



Even The Dogs

Jon McGregor

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On a still and frozen day between Christmas and New Year, a man's body is found lying in his ruined flat. 'Even the Dogs' is an intimate exploration of life at the edges of society, describing a world littered with love, loss, despair and a glimpse of redemption.

Even The Dogs Details

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From Reader Review Even The Dogs for online ebook

Jake Goretzki says

Stunning.

Where do I start?

Firstly, for the relatively rare thing (in British fiction) that is taking on a contemporary, marginal, anything-but-feelgood setting and sub-class, and handling it with great depth and empathy. This is a novel about junkies and alcoholics; damaged and self-damaging. It's not sentimental (most of them are fuckers), but it's very observant and truthful.

Secondly, the style - authentic and for-a-reason. Those non-sequiturs, shifts and sudden stops (lines like 'He did and.') brilliantly capture the fidgeting and distraction of characters with just one thing on their minds. The ghost-like 'we' narrator (which feels part tribal and trippy, part false camaraderie) is suitably eery and diffuse. And he's got group therapy nailed.

Thirdly, we've got some superb set pieces here: heroin's journey from poppy to pin; the stop-motion descent of a home into squalor; the autopsy. Yep, it's bleak alright.

In all, searing, bleak and utterly contemporary.

Katie Lumsden says

Brilliantly written, haunting stories, fascinating narrative voice - as always Jon McGregor is amazing.

Ubik 2.0 says

Non avrei molta voglia di soffermarmi su questo libro.

Attratti nelle prime pagine dallo stile particolare e originale, quasi cinematografico, con la narrazione che girovaga da un luogo all'altro e un "noi narrante" di ambigua natura, si precipita troppo presto in un contesto alquanto spiacevole, interpretato da tossici senza tetto e senza speranza, alcolizzati, sbandati che cercano di sopravvivere nei modi più sordidi alla periferia di un'anonima città inglese.

La crisi che può anche indurre all'abbandono del libro (ma io ho resistito stoicamente fino all'ultima riga!) sopravviene quando ci si rende conto che, in un parallelo non so quanto voluto con la visione monodimensionale del mondo del tossicodipendente, questa è l'unica immutabile strada che "Neanche i cani" continuerà a percorrere; e senza particolari svolte narrative o approfondimenti esistenziali ma rivolta all'univoca e perenne ricerca della dose o in alternativa del denaro per procurarsela.

Le vicende dei personaggi, che in teoria variano per sesso ed età ma sono voci del tutto sovrapponibili, si alternano alla tragedia di Robert, l'unico non tossicomane ma alcolizzato cronico, che muore a pagina uno e

di cui McGregor lungo l'arco del libro non ci risparmia nei dettagli l'agonia, l'abbandono del corpo in decomposizione, il trasporto del cadavere, l'autopsia e la cremazione.

Conclusione: il romanzo non è scritto male, anzi; ma in nome di tale qualità, fino a che punto può spingersi lo strazio di una lettura esclusivamente basata sui temi di cui sopra?

Paul Bryant says

I'm so happy I never got a job as chief book reviewer for The Times or The London Review of Printed Material, because I would then feel a moral duty to finish all these novels like *Even the Dogs* which are brave, beautifully written and speak compellingly to the heart of our current crisis, which are poetic yet visceral, brutal yet tender, an obvious shoo in for the Booker, and so on.

As you know, with some books you get to the point where you have to hurl them at the wall, but this one I placed against the wall reverently.

You may wish to know that it's all about low-life English junkies, and it's brave, beautifully written and speaks compellingly to the heart of our current crisis. I would go further and say that it's poetic yet visceral, brutal yet tender. In fact an obvious shoo in for the Booker.

Lisa says

Touch. Human contact. How long could you go without it? Have you ever hugged a homeless person? What a world of difference it can make. If you can ever get that close.

Even the Dogs zeroes in on fleeting moments of touch that bear some semblance of a normal human interaction. The hairdresser running her fingers through your hair. The podiatrist taking care of your feet without flinching in disgust. Months may pass before someone touches you again. It's not sexual, it's not even affectionate, it's just *human*.

We had this little guy who used to hang around the centre a lot. He would run in and grab some food but wouldn't let us get anywhere near him. It took months for him to trust us enough to sit down and tell us his name. But over time, we got somewhere. He'd speak in clipped sentences, lots of repetition, very expressive hand gestures. He'd camp out near the bathroom and wash his hands constantly, and his greasy hair transformed into a flowing mane that he'd wash almost every day. He was kind of a dick, and pissed off a lot of the guys, but he kept coming back.

One fine day, he asked me if I had a nail clipper. And would I clip his nails for him.

Nails gross me out, they really do. But I will never forget that tender moment, him letting me hold his hands to get an angle on his crusty yellowed nails, telling me to be careful as he mimed nails clippings shooting into my eyes. I wondered how long it had been since he'd been that close to someone.

We lost track of him about a year ago. I hope he's ok, wherever he is.

At the centre of this book is a dead body. His name was Robert, but the police don't know that. There is a beautiful passage where they undress him and wash his body, unwashed for so long. Woven throughout this section are glimpses of the funeral service that might have been, the wake, the candles, the people that cared about him. Flash back to the cold, clean surfaces of the morgue. And the unanswered questions.

I have another story. I have so many stories, and they flooded my mind throughout this read. Here's the thing though, is that we do lose track of people. All the time.

C. passed away in May, and we found out in August. Listed in the health system as Deceased. Just like that. Cancer, apparently. He'd been sleeping in a parking garage, a deal he'd worked out with the guy in charge who was also his crack dealer. C. was pretty stoked about the set-up and called it his apartment. I don't know how or where he died.

The only picture we could find of C. was a ridiculous, smiley shot that captured one of his good days. We framed it and gathered everyone together for a service. Better late than never, right? Around the circle. Sharing funny stories, talking about the times he exploded at us, the priceless comments, working through our emotions about a guy we had grown to love or tolerate, depending on who was speaking. D. launched into an impassioned diatribe against the society that could allow this to happen, and wondered aloud what would happen when he died, who would be there, how we would find out, if. I'd never heard him speak so well. Touched a nerve there.

We have those services a few times a year. Usually it's just our little community. Sometimes a worker from another organization will join us. A brother, once. I wonder how many deaths we've missed, how many ended up like Robert's.

I really enjoyed the style of this book. The way it jumped around, chapter Two and the fragmented thought process of a heroin addict, the flashes, one foot always locked in the past, the days before when. The pain, the unlikely friendships, the hustle.

Now I need a hug. I'm all alone. It'll have to wait until I get to work tomorrow. I hope D. is there, his coat is still pretty clean right now and he gives great hugs.

Alan says

read a review this weekend, sounds good, although not sure about using first person plural as the p.o.v. - I was railing against Nancy Lee using 'you' recently... we'll see. We will. We are looking forward to it. We liked 'If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable things'.

...review to follow (although I'm falling behind on reviews I will catch up one day)

Later I read Michelle's review of this book: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...> and thought oh dear, maybe it will be a disaster. But I disagree - the use of 'we' is used sparingly enough for it to work, despite some initial irritation. You realise soon enough that no one else can see the 'we' and it dawns on you they or 'we' are dead too, as 'we' follow the finding of a putrefying body (Robert) and its transport to the morgue and the autopsy and cremation and inquest. I think it's OK, it works, although generally I am against this kind of tricky writing (Particularly gone off the use of 'you' as a narrator). Also the sentences that stop halfway through are again used sparingly (in one chapter) and do reflect the train of thought of the character.

So I can understand why Michelle and others don't like the way it's done but I did, in the end.

What becomes apparent is that these snubbed junkies (I would pass by too, after giving them a quid) maybe crave attention, human touch almost as much as heroin or alcohol. They only get it when they are in trouble or ill – a very telling passage about a man who has to see a chiropodist and how wonderful it was to have someone pay attention to his rotted feet (he hasn't removed his boots in months). But the most attention they ever get is when they are dead. The autopsy on Robert goes into detail -

The saw whines a little as it breaks each rib, the technician rocking on her toes as the blade breaks through the soft marrow and out the other side... the extraction fans in the table whistle softly as they suck the bone dust out of the air.

The doctor scrapes away more layers of creamy yellow fat, slices through a series of arteries and veins, and then lifts the organs out as a single block, easing them on to a plastic tray.. we see the rib bones fanning out across his back, the knuckles of his spine, the coiled mass of his intestines and bowels already slipping and spreading out to fill the space.

This careful handling, these hours of attention is something Robert never got when alive after his relationship broke down. Two of the characters are army veterans (of different ages, one from the Falklands conflict, another from the Afghanistan one), and after the country wanting them, they are now used up and left to rot. Perhaps this is a bit simplistic, I don't know, but McGregor is good at describing the incessant need of the addict, the lengths they are prepared to go for the 'fix' (here called the dig), to find the right place to put the needle:

Waiting for the gear to cool in the syringe, and peeling back your clothes to find a vein. Stroking the skin on your arms, running cold steady fingers down the pulsing cords of your neck. Easing your trousers down and spreading your legs to find the bruised and scabbing entry wounds along your fem. There, or there, or there. Hushed and holding your breath.

Waiting to feel the gear hit home, those long seconds between sticking in the pin and the gear doing what it does to your body and your brain and whatever else, your, fucking, soul. Waiting for all that pain to be taken away.. get rid of that rattling for a few hours more, get rid of all the things that come up on you with the sickness. To hold you for the few hours while you work on getting sorted again. To keep the troubles away. The fucking troubles

I note the use of 'hold' there. Then *he feels well again he feels whole again he feels sorted at last he feels what he feels warm and clean and wrapped up in silk and tissue and cotton wool he feels the way he felt when he first began .. he drops the needle to the floor and presses his hands to the cold glass and slides to the floor and curls up on the floor all this shall pass and he waits for all this to pass.*

So, as you can see I think I reckon this is pretty much wonderful, an attempt to get inside the skin of junkies but also remain detached enough to detail their hopeless lives without judgment. I think McGregor has written another very good book.

...also I do see it as part of a tradition of British junkie/low life novels, eg Kelman (particularly *How Late it was*), Welsh and Warner..

Bettie? says

Review Here

Jane says

As I try to write about Even The Dogs I find myself either completely lost for words or drowning in them. Yes, it really is that good.

“They break down the door at the end of December and carry the body away”

The story arc is simple. The death of one man. Once he had a family, a wife and a daughter, but he fell into alcoholism and they left. His home became a haven for drug addicts. And then he died. His body is discovered, there is a post-mortem and then there is an inquest. Some questions are answered, but many are not.

It is an unhappy story, and there is no redemption, but it works and you should read it. Because it is utterly real and utterly compelling.

It's the execution that makes it work. Eyes always moving, always watching. And a chorus of fractured voices, speaking, breaking off, pushing in again Slowly a picture emerges.

The man, Robert, living behind the same door with a partner, Yvonne. The couple raising an infant daughter. But then Robert began to drink. more and more. Yvonne took her daughter and left. Robert stayed, and sunk further and further into alcoholism.

Soon drug addicts moved in, offering up alcohol and food to their “landlord”. And so the downward spiral continued. Until he died, and they scattered. Their stories are told too as the events and formalities that follow such a death go on. And just what happened that night becomes a little clearer.

None of the stories are remarkable, but all are utterly believable.

The cleverness of the construction and oh so vivid, changing voices that make them work. The words are fractured, poetic, and utterly moving.

It would be true to say that it is bleak, dark and depressing; but it would also be true to say that it is a story is happening, could happen anywhere. One lapse, one misjudgment, one piece of bad luck can turn a life.

Not a pretty picture, but a striking one.

And a book that somehow, in a way I can't quite explain, adds up to much more than the sum of its parts.

Simply extraordinary.

And a prize winner? Yes, it definitely should be.

Jennifer says

Story Overview

During the Christmas holidays, a man is found dead in his flat. It appears he has been there for quite some time. The flat is squalid, filthy, empty of most things you would expect. The man's body is in bad shape. The police are unsure if there has been foul play and begin an investigation. Who is this man? How did he come to by lying here ... dead and apparently neglected ... in this seemingly abandoned apartment?

There are voices who could shed light on this mystery. They seem to know this man—Robert is his name. But they don't know what happened to him either. So they follow along as the investigation into the man's death continues ... following the body to the morgue, through the autopsy and inquest and finally to his cremation. Along the way, the voices shed light on who they are and who Robert was. For these voices are the voices of addicts, alcoholics and the disenfranchised—the people who live at the fringes of society, who remember better days but can't quite make their way out of the grip of drugs or drink. In their way, they attempt to give Robert a story. By doing so, they honor their friend in the only way that have left as they themselves are as dead and neglected as Robert.

My Thoughts

I'm not going to lie to you; this isn't an easy book. There were times when I was ready to quit as I was confused and getting a headache. But because I got a review copy, I persevered and I'm glad I did. In the end, I came to appreciate the book and found myself moved by it. Just because a book is a difficult read doesn't mean it isn't worth reading. However, there are things you should know going in.

First, the book is not written in a straightforward narrative. Although the basic structure is the discovery of the body and its subsequent trip toward cremation, the book is written in a jumbled, fractured "stream of consciousness" style that takes some getting used to. The voices of the the dead man's friends (who seem to be dead themselves) appear and disappear. Paragraphs go on and on only to end in a fragment. The collective voices of the dead talk about the progress of the body and then it switches to the thoughts of a specific person, such as Danny trying to score some heroin before he experiences the "rattles" (which I took to mean detox effects). Here is an example of three paragraphs that appear in a row:

Two of them laid out together on the narrow bed but it weren't never going to be like that. And where was she now. What would she say when he told her. Would she

Mike would know what to do. Danny thought. Mike would be at the Parkside squats and would know what was going on, what had happened, what to do. Might even have some gear or know where to get some where to

Didn't even need to be like that anyway sometimes with Laura. Sometimes just, it was like being mates, like they were ten or fifteen years younger and still bunking off school and having a laugh....

Did you ever see the movie Memento, which is told backwards and in fragments? This book is kind of like that. You get bits and pieces of information, here and there, and you need to put them together in some kind of order to get the story of Robert and his friends. By the end of the book, I was surprised how much I came

to know these people. You don't really get told about them as you do in a typical novel. Rather, you inhabit their heads for a brief time. This ended up being oddly effective, yet it requires participation and work by the reader.

The other thing you should know is that the book is set in England and includes a lot of terms that American readers might find unfamiliar. Eventually, I began to figure things out, but it made the book an even more difficult read for me. However, you don't need to suffer the same fate as me as the author has thoughtfully provided a list of definitions for some of the terms to help you along. (I only wish I had found this information BEFORE reading the book!) This way, you don't have to struggle along wondering if giro is indeed welfare money. (It is.)

Speaking of the author, I have to tell you that he contacted me after I wrote briefly about this book in my post yesterday. (A year into book blogging and I still find this amazing and wondrous!) He wrote:

I hope you don't mind me emailing you like this, but I couldn't help noticing you'd mentioned my new book on your blog. Just wanted to say thanks for that - and thanks for persevering even though, as I'll freely admit, it's not always an easy read. In case you're interested, there's some info on the background to the book and how I came to write it here - <http://www.jonmcgregor.com/books/even...>

All the best with the blogging - it looks like you have a lot of fun with it, and I'm impressed that you keep it up with a little one about the place!

Wasn't that awfully kind and sweet? And you can bet I went right on over and checked out that link, and it was extremely helpful and informative.

So here is what I suggest if you decide to read this book (and I do think it is worth reading):

1. Read the background information on the book.
2. Review the list of slang terms before starting reading.

I think doing these two things will help immensely so you don't have to struggle as much as I did. However, if you are the type of reader who doesn't like to work a little bit sometimes, then I don't think this book is for you anyway.

One final caveat: There is strong language in the book (words that rhyme with Puck and Punt are sprinkled liberally throughout.) In addition, there are graphic descriptions of an autopsy. Plus the book focuses on the lives of drug addicts and alcoholics, which is not everyone's cup of tea.

My Final Recommendation

If I haven't scared you off yet (and that isn't my intent at all), I think you'll find a worthwhile book that has something important to say about drug and alcohol addiction and what it might feel like to live on the fringes of society. I ended up being more affected by this book than I anticipated, and I encourage you to give a go. And to help encourage you a bit more, I'll be giving away my Advance Reading Copy. You can enter by clicking here.

In the end, I'm giving the book 3.5 stars. For me, this ranking is reserved for books that I don't think have general appeal but are worthwhile. In other words, these are books that need a certain type of reader to fully appreciate them. Although I struggled with this book and wouldn't categorize it as a "favorite," I'm glad I

read it. It took me to some uncomfortable places, but I suspect this book will stay with me for some time.

Aquavit says

This book takes its place as the king of the junkie fiction genre alongside other notables like *Trainspotting*, *Drugstore Cowboy*, *Requiem For A Dream* and *Naked Lunch*.

It is a difficult read sometimes, written in a stream of consciousness, with paragraphs left dangling from the edge of abandoned ending sentences. But, it becomes a part of the dialogue and flow after a moment, and causes the reader to hurtle along in the same ugly rush as the wasted characters.

I thought it was an incisive and succinct social commentary for a book of 180 some pages. The plot careens around the ways in which society's 'fix' for the plight of the homeless is to get them talking about their past and goals for the future in exchange for a free doctor visit, the loss of human touch, the omnipresent movement and physicality of begging and fix acquisition and their visible-invisibility to people and organizations, and most of all the withdrawal of human connection, even while it is theoretically on display in social assistance programs.

McGregor struck just the right balance between gritty realism and commentary without getting preachy or sentimental. It's a tough book, but one well worth the effort, every bit deserving of the IMPAC.

Paul says

This is not an easy book. It concerns a man (Robert) found dead in his flat and the circle of friends/acquaintances who surround him. It has elements of stream of consciousness and can be disjointed. In former times it would have been called gritty and "real". It is about the underbelly of our society; alcoholics, drug addicts and the mentally unwell; the abandoned and hopeless who can be found in every town and city in this land. Some of the characters in the book are ex-military who cope with post traumatic stress by substance abuse and violence; some never had a chance. We see the lead up to the death and the perspectives of those who knew Robert, all are self-absorbed, not easily likeable and utterly lost.

These people exist and die on our streets every day; I know I come across them in my work. They are mostly unreachable and always uncomfortable to be with. McGregor paints an accurate portrait of the underclass who are expendable and seen as problems and scroungers. And hey; guess what? These are the very people whose services are being cut by local councils and who will soon have even less contact with help and assistance they desperately need. So much for the Big Society!!!

This is a chilling account of the desperation all too evident in the human beings we ignore on the streets because they are uncomfortable and dangerous. An excellent book. Sorry for the rant but seeing what is happening to services so badly needed reminds me why I am a socialist. This, in many ways is documentary rather than novel.

Fionnuala says

Some reviews of *even the dogs* criticise the unusual style, the frequent shifts in point of view, the sentences which peter out in mid stride and the mixed-up chronology, but in my opinion, Jon McGregor has chosen the

most fitting way to tell this story. From the title to the last line, it is all perfect.

Here's why:

The title, itself a fragment, refers to a comment by a soldier in Bosnia who, when asked for directions to a particular town, replies that there's no point in going there as even the dogs in that place are dead.

So why is this comment about annihilation in Bosnia relevant to the action of this book which mainly takes place in a provincial English city?

Here's why:

The principal character is called Robert Radcliffe and the author might well have called the book *Robert Radcliffe's Life*, but even the dogs in the street would have had a better life than Robert Radcliffe.

Or he might have called it *Robert's Last Days*, but even the dogs would have had better.

Or the title could have been *Robert's Wake*, but even the dogs

So you're beginning to get the picture. The world of this slim novel is a violent and tragic place and people's lives sometimes come to an abrupt

But, you might ask, why would we want to read about people whose lives are so wretched and doomed?

Here's why:

Jon McGregor tells the story in an original and creative way: the events are recounted by a group of invisible narrators who have the ability to be in the past and the present and in more than one place at the same time.

Crazy but genius.

The many shifts in point of view from the group narration, the 'we', who begin the story, to the individual viewpoints of various members of the 'we', are perfectly handled. The 'we' slides subtly to 'he' or 'she' but we hear it as 'I'.

Magic.

There is a cinematographic quality to the writing which makes it seem like we are watching a documentary: details stand out; sounds, even smells, are vivid, but nothing is over dramatised.

Subtle.

There are amazing touches of irony: Robert, an unemployed alcoholic, completely unknown and undocumented by the authorities gets examined, handled, touched, washed and cared for after he is dead. In life, he was surrounded by decay. In death, he is sanitised.

Ant, a British soldier in Afghanistan, witnesses the harvesting of opium while waiting to be airlifted home after losing his leg in a bomb blast. This hero will end his life as a crippled heroin addict on the margins of society in the company of another damaged ex-soldier, a survivor of the Falklands war, who was also in Bosnia.

Robert, likewise an ex-soldier, dies alone on Christmas Day.

When I started this book, I had been reading *The Opium-Eater*, a life of Thomas De Quincey.

Final irony.

Philippa says

I feel - as I did with *If Nobody Speaks* - that I need to re-read this once or twice to fully appreciate all the layers of it.

I spent half of it stunned by McGregor's capable skill, and the other half struck by how genuinely important this book is. Even *The Dogs* is not an easy book to read. It's not a particularly fun book to read. But this tale of despair and vulnerability and deep desperation is the kind of story that needs to be more widely read. McGregor pulls you into this world of addicts: those lying unheeded and uncared for on the fringes of society.

The story is chilling not just in its isolation, but in its sense of connectedness, which has always been McGregor's strength: its sense of how easy it is to tie these lives together, of how easily that could be your family or your friend or your neighbour.

I'm still a bit too stunned by it to formulate more thoughts. Not the book for a Sunday afternoon easy read, but if you want something hauntingly realistic that will stick with you for days, and something masterfully written, this is the book for you.

Lisa says

I rated this 4 stars, but 'liked it' somehow seems an inappropriate description for how I felt it. It's not easy reading, but it's very worthwhile...

It probably wasn't meant to, but *Even the Dogs* made me feel sorry for the social workers and police trying to deal with the human misery in this story.

A man has died one of those squalid deaths we hear about from time to time, and in a scene that we've all seen in TV crime dramas, the old cop and the young cop have to break down the door of a trashed flat and deal with the putrefying body. McGregor is economical with the details but we know about the decomposition of the body because the young cop has a handkerchief to his nose and the old cop murmurs sympathetically that he'll get used to it. The story moves on, but I'm still thinking, what kind of world is this that the police have to get used to this sort of situation so that it becomes routine?

Later on, the narrator takes the world to task for walking on past people in need.

Lying there waiting for help...is something else we know about. Lying on the ground and looking up and waiting for someone to come along and help. In some kind of trouble. A turned ankle, or a cracked skull or a diabetic epileptic fit or just too drunk to stand up again without some kind of a helping hand.

Which is when you're most invisible of all. Get a good look at people's shoes when they're stepping around you. Like they'll leave you there for days. Like they'll leave you there for as long as it takes. (p58)

Read the rest of this review at <http://anzlitlovers.wordpress.com/201...>

Weinz says

Bear with me

We won this book. We felt we had to read it. The second person plural POV was distracting and the random stream of consciousness made it an easy but not exactly enjoyable read. We didn't appreciate the fractured sentence structure or starting thoughts and sentences and occasionally never finishing those thoughts and sentences. Our assessment of

Karen's excitement for it made us move it to the top of our to-read pile. Pancakes. We had high hopes for

Sentences would start but never

And we like depression and different views of society. We understood the edgy style and the drug addled view of the horrors of addiction. All done without dialogue. Hockey pucks. We must

The disjointed storyline combined with lack of punctuation and multiple characters made us yearn for beautifully constructed sentences. Second person plural POV really distracting. Pumpkin Seeds are

and The End.

Ms. Karen, If you still want it I'll send it to you. :)

Edazice says

Am primit cartea de la Editura All, in urma completarii unui chestionar. Coperta e superba, iar din rezumatul de pe spatele cartii, chiar aveam impresia ca va fi o carte pe gustul meu. Dar m-am inselat! E printre putinele carti pe care nu am reusit sa le citesc pana la capat. Se citeste extrem de greu, e scrisa intr-un mod absurd, pentru mine, si desi subiectul cartii este interesant si de actualitate, crima, droguri, dependente, anturaj, la pagina 58 m-am lasat pagubasa.

Natalie Richards says

This was a very descriptive and ultimately depressing book about homelessness, drug taking, violence, alcoholism and despair. I was appalled and touched, but mostly the former, at how these people lived, their daily struggle to "score" and survive and their own personal stories. The moments that touched me were when the characters described having their hair washed or their feet seen to at drop in centres; they felt human again at the gentleness of being touched and cared for.

Teresa says

As I started the second chapter of this novel, the style reminded me of McGregor's first novel (as opposed to his second, that is - this one is his third) which was exciting, but I quickly realized it was quite different. So far, this novelist hasn't repeated himself.

While not a difficult book to read as far as the prose (even if much of it is fragmented thoughts and some of it told in the 2nd-person plural, which works very well especially as you realize the reason), it can be difficult to read as far as content: the daily struggles of drug addicts, constantly searching for that next fix, and the journey a dead alcoholic's body takes because he is unknown by his government.

The story becomes elevated to another level as the reader gradually realizes why each has turned to drugs or alcohol: mental illness for one, and a few former soldiers who are in pain due to injuries suffered during their service. The latter's stories and a singular passage of the route that poppies grown in Afghanistan (while one of the young men lies injured nearby) take to end up in some of these men's veins turn into an indictment of the country they served.

I read McGregor's first novel twice (something I rarely do) and while I could see rereading this one due to its structure (after finishing, I paged back and happened upon a single sentence that foreshadows something near the end), I doubt that I will -- at least, not any time soon.

Vit Babenco says

“Cracked red sores around her mouth which opened up when she smiled. Dark sagging skin beneath her eyes. Her face pinched and pale and her hair thin and lank but it weren't hard to think she'd been fucking gorgeous one time but not for a while.”

Even the Dogs is a gloomily explicit story of life and death at the bottom of the world. The narration is a leaping and stumbling stream of consciousness... But it is a stream of consciousness of wraiths, spirits of some dead miseries. And this stream is full of dark nonlinear flashbacks.

“Waiting outside the chemist's all them mornings, Mike and Danny and Heather and Laura and Bristol John, Stevie, Maggie, Ben, necking our little paper cups of meth, draining the thick green syrup and licking our lips and Mike going Eh now if it weren't for this stuff there'd be a what's it called, a like uprising or insurrection or something you know what I'm saying.

It's the opium of the masses is what it is pal.”

Even the stray dogs have a better life than those who are past the point of no return. And so it is all over the world.

Gumble's Yard says

Jon McGregor is the author of *Reservoir 13* – unquestionably the novel of 2017 which managed to be shortlisted for two prizes (the Costa and Goldsmith) at opposite ends of the literary prize spectrum, while bafflingly missing out on making it from the Booker longlist to the shortlist.

“Even The Dogs” is McGregor's third novel and the only one of his four to date not to be Booker longlisted but which instead won the prestigious International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

On one level it seems a world away from the (literally) parochialism of “Reservoir 13” but just as spanning the spectrum from Costa to Goldsmith is a mark of McGregor’s talent, so is his ability to write a book about the life of a Peak District village, and another about a group of City based homeless alcoholics and drug addicts.

What links both novels (and McGregor’s award winning debut novel *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*) is a sense of community, and a sense of describing that community as a collective using non-standard literary techniques. In *Reservoir 13* this effect is achieved by a collage style, non-sequitur filled narrative as well as a deliberate use of a very English passive style (“It was observed that ...”). In this book, the effect is achieved by the use of a second party plural narration (narrated by a group of already dead characters), which then switches to a third person point of view approach, as well as by the unashamed use of the vocabulary, and the messed up chronology and sentence structure of the addicted.

One hugely impressive sequence – focuses on one of the many ex-soldiers among the homeless, as he lies wounded in the past in an Afghanistan poppy field and simultaneously tracks his progress to a field hospital with the progress of the poppies to heroin sold to one of his addict friends.

If you are at all familiar with the shadow-world in English society of the homeless, then so much of this book will ring very painfully true, if not then much of it will I am sure be an eye-opener. But for both groups this is a searing, often painfully difficult but vitally important novel.
