



Pig Tales: A Novel of Lust and Transformation

Marie Darrieussecq

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""Animal Farm" meets "The Metamorphosis".... A very funny, intelligent book that can be read both for its politics and for its extraordinary depiction of a woman who revels in her bestial transformation."

Pig Tales: A Novel of Lust and Transformation Details

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Henning says

Few books have touched me as this one has!

At the time of reading it, ten or so years ago, I actually got really scared and had a hard time sleeping for a couple of days. It's so bizarre but in a sense so realistic and true too human behaviour that it far exceeded the horror of most I'd seen/read up too that point (and still today). The naive narrator and how she, from her perspective, focuses and draw the readers attention to what she thinks is important and how she hides things from herself or society and possibly how society views her together with the span from somewhat comical events to almost unbearable dark ones, yet within a frame of what is possibly all too human (and in the same instance not, she is, after all a pig) really made this book an eye opener for me, or rather, a mind opener.

This is one of those books you carry around all your life and in your mind open up, more or less voluntarily, to use for reference in your everyday events, while watching the news and reality TV or just reading about all crazy shit going on around in the world while you're stuffing nachos on the couch. It's so filled with nuances and context and so much material for thought that it, after more then ten years, still keeps on giving.

So basically, it's a book that takes a couple of hours to read and will take a couple of decades to forget, all while getting several new takes on the phrase "Ignorance is bliss". I gave it a freaking five star rating as it profoundly reshaped the core of what is me, but at the same time I think it's terrible and wouldn't recommended it to anyone.

Zadignose says

"No one talked in there, they all screamed, sang, drooled, ate on all fours and that kind of thing. We had fun."

This stunning book caught me completely by surprise, it is brilliant, and it's right up my alley. It's full of viciousness and humor, remarkable understatement in the midst of insane circumstances, and bitter, intense irony. It is a madcap romp through a hell in which our culture's most sadistic fantasies are made a concrete reality.

Outrage at the commodification of women is quite apparent throughout. For instance, the protagonist has little to complain about when she is gang raped and forced to have sex with dogs, but she's more profoundly hurt when someone refers to her as "not so hot."

Apathy is also brutally skewered. E.g., when hearing authorities laugh about a plan to convert prisoners into pigs to butcher them and sell them as meat, the protagonist's only reaction is "personally, I've never understood anything about politics."

Intense absurdism is everywhere. At any moment, the reader can anticipate being baffled, startled, and confronted with the most ridiculous and unexpected circumstances. Yet the book remains cohesive. It doesn't fall apart, there's a consistent--though consistently odd--narrative.

One of the most amazing things about the book is the strangely sunny attitude of the protagonist. Things don't get her down all that much, most of the time. She even has sympathy where you would think sympathy were impossible. E.g., she worries about the well-being of people who have cruelly victimized her in every possible way.

The book is full of zingers and amazing punchlines as well.

I think it would be fair to call this a *perfect book*.

Nate D says

Scathing deadpan pitch-black satire, first on the more personal horrors of being a women within modern society, then a broader survey of society and politics, building into a truly cataclysmic fervor. In sheer startlingly hilarious vitriol, delivered in a mad rush of increasing insanity (with lack of paragraph breaks to match), even punctuated by surreal moments of calm and odd beauty, this most reminds me of Roland Topor's *Joko's Anniversary*, which few other works can approach. Darrieussecq followed this Goncourt Prize-shortlisted debut with other odd and gut-wrenching novels like *My Phantom Husband*, but never again hit this level of fervor.

Jana says

I don't like when women go overboard with their physical analysis adding feminism and irony. In this story a seductive woman became a pig and her lover became a wolf. And it was boring. Yes, I understand. Women are still seen as meat, men are still predators. I can handle that and I didn't surround myself with people who think like this and professionally every job is a battle. Tough shit but unfortunately that's life. I hated *Good in bed* by Jennifer Weiner and although wtf! this is so not the same genre but the same female nagging is present. Like a word pig, eating like a pig, counting calories defines me as much as word wolf defines men. This is something that I don't like to read in my free time. The same and constant bullshit that can be read in *Cosmopolitan* as on *feminist.com* just with different front cover package.

Amélie says

Oh que je m'attendais pas à ça quand j'ai commencé à lire ce livre.

Truismes est un roman dont j'avais entendu parler sans jamais apprendre de quoi il parlait vraiment. Ça m'arrive souvent. Mais dans ce cas-ci, je crois que j'aurais plus apprécié si j'avais été mieux préparée.

(Alors, spoilers pour la suite? J'imagine?)

Dans un futur un peu flou où la société (& la France en particulier) est plus capitaliste & répressive & suçuseuse de sang que jamais, une jeune femme trouve un emploi dans une parfumerie. Immédiatement, sa vie tombe dans une espèce de cycle d'exploitation sexuelle pas possible, dans son milieu de travail comme chez elle, avec son copain. & puis un beau jour, elle s'aperçoit qu'elle est en train de se transformer en truie.

D'où le titre. (*Pouin pouin pouiiiiin.*)

Bon. En général, j'ai un peu de misère avec les dystopies. Mais quand *en plus* elles sont racontés sur le ton de la fable, avec la voix exagérément naïve d'une pauvre fille qui n'a pas une once de bon sens dans le crâne, je débarque. Je comprends que le roman veut *dire quelque chose*. Je me doute qu'il y a *un message* à saisir -- sur la façon dont les femmes deviennent un produit de plus à consommer dans nos méchantes sociétés capitalistes, sur la corruption & le pouvoir qui avilissent les hommes, les rendent pires que les animaux, oui, OK, c'est beau. Mais ç'a-tu besoin d'être aussi pénible, par bouts? & est-ce que la narratrice peut être juste un petit peu plus allumée?

Il y a aussi que je trouve toujours ça un peu facile, quand la fiction nous crie que *l'avenir sera pire qu'aujourd'hui, tout le monde sera croche & tout le monde s'exploitera & il n'y aura plus de culture, juste des produits de beauté en surabondance & des inégalités sociales indigestibles & un patriarcat exacerbé!* Ah oui? Vous m'en direz tant. C'est une perspective nouvelle & nuancée que vous amenez là.

Bref. J'ai bien aimé les grands moments d'étrangeté complètement assumée (elle se transforme en truie! & finit par sortir avec un loup-garou! & ensemble ils deviennent tueurs en série de livreurs de pizza!), mais j'ai trouvé la satire socio-politique beaucoup trop lourde. À lire si vous avez l'estomac pour ça.

Stephanie Sun says

Girl meets boy. Girl starts gaining weight. Girl gets work in the oldest profession in the world, is upbeat about it.

Girl grows extra breast... or two or three or four...

And a curly tail.

Darrieussecq can't be accused of holding back in her first novel. She covers a lot of ground: from the dark side of heterosexual relations in modern Paris, to the end of the world. In the end, however, it's a tad too much, ahem, red meat on the chopping block for a 134 page novel.

I love eating and reading the offal truth, but this was a bit of a disappointment.

Belinda Lorenzana says

Lo más notable de este texto es que ondea. Cuando una la está leyendo, no se sabe si sentir lástima, risa, miedo, asco o excitación sexual. La personaje, de entrada, no fue provista de voluntad y, cuando experimenta algún impulso que la lleva a "moverse", este es equiparable al celo de los animales. No se puede establecer una identificación con ella, por lo tanto. Una se limita a hacer gestos conforme pasan las páginas, porque la protagonista ni siquiera es capaz de despertar compasión. Un acierto, me parece.

La novelita es absurda, futurista, desesperanzada, burlona de sí misma, desagradable la mayor parte del tiempo. Sí funciona. Aunque, obviamente, yo no la puedo amar.

Travelin says

I can't say why the tale of a prostitute who devolves into a pig sounded like a such a great concept. Certainly the idea must have popped up in abraded folktales once or twice. It really turns out to be "high concept", in the sense of some movie pitch which hasn't been fully fleshed out.

You see what I did there? If you like porcine punnery, well, welcome to this book. The youngish author almost holds it together, for 70 pages or so, before spinning, spinning, spinning, wildly out of control, even by folktale standards. I hope it's not too much of a spoiler to mention that her last boyfriend suddenly turns into a werewolf.

It was worth some laughs about male perverts, perverts from different races, perverts who are politicians, etc. but here are some issues:

- 1) The joke always seems to be on the girl/pig and not about the men/politicians.
 - 2) She misses golden opportunities to show a corrupt political leader in flagrante delecto with a pig.
 - 3) The political satire is muted. Some of the funniest lines are describing some heavily implied political debauchery, followed by "I am not political".
 - 4) It doesn't even seem to be a joke about prostitutes; only about stupid prostitutes.
 - 5) It's not even a joke about pigs. It describes pigs as intelligent, but doesn't show it.
 - 6) It relies on transparent injection of studies in pig anatomy, rather than close study of an adopted pig. It's when Kafka seems most mechanical that I find him least interesting, so it was only the sexual innuendo which gave the pig anatomy any depth.
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Molly says

This book is about a girl with an excellent work ethic who gets a job at a perfume shop/brothel and slowly transforms into a pig. Oh, she is just the most honest, hard working girl ever. The author pulls off one of the best transformation sequences that I have read. Very worthwhile reading, albeit the ending is a little far fetched.

Daniella says

I might reserve this for an Experimental Read sometime soon.

Pig Tales and I go way, way back. When I was a sophomore in college many years ago, I remember my Lit professor introduced me to this novel and it really fucked me up--in a good way. (She was the same professor who introduced Haruki Murakami, Banana Yoshimoto, Orhan Pamuk and Kazuo Ishiguro to me.)

This story focuses on the objectification of women in society, an issue that has always intrigued me. I'm excited to go back to this and see how my views differed throughout the years.

elizabeth says

an odd one. it saddened me that it became more obviously, extravagantly futuristic in its setting as it progressed, but this is less a fault of the author's than my own sense that a woman turning into a pig is an entirely possible event in a Parisian parfumarie. but i realize that not everyone has such a troubled relationship with skin conditions or the french.

Kirjavaras says

Taas yksi kirja, jota ei olisi tullut luettua, ellei se olisi kuulunut kurssin lukemistoon. Outoja tapahtumia pullollaan oleva kertomus naisesta, joka muuttuu siaksi on, symboleiden ja kuvallisuden analysoinnin kannalta ihanteellinen ja haastava kirja.

Francine Maessen says

I never thought I would be the kind of person who would become a vegetarian, but some of the books I read lately made me reconsider eating meat and I'm afraid this book was the last drop.

Pig Tales is about a young, naive, ambitious sex worker who slowly turns into a pig. It is set in some dystopian setting but that doesn't really play a big role (you don't even start to notice until the end of the novel), because everything is focalized from her perspective and she's just not that into politics. Darrieussecq examines the boundaries between human and animal and the way we marginalize people by describing them as more animal than human (we are kind of used of women being called "fat pigs," but what if the woman in question is *actually* turning into a pig?). Best of all, I started taking the side of the pig. Towards the end of the novel, the main character just seems more... content when she is a sow, so why would we see her losing her human form as a bad thing?

Szymon Pytlik says

Bardzo, bardzo mocna. Miejscami okropna i ohydna, miejscami magiczna, a momentami pi?kna - na pewno zas?u?enie g?o?na.

Cz?owiecze?stwo, spo?ecze?stwo, my - wszystko przez pryzmat tego gdzie si? co ko?czy, gdzie s? granice. Podkre?lone przez cykl przemian cz?owiek-maciorka-cz?owiek.

Wielka literatura, cho? niespecjalnie "przyjemna" lektura.

MJ Nicholls says

You have this friend, she's been out of work for months. Then she gets this gig at a perfume counter, which also involves being a prostitute. She is routinely abused by her "clients" who use her for increasingly

perverse sexual practices. She is also, at that time, transforming into a sow. You keep calling to meet for a coffee, but all you get is the answer machine, oinking and grunting her absence. You hear she's taken up with a politician who sweeps her into the dark sexual underbelly of Paris's powerful elite, where her fluctuating pigginess proves popular with the higher-ups she lets abuse her rectally. You can forget trying to reach her now. She's leading a new life with her six teats and wolf boyfriend, she has no time for YOU. It's frustrating when friends fall away. (This is a delightfully surreal tale with no paragraph breaks).
