



# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Virginie Despentes  
*Baise-Moi* (2003)  
*Bye Bye Blondie* (2004)  
*King Kong Theory* (2006)  
*Apocalypse Baby* (2010)

## Vernon Subutex 1 Virginie Despentes

Translated by Frank Wynne

MacLehose Press

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<b>About the author</b>	Virginie Despentes was born in Nancy, France, in June 1969. She is a writer and filmmaker, and former maid, sex worker and freelance rock journalist. Her first novel, <i>Baise-Moi</i> , the controversial rape-revenge story, was published in 1992 and adapted for film in 2000. Upon release it became the first film to be banned in France for 28 years. She is the author of over 15 further works, including <i>Apocalypse Baby</i> (2010) and <i>Bye Bye Blondie</i> (2004) and the autobiographical essay, <i>King Kong Theory</i> (2006).
<b>About the translator</b>	Frank Wynne was born in County Sligo, Ireland, in April 1962. He is an award-winning translator from French and Spanish. His previous translations include works by Pierre Lemaitre, Patrick Modiano and Michel Houellebecq. He lives in London.
<b>About the book</b>	<p>Vernon Subutex was once the proprietor of Revolver, an infamous music shop in Bastille. His legend spread throughout Paris. But by the 2000s, with the arrival of the internet and the decline in CDs and vinyl, his shop is struggling. When it closes, Subutex is out on a limb, with no idea what to do next. Nothing sticks. Before long, his savings are gone, his employment benefit is cut, and when the friend who had been covering his rent dies suddenly, Subutex finds himself relying on friends with spare sofas and ultimately alone and out on the Paris streets. But, as he is stretching out his hand to beg from strangers in the street, a throwaway comment he made on Facebook is taking the internet by storm.</p> <p>Vernon does not realise this, of course. It has been many weeks since he was able to afford access to the internet, but the word is out: Vernon Subutex has in his possession the last filmed recordings of Alex Bleach, famous musician and Vernon's benefactor, who recently died of a drug overdose. Unbeknownst to Vernon, a crowd of people, from record producers to online trolls and porn stars, are now on his trail.</p>
<b>Discussion points</b>	<p>Discuss the book's exploration of the rise of digital media and how it has led the death of record stores. What changes have you seen in your own town?</p> <p>A Facebook comment sparks a major narrative in the novel. How do you think social media has changed the way we communicate?</p> <p>After the record shop closes, Vernon finds his circumstances changing rapidly, and soon ends up on the streets. How did this make you feel about society?</p> <p>Despentes is known for writing about people on the fringes of society – which characters particularly stayed with you?</p>
<b>Themed reading</b>	<p>Joseph Mitchell <i>Up in the Old Hotel</i>  Jack Kerouac <i>On The Road</i>  Rachel Joyce <i>The Music Shop</i>  Nick Hornby <i>High Fidelity</i></p>
<b>Useful links</b>	<p><a href="https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/vernon-subutex-1-by-virginie-despentes-translated-by-frank-wynne-review-one-of-the-books-of-the-year-if-not-the-decade-1.3249382">https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/vernon-subutex-1-by-virginie-despentes-translated-by-frank-wynne-review-one-of-the-books-of-the-year-if-not-the-decade-1.3249382</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/07/virginie-despentes-attempts-a-fresco-of-modern-french-society/">https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/07/virginie-despentes-attempts-a-fresco-of-modern-french-society/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.pantagruelista.com/blogeng/virginie-despentes-feminism-men">http://www.pantagruelista.com/blogeng/virginie-despentes-feminism-men</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/books/review/french-feminist-pulp-that-spares-no-pain.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/books/review/french-feminist-pulp-that-spares-no-pain.html</a></p>