
Introduction to Special Issue on Virginie Despentes. From Margins to Center (?)

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“From Margin[s] to Center,” bell hooks’s subtitle to *Feminist Theory* (1984), could not better illustrate Virginie Despentes’s parcours in the French literary world: from antiestablishment to acclaimed author. However, my purpose here is not to equate hooks’s narrated experiences or the historical marginalization of African American women or of other people of color to Despentes’s path as an author. As a white middle-class woman, Despentes holds a relatively privileged position within French society.¹ Nevertheless, as an author and as an individual who has experienced gender- and class-based marginalization and violence,² she has “looked both from the outside in and the inside out” and, as a consequence, has developed an “understand[ing] . . . of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing . . . acknowledgement that [marginalized people] are a necessary, vital part of the whole” (hooks xvi). Indeed, Despentes’s portrayal of marginalized individuals highlights their experiences but also sheds light on dominant groups and how those in the margins and those in the center remain intrinsically connected. Moreover, in her fiction, essays, and films—just as hooks has advocated to do—Despentes has “examined [French] culture from a feminist standpoint rooted in an understanding of gender, race, and class” (hooks xii).³ Similar to the marginal voices—primarily those of women of color—that sought to make mainstream feminism more inclusive and critical of its own prejudices, Despentes has, initially, been dismissed and vehemently rejected as an artist and feminist (hooks xii).

To this day, she is cast as an outsider who broke into the establishment, ready and willing to shake it up.⁴ The biographical profile on the back cover of her first novel, *Baise-moi* (1993), already established her as essentially marginal, atypical, and rebellious: “Virginie Despentes, une touche-à-tout dotée d’instabilité qui aime le vin, la dope et le chocolat” (*BM*).⁵ This status was further reinforced since the book was released by the small, independent publisher Florent Massot (specializing in street and various other subcultures) and Despentes’s own claims that, while an avid reader, she only read classic or

canonical literature later in life.⁶ Furthermore, she had not initially envisioned writing as a career:

L'écriture de *Baise-moi*, il y a vingt ans, ne fut que ludique. . . . Pour le deuxième, *Les Chiennes savantes*, je n'étais guère plus consciente. En revanche, je me souviens combien *Les Jolies choses* a été terrible à écrire, à relire, à publier. En lutte permanente contre l'angoisse. C'était mon troisième livre, mais j'avais conscience que c'était lui qui ferait de moi un écrivain.⁷

Despentes was also highlighted by the literary press and researchers as part of a “new generation” of women writers who published their first novels in the late 1980s or early 1990s, and whose work broke many taboos, especially in their depictions of women's gender identities, bodies, and sexuality.⁸ However, due to Despentes's use of slang and her intertextuality with popular culture or genres (crime fiction, pornography, or punk-rock), she has been equally condemned for being antiliterary, anti-intellectual, and “trashy.”⁹ From the beginning, critics and scholars debated whether her work could be deemed feminist or not. While Despentes is a self-identified feminist and has systematically examined gender roles, transgressed gender-based conventions (including in literature and film), featured women protagonists,¹⁰ or denounced the ongoing sexism and misogyny at work in French society, culture, and literature, some have viewed her use of graphic sexuality and violence as counterproductive.¹¹

A significant shift occurred in her public and critical reception with the release of *Apocalypse Bébé* in 2010, which was granted the prestigious Prix Renaudot French literary award. Again, the biography on the book's back cover testifies to this change: “Virginie Despentes est née en 1969 à Nancy. Romancière, elle est [a]uteur (sic) . . . [p]ubliée dans de nombreux pays, Virginie Despentes est également réalisatrice” (*AB*). Instead of emphasizing her marginality (as was the case for *Baise-moi*), she is now presented as an established artist. With *Apocalypse Bébé*, Despentes also began to be cast as appeased,¹² as a major contemporary French écrivain (sic), and as an acute, if not critical, observer of contemporary French society and its malaise.¹³ Her latest novel, *Vernon Subutex* (published as a trilogy from 2015 to 2017), is hailed as a classic of twenty-first-century French literature, even being compared to Balzac's famous œuvre and commentary on the French society of his time, *La Comédie humaine*.¹⁴ For the release of the third volume, *Le Monde* journalist Laurent Telo considered her “le Phénomène littéraire

français des années 2010” (21), and Nelly Kaprièlan, from *Les Inrockuptibles*, deemed her work “une littérature aussi généreuse qu’universelle” (Kaprièlan and Despentès 20). Once more, marginality seems no longer to describe the author and her work, almost contradicting the earlier criticism of her fiction and film. Furthermore, in 2015 Despentès became a member of the jury for the Prix Femina, another significant French literary award,¹⁵ that same year, in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo massacre in January and the terrorist attacks on November 13 in Paris, she was lauded by the major public radio station France Inter as a champion of free speech (Trapenard “Monde englouti...”; Trapenard “Despentès douce”). In 2016 she juried France’s most prestigious literary award, The Prix Goncourt. Thus, it may be claimed that Despentès has indeed left the margins and has become part of the French literary establishment (Telo 21). Yet, as the articles in this volume demonstrate, while she may be on the verge of canonization, marginalization—whether gendered, sexual, racial, religious, literary, artistic, or class-based—remains at the heart of her aesthetics and authorial politics as does the interconnectedness of the margins with the various centers or dominant social groups.¹⁶ Since the contributions to this Special Edition follow her publication chronology, readers will clearly see that, from the beginning, she has established a unique, coherent, literary, and feminist voice that relentlessly questions and examines French society, culture, and art.

Since 1993, Despentès has proven to be a prolific, versatile artist whose publications and other artistic endeavors have oscillated between the margins and center(s). She has thus far published seven novels: *Baise-moi* and *Les Chiennes savantes* (1996) with Florent Massot before moving to the more established publisher Grasset¹⁷ for *Les Jolies choses* (1998), for which she received the Prix de Flore (1998).¹⁸ She published her subsequent novels with Grasset, namely *Teen Spirit* (2002), *Bye Bye Blondie* (2004), *Apocalypse Bébé* (recipient of the 2010 Prix Trop Virilo¹⁹), and *Vernon Subutex*.²⁰ In 1999, for Libro,²¹ she released a collection of short stories written between 1994 and 1999, and has since contributed several short stories to a variety of anthologies, has written reviews, opinion pieces or short essays for newspapers and magazines, and has penned prefaces to books illustrating her feminist, cultural, and literary tastes.²² She has also been active as a translator, primarily for the independent publisher Au Diable Vauvert, which specializes in pop and countercultures.²³ In 2006, she released, with Grasset, her feminist essay *King Kong théorie* in which she discussed, both from a personal and theoretical

perspective, issues as diverse as sex work, rape, and gender roles, as well as the lingering sexism and misogyny in French society and literature.

Despentes has, however, not solely been active as a fiction or essay writer. In 2002 she co-published with illustrator Nora Hamdi a graphic novel, *Trois étoiles*, an exploration of the themes already used in her early novels, namely sex work, gender-based violence (including rape), and what women (have to) do in order to survive in an oppressive, patriarchal system. In addition, she has directed three films. Together with Coralie Trinh Thi (a former adult film performer), she released the adaptation of her novel *Baise-moi* in 2000. Due in large part to the brutal backlash against it, especially by conservative and far-right groups, the film was banned three days after its release, and was later rated for viewers eighteen years of age or older.²⁴ In 2009 Despentes directed the documentary *Mutantes. Féminisme Porno Punk* for the French LGBTIAQ+ channel Pink TV. In this film, Despentes charts the history of U.S. sex-positive feminisms—namely by interviewing some of its iconic figures such as Annie Sprinkle, Candida Royalle, and Scarlet Harlot—as well as the rise of the global post-pornographic movement. Later in 2012 she released her adaptation of *Bye Bye Blondie*. However, the book's heterosexual romance was changed into a lesbian one in the film.²⁵ Despentes has also been active in the music world. Before she became a writer, she performed with a series of bands and recently wrote songs for Placebo and A.S. Dragon (Artus 42; Kaprièlan; Roulier). As of 2018, she is touring France with the band Zéro and actress Béatrice Dalle. Together, they read and set texts by Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini to music (Heymann; Perreau).²⁶

Aesthetically and thematically, the margins and the center(s) have been at the heart of Despentes's work. Regardless of the chosen medium, she has tackled a wide range of social issues over the past twenty years: gender and sexual identities, gender as a performance, sexual and gender-based violence, violence perpetrated by women, women's (lack of) political and cultural emancipation, sexual freedom, sex work, heteronormativity and heterosexism, systemic racism, sexism, and classism, the disillusion generated by the François Mitterrand presidency, the rise of the political far-right, contemporary class inequalities and *précarité*, or the internalization of oppression. From an artistic perspective, she has deployed a postmodern and intertextual aesthetic, questioning the boundaries between literary, classic, and popular genres. She has also further revealed that, despite claims of neutrality, literature itself still has a tacit gender—namely the masculine as

generic—since her gender has often been used against her, especially when appropriating genres typically considered masculine such as pornography or crime fiction (*KKT* 125-30). However, one can never really separate the political from the artistic in Despentès's work: her use of multiple narration perspectives or her metatextual interrogations on the nature of narrative voice(s) have allowed for complex portrayals of all her characters or issues discussed.²⁷

The concepts of marginality and centrality also transpire in the academic reception and treatment of Despentès's work. From the beginning, Despentès has drawn the attention of scholars, particularly in the English-speaking world.²⁸ Yet, despite her popularity and significance on the literary and feminist scenes, no monograph or special edition has heretofore been devoted to her work.²⁹ This Special Edition for the *Rocky Mountain Review* will, therefore, be the first of its kind. In 2000, the temporary banning of the film *Baise-moi* generated further interest in her work, with numerous publications focusing on either the novel or adaptation or both (Schaal *TVFL* 99). More recent studies have primarily tackled her feminist essay *King Kong théorie* and her novel *Apocalypse Bébé*, pieces that granted her public and critical recognition.³⁰ Despentès has also been the object of several Ph.D. dissertations and Master's theses in both France and North America.³¹ Her other novels, film, documentary, and graphic novel, while crucial to her aesthetic and thematic identity as an author and feminist, have been largely ignored or only mentioned for brief comparative or introductory purposes.³² Thus, the *Rocky Mountain Review's* Special Edition on Despentès aims at further developing the understanding of her path as an artist and as a feminist, as well as her impact on French literature and feminisms.

Notes

¹Virginie Despentès has often spoken of her recent embourgeoisement; yet it has also granted her financial stability and greater artistic freedom (Kaprièlan and Despentès 26; Roulier; Savigneau “Virginie Despentès . . .”; Trapenard “Monde englouti . . .”). As a self-identified lesbian, however, she remains a sexual Other. Nonetheless, Despentès claims that her sexual orientation led her to both personal and artistic emancipation (Artus 44; Carolin; Kaprièlan; Kaprièlan and Despentès 23; Roulier).

² Despentès was born into a working-class family, and her parents

worked for the French postal services (Artus 42; Despentès *KKT* 82, 140; Kaprièlan and Despentès 26). She also emphasized that in the 1980s she participated actively in the French punk subculture, which was a foundational experience for her, even if occasionally problematic (Artus 42; Belin and Arbizu; Brocas and Einhorn 30; Despentès *KKT* 124-26; Emmanuel; Roulier; Trapenard “Despentès douce”). Despentès was also institutionalized, employed as a sex worker, held a series of odd jobs, and is a rape survivor (Artus 42; Aubenas 19; Chifflet 9; Crom and Bonnet 3; Despentès *KKT* 35-57, 43, 61-92, 124; Kaprièlan and Swirc 20; Roulier; Tallon; Telo 23; Tolbiac).

³ Sources for Despentès’s work as intersectional include Authier 87, 49; Baillargeon (“Entre . . .”) 44; Barfoot 154-55; Bauer 165, 167, 174, 182; Bélot 8-9; Détrez and Simon 57, 66, 67-68; Downing (“French Cinema’s . . .”) 274; Downing (“The Ethics . . .”) 55; Fayard (“Rebellious Body . . .”) 63, 64, 65; Gargett; Grangeray (“L’Âge de raison”); Jordan (“Dans . . .”) 125, 137-38; Jordan (*CFWW*) 14, 39, 113-14, 118-19; Lasserre (“Mauvais genre(s)”) 68; Martin 57; Sabatier 36; Sanyal 165, 172; Sauzon (“Récits . . .”); Sauzon (“Ni victime ni coupable”) 54, 156-57, 158, 159; Schaal (“Virginie Despentès . . .”) 39, 41, 45, 46, 48-51; Schaal (“Une Nécessaire . . .”) 265, 273, 276-77; and Schaal (*TVFL*) 108, 110-11, 118-20.

⁴ See Brocas and Einhorn 31; Crom and Bonnet 3; Goldszal and Monfourny 94; Kaprièlan and Despentès 20; Lancelin 50; Roulier; Tallon; and Telo 19, 23.

⁵ In addition, her last name as writer is a pen name. It was inspired by the neighborhood “La Croix-Rousse” in Lyon and its slopes (Médioni; Artus 43). Thus far, Despentès has never revealed her civilian last name. However, journalist Laurent Telo mentions that, prior to the publication of *Baise-moi*, she sent a demo tape to Florent Massot under the name of “Virginie Daget” (22).

⁶ See Aubenas 19; Crom and Bonnet 4; Savigneau (“Virginie Despentès . . .”); and Tallon. However, she also states that one of her middle school teachers, Roger Muller, helped her discover and appreciate classics of French literature (Roulier; Tallon).

⁷ Crom and Bonnet 4. See also Kaprièlan.

⁸ See namely Authier 14-23, 49; Artus 44 ; Baillargeon (“Entre . . .”) 42, 44; Barfoot 150; Bélot 13; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 191; Bourcier (*QZ1*) 15;

Brocas (“Un polar transgenre”) 41; Brocas and Einhorn 26; Downing (“French Cinema’s . . .”) 266, 268, 278; Downing (“The Ethics . . .”) 56-60, 62-64; Edwards (“Feminist Manifesto . . .”) 9-11, 18, 20-23; Grangeray (“Nouvelle génération”); Fayard (“Sadeian Sisters”) 101-20; Fayard (“Rebellious Body . . .”) 63-77; Gargett; Grangeray (“L’Âge de raison”); Jordan (“Dans . . .”) 121-39; Jordan (*CFWW*) 113-50; Kaprièlan and Swirc 26; Landry 53; Lasserre (“Mauvais genre(s)”) 59-70; Lasserre (“Mon Corps est à toi”) 69-88; Louar (“Version . . .”) 84-85, 87, 88, 90, 92; Martinek (“Inventer . . .”) 49; Morello and Rodgers 26-28, 31-34, 43; Rye 165-75; Rye and Worton 1, 12, 18-21; Sabatier 43; Saint-Amand; Sanyal 159-61, 166, 167, 171; Sauzon (“Ni victime ni coupable”) 145-59; Schaal (“Gendered Performances”) 41-43; Schaal (“Virginie Despentès . . .”) 39, 44, 46-47; Schaal (“Conte . . .”) 58; Schaal (“Une Nécessaire . . .”) 279; and Schaal (*TVFL*) 1-47, 99-153.

⁹ Sources include Artus 43; Authier 25; Baillargeon (“Entre . . .”) 44; Barfoot 154; Bauer 177; Crom and Bonnet 1; Détrez and Simon 65; Edwards (“Feminist Manifesto . . .”) 12; Fayard (“Rebellious Body . . .”) 64; Gargett; Garapon 228-29; Jordan (“Dans . . .”) 124; Jordan (*CFWW*) 24, 113, 114, 115-19; Lancelin 50; Marcelle (“Face aux piles”); Médioni; Nettelbeck 61; Sabatier 39; Sanyal 155, 156, 167; and Schaal (*TVFL*) 101.

¹⁰ The exceptions are *Teen Spirit* (2002) and the short stories “Je te veux pour moi,” “Lâcher l’affaire,” “Blue Eyed Devil,” and “Fils à papa” in *Mordre au travers* (7-17, 53-58, 91-99, 101-108). As a multifocal novel, *Apocalypse Bébé*, has two chapters centered around two men, respectively one of the protagonists’ (Valentine Galton) father and cousin/lover (*AB* 38-53, 133-49). The title *Vernon Subutex* falsely leads readers to believe that the eponymous character is the sole protagonist of the story. While the narrative undeniably centers around him, the novel still comprises an equal number of male and female characters, as well as two transgender perspectives.

¹¹ Sources include Baillargeon (“Entre . . .”) 40-41; Baillargeon (“Manifeste . . .”) 145-60; Barfoot 25, 143-69, 201-202; Bélot 7-17; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 205, 206; Bourcier (*QZ1*) 13-15, 17-18, 21, 27, 32; Brocas (“Despentès abrupte”) 82-83; Brocas and Einhorn 26; Carolin 20; Crom and Bonnet 6; Daumas and Despentès; Détrez and Simon 57, 60-67; Downing (“French Cinema’s . . .”) 274-75, 277-78; Downing (“The Ethics . . .”) 53-60, 62-64; Edwards (“Feminist Manifesto . . .”) 9-26; Fayard (“Sadeian Sisters”) 103, 107, 113, 115-17; Fayard (“Rebellious Body . . .”) 63, 65-77; Gargett; Goumarre; Grangeray (“L’Âge de raison”); Jordan (“Dans . . .”) 121-25, 132,

135-37, 141; Jordan (*CFWW*) 20, 38, 114-15, 122-23, 127, 129, 131, 137, 140-41; Lancelin 50; Landry 50, 51, 55-56, 61, 64-71; Louar (“Version . . .”) 84-85, 90, 95; Médioni; Nettelbeck 58, 61-62, 65; Reyns-Chikuma 551, 557, 558; Roulier; Sabatier 36, 41; Sanyal 156-57, 172; Sauzon (“Récits . . .”); Sauzon (“Ni victime ni coupable”) 147, 158 ; Schaal (“Gendered Performances”) 41-63; Schaal (“Virginie Despentes . . .”) 39-55; Schaal (“Conte . . .”) 49-61; Schaal (“Une Nécessaire . . .”) 265-80; Tolbiac; and Trapenard (“Despentes douce”). For a comprehensive list of references, see Schaal (*TVFL*) 99-153.

¹² This has been a leitmotiv in the press and academic studies since the release of *Les Jolies choses* (Schaal *TVFL* 100).

¹³ See Brocas (“Despentes abrupte”) 83; Brocas (“Un polar transgenre”) 41; Edwards (“Feminist Manifesto . . .”) 18-20, 24, 25; Joste; Marcelle (“L’Apocalypse . . .”) 24-25; Reyns-Chikuma 551, 553; Sauzon (“Récits . . .”); Savigneau (“Une vadrouille . . .”) 10; Schaal (“Une Nécessaire . . .”) 266, 277-78; Stemberger (“Troubles of Authority”); and Stemberger (“Reste . . .”) 166.

¹⁴ Among other references, see Artus 144; Aubenas 19; Bonnaud 8; Bourmeau; Brocas and Einhorn 26, 31; Chifflet 9; Cohen; Crom (“Vernon Subutex, 1”) 42; Crom (“Vernon Subutex 3”); Crom and Bonnet 4; Delaporte; Goumarre; Kaprièlan and Swirc 20, 26; Laporte; Leyris 4; Roulier; Sulser; Trapenard (“Monde englouti . . .”); and Trapenard (“Despentes douce”).

¹⁵ Created in 1904 by a group of women, the Prix Femina initially highlighted the work of women authors because, back then, the Prix Goncourt was only granted to men.

¹⁶ Despentes considers herself “un écrivain (sic) de gauche” and “engagé” (Trapenard “Monde englouti . . .”; Moguérou 40). For the theme of marginality in Despentes’s work, see also Artus 43; Authier 17; Barfoot 148, 154; Bauer 176; Bélot 9; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 198; Brocas and Einhorn 26; Crom (“Vernon Subutex 3”); Devarrieux; Downing (“French Cinema’s . . .”) 274, 278; Downing (“The Ethics . . .”) 55; Edwards (“Feminist Manifesto . . .”) 18-19, 20, 24, 25; Fayard (“Sadeian Sisters”) 104; Fayard (“Rebellious Body . . .”) 67; Gargett; Goldszal and Monfourny 95; Jordan (“Dans . . .”) 121-22; Jordan (*CFWW*) 47-48, 58, 113, 115-16, 118, 140; Joste; Kaprièlan and Despentes 25, 26; Lancelin 50; Landry 52; Lasserre (“Mauvais genre(s)”) 66; Louar (“Version...”) 85, 91, 94-95; Martinek (“Inventer . . .”) 51; Moguérou 40; Morello and Rodgers 28; Nettelbeck 61, 65; Reyns-Chikuma 551, 553;

Sabatier 36, 40; Saint-Amand; Sanyal 155, 156, 158, 161, 162, 169; Sauzon (“Récits . . .”); Savigneau (“Une vadrouille . . .”) 10; Savigneau (“Virginie Despentès . . .”) 10; Schaal (“Gendered Performances”) 41, 47, 49; Schaal (“Virginie Despentès . . .”) 41, 48-49; Schaal (“Conte . . .”) 58; Schaal (“Une Nécessaire . . .”) 266; Schaal (“Whatever . . .”) 87-99; Schaal (*TVFL*) 118-19, 151; Stemberger (“Troubles of Authority”); Stemberger (“Reste . . .”) 166-68; Tallon; Telo 23; and Trapenard (“Despentès douce”).

¹⁷ Florent Massot filed for bankruptcy (Artus 43; Aubenas 19).

¹⁸ The Prix de Flore (established in 1994) is awarded to emerging and promising authors.

¹⁹ This award was created as a parody of the Prix Femina in 2008.

²⁰ Confirming Despentès’s canonization, the trilogy received numerous awards: the Prix Anaïs-Nin, Prix Landerneau, Prix La Coupole, Prix Roman-News (all 2015), and Prix de la ville de Deauville (2016).

²¹ *Librio* is a collection belonging to the French major publisher Flammarion. This collection specializes in distributing classic and contemporary literature—typically short pieces—at an affordable fixed price (€2 or €3 depending on the work).

²² Among others for short stories, see “C’est dehors, c’est la nuit” for *Les Inrockuptibles* anthology Dix (1997); “Le Foulard” for *Des Nouvelles du Prix de Flore* (2004); “Porn Star, the FUCKING DUEL” (2004) for the second volume of the journal *Bordel*; “I Put A Spell On You” for *Psychologies* (2009); “Première classe” in *La Malle* a collection in homage to Louis Vuitton (2013); and “Viens, on regarde ailleurs” for *Passés par la case prison* (2014), an anthology released by the Observatoire International des Prisons and that proposes both the perspectives of former convicts and the fictionalization of their stories by writers. For opinion pieces, reviews, and essays, see namely, “Lost in Saint-Germain-des-Prés,” an homage to French writer and feminist Simone de Beauvoir (*Une Vie, une œuvre*, Hors-série *Le Monde* 2011); “Virginia Woolf, le souffle vif” (*Le Monde des livres*, April 2012); “Virginie Despentès répond à Lionel Jospin et aux anti-mariage pour tous” to denounce the hypocrisy of left-wing politicians not supporting marriage equality (*Têtu*, November 2012); “C’est vous, madame, la ‘belle et haute voix’ in defense of Christiane Taubira, the Ministre de la Justice targeted by brutal racist attacks (*Libération*, November 2013); “Les Hommes nous rappellent qui commande, et comment” on the terrorist attack against Charlie

Hebdo (*Les Inrockuptibles*, January 2015); “La’ Femme et le grand écran” on the objectification and limited roles for women in films (*Les Nouvelles News*, February 2015); “Madonna,” a feminist tribute to the singer in the French version of *Elle* magazine (December 2015); and “RuPaul et ses reines féroces” (*Les Inrockuptibles*, May 2017). Despentès also became a guest editor for the left-wing newspaper *Libération* in March 2013 and for *Les Inrockuptibles* in May 2017 (Guilbert 5; Despentès “J’adore . . .” 7). For prefaces, see for instance “J’assume, c’est *La Boum*, mais version troisième millénaire,” a preface to Nina Roberts’s book on her experience as a porn actress (2005); the humorous preface to the feminist book *Guide de survie en milieu sexiste* (2013); or “À la hache,” her foreword to the translation of Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek’s feminist novel *La Pianiste*. Despentès also briefly held a blog in the 2000s.

²³ She translated Poppy Z. Brite’s *Plastic Jesus* (2002), Dee Dee Ramone’s autobiography (*Mort aux Ramones*, 1997), and Lydia Lunch’s *Déséquilibres synthétiques* (together with Wendy Delorme and Busty, 2010). She also translated Johnny Depp’s text on Jean-Michel Basquiat for the journal *Bordel* (7-10).

²⁴ See Artus 44; Aubenas 19; Authier 245-52; Bélot 8; Bourcier (*QZ2*) 157-206; Bourcier (*QZ1*) 13-32; Damien; Downing (“French Cinema’s . . .”) 267; Joffrin 40-44; Mandelbaum; and Nettelbeck 60.

²⁵ *Les Jolies choses* and *Teen Spirit* were also made into films, respectively by Gilles Paquet-Brenner in 2001 and by Olivier De Plas in 2007 (with a different title, however: *Tel père, telle fille*). *Vernon Subutex* will become a television series for the channel Canal+ but Despentès is not involved in this project (Kaprièlan and Despentès 25). *King Kong théorie* was also adapted for the stage, again without Despentès’s collaboration (Charriot; Larré).

²⁶ In 2015, Despentès had already performed with Zéro, reading the *Requiem des innocents* by French writer Louis Calaferte (Le Cargo!).

²⁷ For references on Despentès’s aesthetic and thematic motifs, see the studies cited in this introduction, as well as the contributions to this volume.

²⁸ See namely Baillargeon (“Entre . . .”) 37-47; Barfoot 143-69; Downing (“French Cinema’s . . .”) 265-80; Fayard (“Sadeian Sisters”) 101-20; Fayard (“Rebellious Body . . .”) 63-77; Gargett; Jordan (“Dans . . .”) 121-39; Jordan (*CFWW*) 113-50; Louar (“Version . . .”) 83-98; Nettelbeck 59-68; and Sanyal 154-72. French scholars have also taken an early interest in Despentès.

However, and at the exception of Marie-Hélène Bourcier (QZ2 157-206; QZ1 13-32), they have primarily taken a comparative approach to her work, especially with fellow women writers from the “nouvelle génération.” See Détéz and Simon 57-69; Lasserre (“Mauvais genre(s)”) 59-70; and Lasserre (“Mon Corps est à toi”) 69-88.

²⁹ On December 14, 2016, the “Colloque Mutantes / Vampires. Autour des œuvres de Virginie Despentes et Paul Beatriz Preciado” was hosted by the Université Paris VIII in France (Péron-Douté).

³⁰ Among other possibilities, see Baillargeon (“Manifeste . . .”) 145-60; Edwards (“Feminist Manifesto . . .”) 9-26; Edwards (“Virginie Despentes . . .”) 87-102; Landry 50-69; Reyns-Chikuma 550-59; Sauzon (“Ni victime ni coupable”) 145-59; Stemberger (“Troubles of Authority”) 17-56; Stemberger (“Reste . . .”) 163-78; and Zgola 183-202.

³¹ See Ausina; Brassard; Brejchová; Chareyron; Krauth; Lemperle; Louar (“Le ‘Devenir féminin’”); Martinek (“Les Identités de genre . . .”); Romanowski; Sauzon (“(Ré)inventer le couple”); Schaal (“Altérité, performance, hybridité”); and Skidds.

³² Thus far, only one book chapter has been entirely devoted to *Les Chiennes savantes* (Barfoot 143-69) and two to *Teen Spirit* (Saint-Martin 87-97; Schaal “Gendered Performances” 41-63). Two articles have also focused on *Bye Bye Blondie*, the novel and film (Schaal “Conte . . .” 49-61; Cox 97-106). This special edition is the first one to propose a study of *Mordre au travers*, new contributions on *Les Chiennes savantes*, and two of the earliest studies on *Vernon Subutex*.

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