



The Yellow Eyes of Crocodiles

Katherine Pancol, William Rodarmor (Translator), Helen Dickinson (Translator)

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***Le Divorce* meets *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* in this hilariously entertaining mega-bestseller from France**

When her chronically unemployed husband runs off to start a crocodile farm in Kenya with his mistress, Joséphine Cortès is left in an unhappy state of affairs. The mother of two—confident, beautiful teenage Hortense and shy, babyish Zoé—is forced to maintain a stable family life while making ends meet on her meager salary as a medieval history scholar. Meanwhile, Joséphine’s charismatic sister Iris seems to have it all—a wealthy husband, gorgeous looks, and a très chic Paris address—but she dreams of bringing meaning back into her life. When Iris charms a famous publisher into offering her a lucrative deal for a twelfth-century romance, she offers her sister a deal of her own: Joséphine will write the novel and pocket all the proceeds, but the book will be published under Iris’s name. All is well—that is, until the book becomes the literary sensation of the season.

The Yellow Eyes of Crocodiles Details

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From Reader Review The Yellow Eyes of Crocodiles for online ebook

Rob Slaven says

As usual, I received this book through the kindness of some giveaway or other. In this case it appears to have been an actual GoodReads giveaway. That certainly doesn't happen much any more!

So to begin, I realize that this book is probably in a genre more generally considered appropriate to the female gender and because of that, as a dude I'm a bit of an interloper. Despite that slight misalignment, I found this book pretty delightful. Its complexity of character made me realize just how bad I am at keeping names straight. After 40 pages I came up short and found I had no clue who all these people were so I went back through those pages and made a nice tidy relationship diagram of who slept with whom and who was previously dating whom and which characters were, in fact, screwing like rabbits in the back storeroom. Of all these there are many examples.

On the positive side, after sorting out all the 'whos' in diagrammatic format, this story had quite a bit to say. The intrigues were entertaining as well as demonstrating a clear and refreshing evolution of character and story. I found myself very invested in the characters and fervently rooting for some justice at the end and for things to turn out just so. I took a couple days getting started but by half way I was staying up late and reading before work to get through it. It does get ahold of you.

On the neutral side, some of the subplots came across a bit weakly. I was tied up in most of them but others just left me rather quizzical. There are certainly high points and "meh" points. Also, in this translation some of the dialog just doesn't come across as very Parisian. At times the characters seem more Midwestern than European and one wonders how a passage from Little House on the Prairie leaked into the novel.

One final item of note is that this book is exceptionally graphic at times. It's not exactly pornographic but it certainly pulls no punches when it comes to who's doing what to whom. If you're easily offended by such things then don't bother. Personally I found such candid talk refreshing but then again, I am a guy and we do have a different view on such things most of the time.

In summary, a grand and enthralling book that could have used just a little better translation job. It's a quick and entertaining 430 pages.

PS: If you like my review, please visit it on Amazon.com and vote it helpful. Thanks!

Meg says

I picked this book up with doubts. My friends in France all...smiled with the look of "ugh", popular, but such a bad book.....sadly, for them, I liked it a lot. I got pulled into the story....and found myself reading 100 pages per day. Addictive like dark chocolate covered almonds.

The story? A woman...who is not so self-confident separates from her husband. She puts up with awful family members (including her daughter)...and finds her life and her footing. All while writing a book about a XXII woman. Maybe cheesy in points, but a good read....for the beach? Or when spending all your free

time teaching.

Read it....if you speak French.

Cindy says

This book was a complete impulse purchase; I didn't know the author and the marketing copy on the back cover sounded suspiciously like chick lit (not a genre I generally read). That said, I thoroughly enjoyed it! The characters seemed to come alive. The story lines interwove and kept my interest. And set in Paris with side trips to London and the Caribbean, provided the perfect amount of escapism. While not great literature, it was a good read!

Sonia says

No puedo decir que el libro me haya gustado, por momentos incluso pensé en dejarlo de lado.

Empieza lento, muy lento, situando a los personajes en su lugar, relacionando a unos con otros, pero de una forma tan aburrida que no puedes evitar preguntarte: ¿pero de verdad me interesa todo esto?

Hay un grupo de personajes egoístas, malvados, interesados, que rodean a una protagonista buena, buenísima pero débil hasta la exasperación. Unos caracteres tan planos e irreales que resulta imposible ninguna identificación ni con los secundarios ni con la protagonista. Nadie es tan malo, nadie es tan bueno, nadie es tan tonto.

Si superas el tedio del principio, llega un punto en el que sigues leyendo porque te preguntas cómo acabará todo. Si algunos recibirán su merecido, si otros encontrarán la felicidad, pero el final decepciona. No es categórico en lo que respecta a muchos personajes, está demasiado diluido, demasiados pequeños hilos sin importancia que se van cerrando para dejar cómo el último el más ñoño, el menos interesante, la relación de la protagonista con su hija mayor, una hija odiosa que sigue siendo odiosa hasta el último segundo y cuya supuesta redención es inadmisible como tal.

Sé que detrás de este van otros dos libros, de hecho, llegué a *Los ojos amarillos de los cocodrilos* por la recomendación de *"Las ardillas de Central Park están tristes los lunes"*, pero no me siento con ganas de leer más de esta autora.

Tea Jovanović says

Francuski bestseler, ženski roman s dobrom pričom i prvi deo trilogije... U svetu su prodati milioni primeraka njenih knjiga a po ovom romanu se upravo snima film... Autorka je prava francuska dama, imala sam priliku da je upoznam pre nekoliko godina... :)

Sonja says

I bought this book because it was an international best seller and so I figured that it had to be a good read. The back blurb made it sound like a comedic adventure but I have to confess that I didn't like it. The story didn't live up to the book description's promises. I found the main character, Josephine, to be whiney and too much of a martyr. Her husband runs off with his sexy mistress, leaving Josephine to look after their two daughters. On top of this he takes out a loan for 200,000 Euros, defaults on the loan and Josephine simply starts paying the loan repayments because the loan is in both their names. She claims he tricked her but the reality is she didn't even bother to read the papers that she was signing. She doesn't get angry or confront her scheming husband, make a fuss, or tell anyone. Instead she suffers in silence, which I thought made her a pathetic character, and didn't do much for the portrayal of modern day French women. Josephine's neighbour, Shirley, is a woman in hiding with a secretive past, and later it's revealed that she's actually connected to the British Royal Family, and is an occasional bodyguard to the Queen. The idea may seem funny but story lacked the strength to pull it off convincingly. In amongst all of this Josephine writes a best seller and overcomes a lifelong emotional trauma from her childhood in the blink of an eye, or a matter of lines. I feel that this book tries to include too many big, bold events that simply aren't handled all that well. The worst of it was that I didn't find it funny at all. I found most of the women in the books irritating, self indulgent and annoying. Shirley, the neighbour, was the only sane character, and then she lost credibility throughout the book with irrational moments tied to the royal family angle. In my opinion, this book had great potential but it's missed the mark. There were simply too many elements that weren't believable, and as such the story lacked credibility. All up it was a disappointing read, and I guess it shows that just because a book is on the best seller list it doesn't mean it's brilliantly written.

switterbug (Betsey) says

In the burbs of Courbevoi, outside of Paris, Joséphine Cortès and her husband, Antoine, have fallen out of step with each other. He is unemployed; she is trying to make ends meet on her pittance as a 12th century medieval scholar. Their radiantly beautiful and arrogant daughter, Hortense, is on the verge of womanhood, and has little respect for her overweight, overwrought mother, who carries herself with slack ill-confidence. The younger one, Zoé, is bashful and sensitive. When Antoine runs off with his mistress to Kenya to start a crocodile farm, Joséphine tries to keep the family from falling apart. The rest of the story is watching the gradual transformation of Joséphine from insecure, reticent, and overwhelmed to a woman who is ready to take charge of her life. This means also dealing with her beautiful, wealthy, and manipulative socialite sister.

Iris has a plan to recapture her own *joie de vivre* and get back in the limelight, while helping Joséphine earn a lot of money. She finally talks her sister into writing a novel in her own métier, the 12th century. Joséphine will get all the money, and Iris will get all the fame, by purporting to be the author. Will this plan work?

Says Josephine: "I see all, I feel all, I am the depository of thousands of details that stab me like shards of glass, and that other people don't even notice."

This is a French screwball comedy of manners, with some poignant and pithy moments slipped in effortlessly. As the book jacket states, it is the "ultimate upmarket escapist read." This is what I call a fine sorbet book, one that is contrived and predictable at turns, but still keeps you wanting more and wondering how it will ultimately bring characters together--or apart. Iris's husband is a very observant man, and Joséphine and Iris's mother is a cruel and sexless woman, married to their stepfather, Marcel, who has been

in love with another woman, Josiane, for twenty years. Then there is Shirley, Josephine's best friend, who has secrets of her own. And, of course, there's Antoine, struggling in Kenya.

"But in the evening, reality didn't have such a jagged edge, and the yellow eyes of crocodiles were a thousand points of light."

Read this for the fun of it. It's a very swift read--don't let the 400 pages fool you. It's a smaller than average paperback, and the sentences just pour like silk milk. You can probably start it one day and finish the next. It's a feel good, witty story about transformation and coming to terms with your authentic self. Well, sometimes you have to use a little subterfuge to get there...

Liza Wiemer says

The Ultimate Character Driven Novel!

The were some of the most unforgettable fictional characters I've ever read. This novel was a totally new reading experience - because the characters were so FRENCH. Meaning that they have their own way about them - from fashion, to food, to beliefs on marriage and mistresses. I found myself laughing out loud, gasping with surprise, wanting to smack a few of these characters, feeling deeply sympathetic to Josephine and also deeply respecting her even when she seemed like her whole world of family and friends were walking all over her. There were numerous surprises in this novel - characters who seem to be one way turned out to be completely different. Circumstances seemed to point to one impression but ends up being completely different. I loved that.

This novel truly does have a cast of characters:

There's Josephine - a specialist in 12th century history and the character I loved the most. She seems like a pushover, and maybe she is sometimes, but she's also just an awesome person - kind, caring, loving. And she can put her foot down when she absolutely needs to do so. Sometimes you'll want to shake her, but most of the time you can't help but like her. A LOT!

Here daughters: Zoe and Hortense - Zoe is likable and sweet. Hortense has attitude and knows how to use her looks to manipulate men. She's a handful - an understatement, actually!

Antoine - Josephine's ass of a husband & father of Zoe and Hortense - Never the man he should be.

Mylene - Antoine's mistress, a strong woman.

Luca - a guy Josephine meets in a library, swoon.

Iris - Josephine's sister - so not who I thought she was, I'm keeping my mouth shut - you'll figure her out eventually.

Philippe - Iris's husband who is very wealthy - and not what he appears to be, either.

Alexandre - Philippe and Iris's son - sweet boy.

Henriette - Iris and Josephine's mother- Oh gawd - a nightmare of a mother!!!!

Marcel - married to Henriette, a self-made highly successful businessman & good guy, in love with Joisane, and so likable.

Joisane - madly in love with Marcel, a bimbo? I didn't love her or hate her, but I did seem to understand her.

Shirley - an Englishwoman with secrets & friend and neighbor to Josephine - she's kick-ass awesome.

Gary - Shirley's son - crushing on Hortense, swoony for the younger set.

AND THERE ARE MANY MORE minor characters!

Surprise, surprise - I didn't have any trouble keeping them all straight. That's because Pancol does an

amazing job giving each very distinct characteristics and personalities!

So, if you love a character driven novel, this is the ultimate. And it's set in Paris!! <3 <3

Oh, and the crocodile references are great - woven into the story line in many different ways. Love that!

Thank you to Pamela Dorman Books for a review copy!

Marianne says

The Yellow Eyes of Crocodiles is the first novel in the Joséphine series by French author, Katherine Pancol. When she discovers her unemployed husband Antoine (call me Tonio) is having an affair with his manicurist, Joséphine Cortès kicks him out of their Paris apartment and resolves to somehow manage, with two daughters, on her own. Her meagre salary at the CNRS as a 12th Century historian will need to be supplemented; luckily, her brother-in-law, Philippe Dupin offers her some translation work.

When Antoine and his mistress, Mylène desert Paris to run a crocodile farm in Kenya, Joséphine knows her daughters' survival is dependent on her: 10-year-old Zoé can still be reassured, but 14-year-old Hortense is becoming a wilful handful. And the bank manager has a nasty surprise for Joséphine. Desperation and a sense of filial loyalty see her agreeing to a dubious deal with her glamorous (and manipulative) sister, Iris: Jo will write a novel set in 12th Century France; Iris will relish doing the publicity and taking the credit; she'll funnel the fees to Jo.

Pancol's plot is wholly credible; it has a few twists and turns to keep things interesting as some two years of Joséphine's life are detailed against a backdrop of other family and neighbourhood dramas: an eviction, a secret Royal baby, a long-standing unrequited love, a black-sheep twin, repressed memories, internet dating, lovers, plenty of gossip, mistresses, revealing YouTube clips, fake designer bags, hungry crocodiles, failing marriages, and a longed-for heir.

Pancol gives the reader a diverse cast of characters, none perfect, all flawed, all very human, with their strengths and weaknesses, none wholly good or bad: a few are easy to despise; others draw the reader's sympathy; insecure and reticent, Joséphine will, at first, frustrate, as we wait and hope for her to lose her naiveté and develop some backbone. And everyone has secrets they're not telling.

This first book (of three so far) is translated from the original French by William Rodarmor and Helen Dickinson. Readers who enjoy this novel will be pleased to know that the second book, The Slow Waltz of Turtles is also available in English. Funny, moving and highly entertaining, this is a very enjoyable read.

eb says

A beach read for dummies. Moderately more entertaining than reading the contents list on the back of a shampoo bottle.

Mosco says

maddai! Mick Jagger, la regina Elisabetta, William e Harry... il papa, no? Fossi in lui mi offenderei!

Elizabeth? says

The story revolves around two sisters: Josephine who is a scholar and wallflower and lives in the shadow of her extravagant sister Iris. The two sisters have different lives, but they are close. The story unfolds around the shifts in both their lives and is full of characters that add to the shenanigans.

This is the first in a series and one that I think will be fun to revisit. I liked the levity of the story which balances out some serious moments. The story moves along at a good pace and while some moments are cringe worthy, I did enjoy the story.

Mita says

J'aime beaucoup ce livre. Doit être lu par tout le monde.

Rose says

Non merci. J'ai cru que je n'allais pas me rendre à la page 50. C'est bourré de clichés qui véhiculent une image de la femme complètement débile. Et c'est tellement mal écrit qu'on n'arrive pas à voir les véritables thèmes que l'auteur tente maladroitement d'aborder. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi c'est un bestseller, pour moi c'est un mauvais soap.

Dorothy says

I was listening to "Fresh Air" on NPR recently, as I often do in the morning, when one of their regular book reviewers started talking about this book. She went on about how it had been a best seller in France and had been translated into several different languages and had finally made it into English, translated by William Rodarmor and Helen Dickinson. She raved so about the book that I decided to put it on my TBR list, even though I knew nothing about the author.

Indeed, I had never heard of Katherine Pancol. Now that I've read her book, I won't be forgetting that name.

The plot of the novel might read like a typical chic-lit or women's novel formula. We have the drab 40-something housewife who is deserted by her dolt of a husband, who runs off with his mistress to Kenya where he plans to become rich raising crocodiles, but not before emptying their joint bank account and taking out a loan for which the wife has naively co-signed.

The naive wife is left to raise two daughters on her own. The older daughter is a thorough-going teenage brat who delights in tormenting her mother. The younger daughter is a sweet and sensitive child.

In order to take care of the family, the drab housewife has to pinch pennies and take odd jobs. Nothing really new about that - she had been doing it for at least a year since her now-absent husband had lost his job and refused to find another.

This housewife, Josephine (Jo) Cortes, starts out as an authentic drudge, but she is not without resources, one of which is her intelligence and her scholarship. She is a scholar of medieval history, particularly of 12th-century literature and that allows her to earn a meager living tutoring and translating.

She has a beautiful older sister, Iris, in whose shadow she has lived for her entire life. Iris is married to a successful lawyer with whom she has a son, but she is really doing nothing. Her life is all blather and bravado and she is bored beyond tears.

Iris comes up with a scheme that she thinks will solve both sisters' problem. She suggests that shy and retiring Jo write a historical novel set in the 12th-century and beautiful and charismatic Iris will pretend to be the author and will do all the interviews and book tours that are required of an author trying to sell a book. Iris will get all the glory and Jo will get all the money. As soon as Jo agrees to this, the reader suspects that things are not going to go exactly as planned, but, in fact, things proceed swimmingly for a while. Then the book becomes the literary sensation of the year!

The rest of the novel is about how the sisters' lie affects Jo and her children, Iris and her family, and all the other several fascinating characters that we get introduced to along the way. Suffice to say that Jo's virtue shines through, she becomes a more confident person, she loses weight, gets highlights in her hair, and ends up rich and with a dishy boyfriend. In other words, it's just your typical middle-aged suburban housewife's life story!

Did I mention that all of this takes place in Paris and its environs? Yes, Katherine Pancol is a French writer and this novel seems very French in its conception and outlook. The book explores relationships and infidelity and the characters' attitudes toward them, how they deal with them, but essentially this book is about money. It's all about what money can and cannot buy and how having enough money makes all the difference in people's lives.

There are just a few quibbles with the story or maybe with the translation. For example, in Kenya one Christmas, the absconding husband and his mistress are unable to find turkey for their dinner so that have "wapiti." Maybe. But it seems to me that if there is one thing less likely to be found in Kenya than turkey, it might be elk meat. Also, the ending of the tale, as often happens, seemed a bit contrived in order to tie up all the loose strings.

But I can barely even bring myself to mention any complaints, because the truth is I loved this book! Once I got a few pages into it, I could hardly put it down.

This was the first of at least three books featuring these characters. I don't think the other two (*The Slow Waltz of the Turtles* and *The Central Park Squirrels Are Sad on Monday*) have been translated into English yet, but I'm definitely on the lookout for them. I can't wait to see what happens to Jo.
