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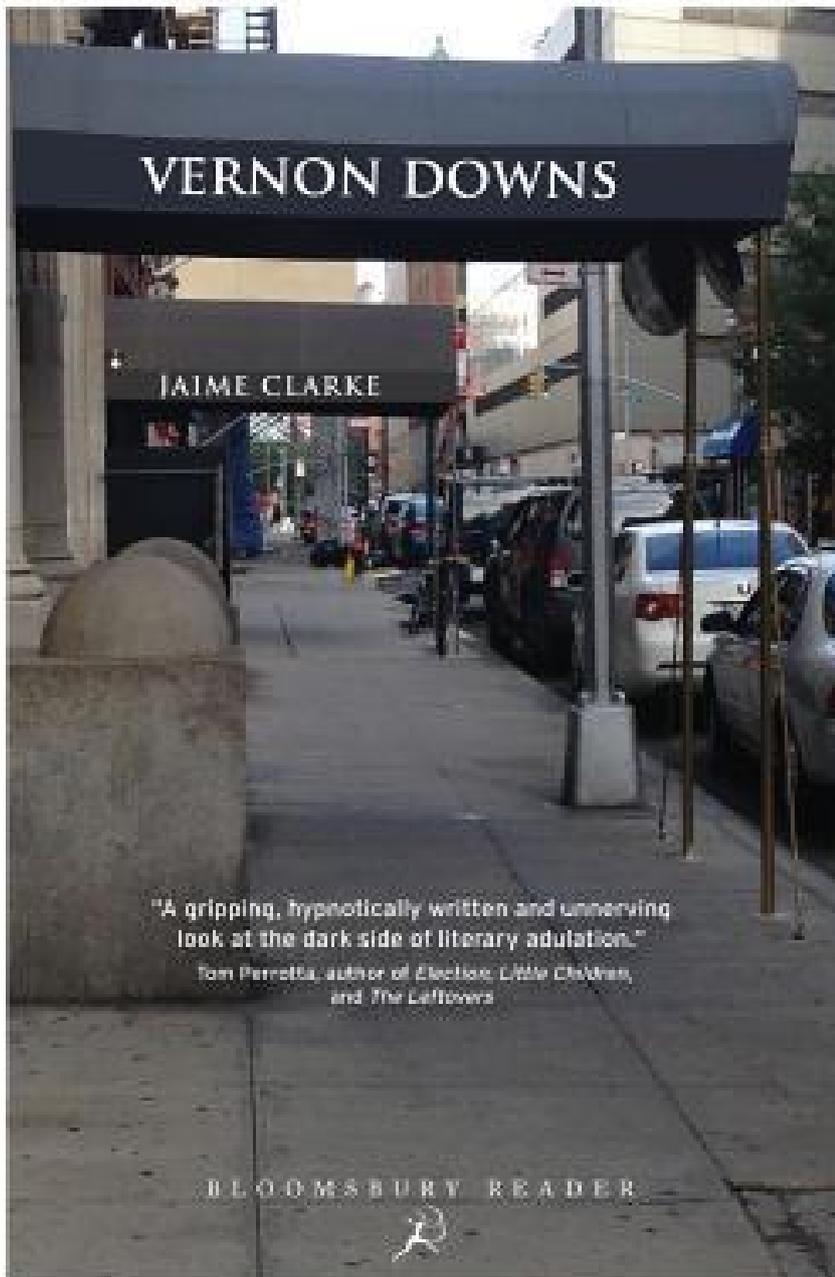
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Posted on 09 October 2019 By Jaime Clarke

Fiction Charlie Martens Is Desperate For Stability In An Otherwise Peripatetic Life An Explosion That Killed His Parents When He Was Young Robbed Him Of Normalcy And He Was Shuttled From Relative To Relative, Left Alone To Decipher The World He Encountered In Order To Cobble Together An Answer As To How He Would Live Ever The Outcast, Charlie Recognizes In Olivia, An International Student From London, The Sense Of Otherness He Feels And Their Relationship Seems To Promise Salvation But When Olivia Abandons Him, His Desperate Mind Fixates On Her Favorite Writer, Vernon Downs, Who Becomes An Emblem For Reunion With Olivia Charlie S Quest Takes Him From Phoenix To New York City And When Chance Brings Him Into Proximity To Vernon Downs, He Quickly Ingratiates Himself Into Downs S World Proximity Invites Certain Temptations, Though, And It Isn T Long Before Charlie Moves Dangerously From Fandom To Apprentice To Outright Possession VERNON DOWNS Is A Gripping, Hypnotically Written And Unnerving Look At The Dark Side Of Literary Adulation Jaime Clarke S Tautly Suspenseful Novel Is A Cautionary Tale For Writers And Readers Alike After Finishing It, You May Start To Think That JD Salinger Had The Right Idea After All Tom Perrotta Moving And Edgy In Just The Right Way Love Or Lack Of And Family Or Lack Of Is At The Heart Of This Wonderfully Obsessive Novel Gary Shteyngart All Strong Literature Stems From Obsession VERNON DOWNS Belongs To A Tradition That Includes Nicholson Baker S U And I, Geoff Dyer S Out Of Sheer Rage, And For That Matter Pale Fire What Makes

Clarke's excellent novel stands out isn't just its rueful intelligence, or its playful semi veiling of certain notorious literary figures, but its startling sadness. VERNON DOWNS is first rate. Matthew Specktor Jaime Clarke's VERNON DOWNS is a brilliant meditation on obsession, art, and celebrity. Charlie Marten's mounting fixation with the titular Vernon is not only driven by the burn of heartbreak and the lure of fame, but also a lost young man's struggle to locate his place in the world. VERNON DOWNS is an intoxicating novel, and Clarke is a dazzling literary talent. Laura Van Den Berg's engrossing novel about longing and impersonation, which is to say, a story about the distance between persons, distances within ourselves. Clarke's prose is infused with music and intelligence and deep feeling. Charles Yu's VERNON DOWNS is a fascinating and sly tribute to a certain fascinating and sly writer, but this novel also perfectly captures the lonely distortions of a true obsession. Dana Spiotta



10 thoughts on “Vernon Downs ”



Greg Greg says:

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I felt like this was a book that had a lot of potential for

being a fun look at celebrity author culture, but which sort of came apart and fizzled out The book is about a guy trying to impress a girl The girl's favorite author is Vernon Downs and when he is scheduled to read in their city he decides the best way to escalate things from friend zone with an obvious huge crush, to something is to arrange for her to get to meet the famous author Things don't work out, he promises her that they are scheduled to have lunch with Ellis, I mean Downs, even though he hasn't been able to successfully get in contact with the author or his agent It doesn't matter though because Downs cancels the reading because of security concerns and people sort of hating him for writing a book that relishes in gratuitous violence and mindless overconsumption consumerism of the 80s NYC The girl goes back to her native England, and the boy not being able to accept that there will never be anything between them decides that the best way to impress her would be to meet Downs He proceeds to ingratiate himself into the author's life while having misadventures of someone moving to New York City without a realistic plan besides some grandiose scheme The book is pretty obviously about Bret Easton Ellis look karen, I got his name right A wunderkid young novelist who published a best seller while still attending a small liberal arts college in Vermont Then becoming something of a pariah after publishing a novel about filled with graphic violence the worst scene involving a rat, and chapters on things like Phil Collins and Huey Lewis And his follow up novel to that is going to be about fashion models as terrorists I don't think I'm making too big of a leap in who I'm figuring the book is about The main action of the book revolves around the Ellis character going away for the summer and leaving the main character, Charlie, to house sit and start organizing his archives Slowly, Charlie starts assuming the identity of Downs He accepts dinner invitations, answers emails, signs books and does lots of other little things that as if he was the famous author Charlie is such

a sort of lovable good guy doormat in the book that it doesn't come across as him taking over Downs' life is creepy, rather a mixture of a guy seeking approval trying to be helpful and not wanting to tell anyone they are wrong. Prior to this, like in *American Psycho*, there are moments where people will come up to Charlie thinking he is Downs. Like in Ellis's novel there is never an explanation given for all these incidents of mistaken identity. Here it's unclear why or how people would confuse the two. In *American Psycho* I always assumed it was either some basic interchangeability between all those finance guys making a ton of money, but were replaceable cogs. Or that everyone was so self-centered in the book that the people around them were ultimately too unimportant to care about except to be reflections of their own success. My biggest problem with the book is I wanted there to be some kind of repercussions or something from the ruse Charlie had been engaged in. It's been over 20 years since I've read any of Ellis's novel, so I don't know if the last chapter is some kind of nod to a book I've forgotten. If it is, maybe this works in a way I just missed. Instead to me the last chapter felt out of place. Since I had read the jacket description I knew about about the protagonist, but it's not until very late in the book, mainly the last chapter, that the author decided to give a lot of the details about his back story. Instead of being something that illuminated the action in the book, it just sort of felt like information that should have been given earlier and not some Usual Suspects reveal that all of a sudden made everything that came before it change meaning and come into focus. Complaints aside, I did have fun reading this book, and the disappointments weren't great enough that I felt like I had just wasted my time.

Reply



Myfanwy Myfanwy says:

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Despite the title this story is really Charlie s story about how he nearly allows his obsession, his sense of isolation, and his ability to compartmentalize to rob him of his own identity In the end, he has not so much grown as he has acknowledged who he is, thereby coming into self awareness It is both a funny and sad book leaving the reader feeling both akin to Charlie and also at a distance from him Thus experiencing the world in much the same way Charlie does for he feels both a part of society and outside it He is both splendidly aware of himself of in the world and also living a grand illusion A great read.

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Isabelle Isabelle says:

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This novella turns out to be a pleasant read I d never heard of Jaime Clarke but I will keep this author in my sight from now on Vernon Downs is a clever story about obsession and the cult of celebrity Mr Clarke raises the issue of the publishing industry and what it means to be an author.Well, the book is both original and well written.

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Nicole Nicole says:

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I prefer books with an interesting plot I feel like I got through the whole book and nothing happened I thought it was going in a direction where Charlie would do something crazy or interesting but he didn't He just pined over a girl, casually stalked an author and then decided to move on Meh.

Reply



Darren Cormier Darren Cormier says:

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I obtained a copy of Vernon Downs at the Boston Book Festival a few years back at a sale at one of the book tables after a reading I didn't read it until recently it sat on my bookshelf along with many other titles that I knew I would get to sooner or later Who are we How do we define ourselves Jaime Clark explores the questions of self identity and hidden motivations through the lens of Charlie Martens, trying to ingratiate himself to his ex girlfriend's favorite author in a convoluted and emotionally evasive plot to win her back Charlie has had a lifetime of recreating himself His parents died in a house fire when he was a child For the rest of his life he bounced around from relative to relative, new location to new location, never staying anywhere than a few years In this way, Charlie's life has been a chameleon, a lifetime of recreation, of uprootedness At first glance it reads like a simple, uncomfortable thriller, a non sociopathic Tom Ripley for the New York literary set By sticking with the reactions of Charlie after events and not the events themselves, Clark creates what could have been a well written thriller and cautionary tale of identity theft and accountability gone wrong into something much

philosophical, existential, and a treatise into what defines us as a person Do we ever rid ourselves of the idea of redefining ourselves, or are we cursed to never knowing who we really are Can we ever know who we really are The mechanism he had so heavily relied on throughout his life his innate ability to box his experiences occurred to him as an impediment against making connections that allow for personal growth If we never have a chance to define ourselves, if we re constantly adapting ourselves to our new surroundings, can we ever know what isn t an adaptation If there is no original, does it matter if we re practicing a masquerade

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Leanna Kowallis Leanna Kowallis says:

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I won this book in a goodreads giveaway So thank you I am going to give this book three stars because I thought the writing style was good and I didn t get bored or annoyed by the writing The story left a little bit to be desired for me, though It was about a guy who takes on the likes and dislikes of people around him and ends up becoming obsessed with the favorite author of a girl he is in love with The issues weren t relatable for me and the story wasn t compelling enough to get me to care much about it.

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Carole Knoles Carole Knoles says:

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I am happy to say that the positive words about this novel by Tom Perrota, an author that I like, encouraged me in a bid to win a copy from Goodreads and I am happy to say that he did not steer me wrong Most of us at one time or another have had an imaginary conversation with a celebrity that we admire and that is as far as it goes In the case of Charlie our protagonist, he is willing to go much farther than a passing fancy of imagination making this an interesting and well written journey.

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Threasa Threasa says:

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I won this book on goodreads The book is about a man whose parents were killed when he was very young He is passed from relative to relative as a young child He grows up and falls in love with Olivia However, Olivia doesn't love him She moves back to London, and Charlie Martens ingratiates himself with Olivia's favorite author, Vernon Downs He's hoping to win Olivia back Read how Charlie moves through that relationship and his relationship with others.

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Jaclyn Jaclyn says:

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I won a copy of this book for free I thought the story concept sounded interesting boy falls in love, girl starts pulling away, boy will do anything to keep her affection,

including stalking his girlfriend s favorite author and eventually taking on his persona However, the book really didn t hold my interest after Charlie meets Vernon Downs I found it kind of depressing.

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Shayne Shayne says:

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An interesting view of the thoughts of a man obsessed, and lost I was pulled into the story wondering just how far he would go.

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