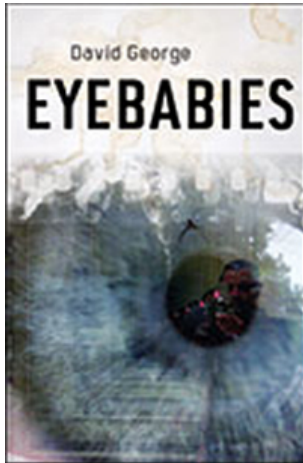


## Eyebabies



*Eyebabies*  
David George  
ISBN: 9781921325045  
\$26.95  
256 pp  
Ilura Press 2008

This is an interesting book with a complex structure. It is a love story and a psychological thriller. It is something of a mystery from the enigmatic beginning to the loose end.

The book explores passion, madness and creativity. It asks questions about how far one should be allowed to go for one's art and in so doing, it raises issues of exploitation – topical, given the controversies this year around the photographs and activities of Bill Henson. Also explored is the question of sanity and artistic expression.

The three main characters, Jackie, Katya and Fabrice, are well fleshed out and believable. I found myself caring about what unfolded and about possible outcomes. I would like the author to have put a little more meat on a few of the minor characters, but that is a small niggle.

Because David George moves the narrative from character to character and between France, the USA and the Czech Republic, readers need to keep their wits about them. The shifts in narrative allow the exploration of themes from different perspectives and allow the examination of the main characters' various motives.

The author asks major questions about love and neediness; truth and fantasy; masks and nakedness; identity and sanity; passion and lust. He tries to offer answers but avoids giving *the* answer to any of the questions raised.

When the story goes briefly to the Czech Republic and exposes the reader to the cruelty and excesses of a past totalitarian regime, the issue of one person's power over another comes to the fore. This is a neat way of forcing the reader to question some of the principal relationships in the book.

*Eyebabies* is above all a book about what makes us human and what it is to be civilised, and what happens when we push boundaries. There are elements in this novel that have the potential to shock – to what extent this happens, very much depends on the reader's sensibilities, prejudices, upbringing and experience. To me, that is what makes this a wonderful book.

[First published in *The Australian Writer*, December 2008]