sort of PI, where he often takes on some pretty shady jobs for the wealthy, allowing them to keep their own hands clean. As the novel opens, he's with Oscar Crumley, the very person who'd put him in prison all those years ago after Idir was hired to cave his face in. Idir needs the money ("It lets me pick up some produce and eat something besides Tuna Helper") although he really wants to destroy Crumley, "just for kicks, because I feel like it and still can." Crumley wants to hire him to find his missing brother, 22 year-old Thibault. But things are about to get strange. Idir's best friend Thomas is obsessed with the idea that his wife is cheating on him and Thomas' dad wants his very expensive stolen car recovered. As Idir starts looking into all of these cases, he starts to get the feeling, and rightfully so as it turns out, that something is just very, very wrong here. Ultimately, he will find himself in a position of having to balance loyalties while trying to get to the truth.

Eyes Full of Empty is not only dark, but rather bleak. Guez writes with a pessimism that is real; the novel is sharp and very powerful. I see it as a social commentary on the "economic elite" - not so much in terms of money, but power. It is also an atmospheric story that grabs hold from the first page and doesn't let go -- just my kind of book.

Antonia says

A shortish crime noir novel about a young man who doesn't really know what to do with his life, who he is and where he belongs. I picked it up because I remember fondly a phase I went through when I was younger when I would try to get my hands on every crime noir novel from France because they were cold and brutal and showed alienated men and women - written in a style that didn't give much, just the bare facts. I liked that a lot. However, few were available in translation. So, I thought - a new take on this genre - great! I was not disappointed.

The novel follows Idir, son of an immigrant in Paris. Somehow, he is not at home in any of the circles he moves in - he's not tough enough for his criminal "friends", not rich enough for the people he studied with and not religious enough for his grandmother. And a disappointment for his father who achieved something in his life. Or so. I understand the allure of rich and privileged people but it is sad that Idir would have chosen them to follow, especially as he seems to know quite well they are double-crossing bastards. But then again - they are his job.

As for the plot - Idir gets asked to find the brother of an old acquaintance and then the car of a friend's father - it is nicely done and as expected the two will come together. As another reviewer has stated, it is nothing new really but well crafted. The characters were fleshed out just enough with their own problems and the protagonist somewhere between an idiot and likeable hero. For a short novel it packed a whole host of issues (and violence). I liked that the author didn't spell everything out for me but just let me be with the action and occasional thoughts by his protagonist.

A good read. And again - a glimpse into a world utterly foreign to me and that is great. I should read more literature not based in the US, Britain and Germany. Ah well... should should should...

As an aside: What I don't get is why this one was translated even though it clearly states it is the third in the author's Paris trilogy. The other two weren't available in English at the time I was reading it. But it seems to be a standalone so no harm done.
