



# Yabo

*Alexis De Veaux*

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Fiction. African American Studies. LGBT Studies. Women's Studies. "See YABO... like a Mingus composition: Pentecostal, blues-inflected, full of wit and that deep literacy of the black diaspora. The present, the past, the uncertain future collapse upon themselves in this narrative of place/s. Our dead move with us: behind us, above us, confronting us--in Manhattan; Asheville (N.C.); Buffalo, NY; Jamaica; the hold of a funky slave ship; crossing and bending lines between genders, sexualities, longing and geographies. Time is a river endlessly coursing, shallow in many places, deep for long miles, and, finally, deadly as the hurricane that engulfs and destroys the slave vessel, 'Henrietta Marie.' YABO calls our ghosts back and holds us accountable for memory."--Cheryl Clarke

## Yabo Details

Date : Published April 11th 2014 by Redbone Press

ISBN : 9780989940504

Author : Alexis De Veaux

Format : Paperback 168 pages

Genre : Poetry, Lgbt, Glt, Queer, Fiction, Intersex, Lesbian, Queer Lit, Historical, Historical Fiction, Novels, American, African American Literature

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## From Reader Review Yabo for online ebook

### Shelley Ettinger says

Extraordinary.

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### LaCelle says

Wow! This book took me, unexpectedly, to so many places! It's a small book but very intense and packed with dynamics of the human existence and experience that we all witness but not quite in the colorful way that De Veaux writes about.

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### Van Ottergirl says

Wow. Yabo crawled into my skin and stuck to all my ribs; I'm fairly certain I'll never shake it. This is a book that alters you. The narrative wove in and out of many stories and time periods, stripping my mind down and demanding attention until a huge story was told in the span of two hours. Potent. Will read again and highly recommend.

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### Breana says

YABO by Alexis DeVeaux, is a densely peopled novella that is unpredictable and surprising. Time is mutable as is gender classification. The work of Alexis DeVeaux is full of literary serendipity and the writing here is filled with fresh turns that direct the reader's eye to new views -- new perspectives. In YABO, Alexis DeVeaux is really rocking the form. Writing newbies, take a lesson!

Check out the 2014 Festival of Women Writers' spotlight on Alexis DeVeaux and her work at:

<http://bit.ly/TNrYQN>

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### Cass says

I wish I could take all the stars I've given other books on Goodreads and give them to this one.

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### erika says

poetic & astonishing; densely packed -- I immediately felt like I needed a re-read upon finishing this book.

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sweet & queer & terrifying, shifting time & space & characters in ways that would be infuriating from a different writer but it works perfectly here.

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### **Brenda says**

Just wow.

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### **Logan Jones says**

I was reading this for a class and I didn't get it until the day before I was supposed to have it done, so I read it all in a day. I like to describe it as *Cloud Atlas* written by a queer black woman, so better really. I loved every second of it and couldn't stop reading, but sadly we weren't able to talk about it the day it was due and I ended up skipping the day the class actually talked about it, but at least I actually read a book :)

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### **M.B. Caschetta says**

A beautiful book.

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### **M. says**

Read for my new book club! In gorgeous prose, de Veaux maps intersex (and nonbinary) gender onto/alongside the simultaneity of time. Both/neither simultaneously. Structural similarities to Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads*, with three main overlapping settings and storylines -- weaving together characters in Jamaica, North Carolina, New York; many slippages here, all kinds of fluidity (gender, time, genre, subjectivity), hella queerness. Also engages poignantly and critically with the history of slavery in New York. Huge huge world in 160 pages.

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### **Baxter Trautman says**

Yabo is a nuanced weaving of time and history that deserves the readers undivided attention. De Veaux's language is blunt yet lyrical, brutal yet tender. Her characters are heart-breaking and deeply crafted. I rarely keep a work of fiction once I've read it, but Yabo's a keeper worth many more reads.

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### **L. Cherelle says**

This book ain't for the faint of heart. You must read with care and memory, and it will satiate those who desire a literary feast. Alexis De Veaux has formed a beautiful tapestry of fiction and poetry, and poetry is laced throughout the short stories. And although the stories are individually titled, each story is part of series, a lyrical series that unfolds without regard to sequence. The nonlinear narratives undergird one of the

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themes: time. In "Yabo," time has no boundaries. Present, past, and future are the same, and this "principle" is mirrored in the expressions of West African folklore, spirituality, symbols, and history throughout the book.

Though groups of characters exist in different centuries and forms and sexualities, they all relate in complex, surprising, and satisfying ways. Parts of the stories are steeped in the rural South; other parts transpire in the bustling North. Regardless of location, the stories are woven in expected ways, through realms of life and death and unseen worlds, through spirit and flesh, and pain and desire. I especially liked "Between Here and Nowhere." The story is less than two pages, but knowing and reverent and told through the mouths of an eagle and leopard.

I was particularly drawn to the character Jules, a resilient person with strengths and talents as deep as Jules' weaknesses. Jules is intersex, and from day one, Ruby and Ramses (Jules' parents), were careful not to "correct" Jules' genitalia or categorize Jules as male or female. Instead, Jules lingers in the spaces of both neither—bn—an acronym coined by Jules' parents; a pronoun in which Jules identifies. I kept waiting for the moment that De Veaux would have to use a conventional pronoun to aid in the storytelling of Jules' characterization and experiences. But, it never happened. Instead, the reader must read along the lines of Jules' identity (literally and figuratively), which encourages readers to set aside the limitations of labels—which reminded me to avoid dichotomous pronouns here.

My only issue with "Yabo" is also a bit of a reader pet peeve. I prefer traditional styling with paragraphs and dialogue. Indentations and quotation marks are my friends. When they're missing, the reading takes more effort, like I'm fighting the text by second-guessing myself and re-reading a line to determine whether it was exposition or dialogue to begin with.

I highly recommended "Yabo" because it is the type of book you not only read, but also see and experience—and the kind of book that incites writer's envy.

[Review originally posted at the Black Lesbian Literary Collective]

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## **Larry says**

It's not my nature to read a book a second time. It's very rare that I will want to go back and read one again, and that has always been with books that have been so big and full of information that I wanted to make sure I had absorbed it all. This book is quite slender, and yet, it reveals itself in very intricate and nuanced ways, hiding that complexity from the reader at first, and eventually getting you hooked on it and craving more. I need to go back and take this ride again. What is it about? Why would I spoil your fun and tell you? Let's just say it's about living between possibilities.

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## **Julie says**

Alexis De Veaux's *Yabo* is an exciting, mesmerizing book. This may be the most interesting and different type of book I have read all year. Resisting conventions of narrative by blending poetry and prose and blending time (past, present, imagined, lived), De Veaux creates a fascinating book that enchants and challenges. Reading *Yabo*, I was reminded of Morrison's *Beloved*, Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, June Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremonies*, and Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*. Yes, it is that good and in the tradition of those great feminist books. This is a book that you do not want to miss.

Lisa Moore's Redbone Press is the publisher. As I always say, buy directly from the publisher if you can; publishers make more money that way, but however you buy the book, get your hands on De Veaux's Yabo. It is a beautiful, provocative, important book.

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## **Chaneli says**

This book reminded me in some ways of Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo* but in certain themes but also very different. It also felt more of a short story collection. I also really enjoyed one of the biggest themes in the book which is that the past present and future are all converging and living in the now and how our past meets with our present selves and what that means. I also really enjoyed the aspect of what it means to raise a child without gender roles and defining them with an assigned gender and what that means when the majority of society is going to be in opposition with you.

So many wonderful things going on and being brought to discussion in this book that i'm excited to think about more

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