



The Reservoir Tapes

Jon McGregor

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"A rare and dazzling feat of art." —George Saunders, in praise of *Reservoir 13*, *The Paris Review Daily*

The Reservoir Tapes returns to the extraordinary territory of Jon McGregor's Man Booker Prize-longlisted novel *Reservoir 13*, leading us deep into the heart of an English village that is trying to come to terms with what has happened on its watch.

A teenage girl has gone missing. The whole community has been called upon to join the search. And now an interviewer arrives, intent on capturing the community's unstable stories about life in the weeks and months before Becky Shaw vanished.

Each villager has a memory to share or a secret to conceal, a connection to Becky that they are trying to make or break. A young wife pushes against the boundaries of her marriage, and another seeks a means of surviving within hers. A group of teenagers dare one another to jump into a flooded quarry, the one weak swimmer still awaiting his turn. A laborer lies trapped under rocks and dry limestone dust as his fellow workers attempt a risky rescue. And meanwhile a fractured portrait of Becky emerges at the edges of our vision—a girl swimming, climbing, and smearing dirt onto a scared boy's face, images to be cherished and challenged as the search for her goes on.

The Reservoir Tapes Details

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From Reader Review The Reservoir Tapes for online ebook

Krista says

Could you

could we

if we could just talk a little bit about Becky. If you could describe her for me. In your own words. What she was like when she was younger. How's she's changed from being a child to being a young teenager. What her – gifts are, if you like. Any challenges there have been. Anything she has found difficult. Anything that comes to mind.

I know

I know this is difficult

this must be very hard for

of course.

I must have been pretty effusive in my Goodreads review for Jon McGregor's *Reservoir 13* because his American publisher contacted me privately to see if I'd be interested in reading a related novel before its release in the States; um, yes please. What a delight, therefore, to have discovered *The Reservoir Tapes* in my mailbox this week; and what a further delight to have been so captivated by this read. I understand that these fifteen short pieces were originally commissioned by and performed on BBC Radio 4, and while I can see the appealing tension of listening to one per week over the course of a few months, I'm sure I much preferred the experience of reading them on the page, close together, and recognising where one person's story chimes with another's. (I especially enjoyed Ginny's chapter – spaced into stanzas with poetic line breaks – that I can't imagine was apparent to the ear.)

Essentially, this book records the recollections of residents of the village where a thirteen-year-old girl has gone missing – some stories occurring in the aftermath, some just before, some recalled from long before – collected by some unnamed “interviewer”. The first chapter (quoted from above) is solely from the interviewer's POV, without the corresponding answers, and I wasn't sure if I'd like the format. But every chapter after that is from a third person POV; each focussing on one character, and serving to fill in the people who were so sketchy in *Reservoir 13*. This is a totally different kind of book from the one that came before, and I don't know how satisfying it would be as a standalone read, but as a companion piece, I was deeply interested and found myself to be ultimately satisfied. This book is more about the people than the landscape (the nature writing and progression of the seasons was outstanding in the earlier work), but the setting still plays its part:

The flat heather moorland was featureless to the untrained eye, but in fact was teeming with detail: the bilberries and bog grasses, the mosses and moths and butterflies, the birds nesting in scoops and scrapes, the bogwater shining in the late-afternoon sun. The warmth was rising from the ground already, the sky a rich blue above the reservoirs in the distance. A hundred yards away, a mountain hare broke from cover and thundered across the heather.

Just as the flat moorland might seem “featureless to the untrained eye”, so too were the lurking dangers of this village (and of the villagers themselves) underplayed in the first book. In one chapter, the story of a Girl Guide who once fell into a sinkhole (in the same area where Becky later disappeared) is recounted:

It seemed the prolonged dry spell, following months of rain, had caused a sort of rupture between different layers of peat, those layers shifting and opening up a deep crevasse, hidden by the tussocks of bog grass.

The summer before her disappearance, Becky went swimming with a group of local kids; sneaking through a safety fence (and perhaps provoking a young man to later seek revenge against her):

People talked about how deep the water was, and how cold. People said it would be impossible to find your body if you drowned. People said a lot of things.

In one character's story of a long ago quarry accident, we not only see the obvious physical danger but learn more about some of the relationships between the villagers:

There's always a pressure to get the job done. And then some small thing goes wrong. Something geological. The temperature changes, the ground shifts, and all of a sudden you're a man lying in the dirt with a ton of rocks stacked up upon him.

Not only is the setting fraught with these hidden dangers, but one would do well to be wary of the villagers themselves: We meet a man with a shotgun who acts creepy around children; a squatter in the woods who makes grown men quake with fear; a woman who knows all too well that sometimes children simply walk away. In one section, a developmentally challenged young man assures his mother that Becky was fine, “He knew a few things and he knew she'd come to no harm”. And in the final, moving, chapter we meet Becky's mother and father; finally learning their names and why they were on this holiday.

I remain delighted to have had this opportunity to revisit McGregor's world, and while I would reiterate that this slim volume (it only takes a couple of hours to read) might not make complete sense on its own, it was an intriguing companion piece to *Reservoir 13*.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

When I read Reservoir 13 less than a year ago, it lingered with me for days. I couldn't shake the feeling that the book wasn't about what it purported to be about. It kept being pitched as a girl-disappearance, village-reacts story, but that wasn't it. It was about the place and its own secrets. The way time moves fast and slow depending how close you are to a tragedy or a mystery. The way each small person has their own stories that end up with more of the focus than someone else's drama. It was like the author aided the reader slowly backing away, leaving each place and person to their own story.

This collection of "prequel" stories, originally commissioned by and broadcast on BBC Radio 4, serves to simultaneously perpetuate this individual story theory and to fill in some of the gaps left by Reservoir 13. I would have loved to hear the original broadcast but reading them back to back allowed my brain to follow more threads through, I think. I'm reading between the lines a lot, as the detectives must have. Everything is fragmented because nobody has the whole story, and even the parts of the story they have, they don't necessarily understand the full meaning. I loved thinking and wondering about all of it again.

ETA: After a tip from a reader in the UK, I was able to listen to the complete BBC Radio 4 recordings of these stories. I enjoyed them, but there is one interview with the author where he talks about writing these with the idea that the reader would be a participant in the investigation. So the audio is great with all the different voices, but it's the text that seems helpful should you want to go back to a detail of sorts.

The publisher approached me to offer a complimentary copy for review, and I said yes, of course. It comes out in the USA on 7 August, 2018. Read Reservoir 13 first.

Elyse says

In this companion follow- up book to "The Reservoir 13",

where a teenage girl has gone missing,

In "The Reservoir Tapes",

.....an interviewer has now arrived.... with the intention of capturing the communities stories -about life in the weeks and months before she vanished. Each villager has a memory to share or secret to conceal.

You'll meet:

Charlotte, Vicky, Deepak, Graham, Liam, Claire, Clive,

Martin, Stephanie, Donna, Ian, Irene, Ginny, Jess, and Joe

With 15 chapters, each of the above 15 characters are the narrator for one of them.

I actually liked this book better than "Reservoir 13". We are taken right into the heads - with more focus of each of the different people. It was an aspect about "Reservoir 13", which I had personally 'missed'.

We definitely get 'stories' in this time around.

We are still left with questions - maybe even more questions than in "Reservoir 13", but we see many different possibilities and scenarios.

In one story we see - the teenage missing girl -Becky Shaw alive.

In another story a young boy on his paper round, walks into a strangers house. The fear I felt had me definitely 'wondering' about danger connected to Becky.

The question is - how would readers react to this book without reading "Reservoir 13", first?

I'm betting most people would say read "Reservoir 13" first .

But, I don't feel it's absolutely necessary. It's very clear that a community is trying to come to terms with what happened to a missing girl in their English Village.

I liked 'all' 15 stories ...each were intimate... filled with insights - yet leaving our and minds heats wide open with questions.

Paul Fulcher says

They'd agreed to talk to Becky about it later, when they went out for their walk.

Reservoir 13 will, I strongly suspect, end up as my book of 2017, one of the most innovative and enjoyable books I have read for years. My review: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

It told the story of an English village for the 13 years after the disappearance of a 13 year old girl, Becky Shaw, but in a unique way. In the author's words from a recent interview:

The narrative spark came first. And it was only once I realised that I'd landed myself with a rural novel that I understood how fully I wanted to immerse the reader in the landscape and the multiplicity of lives lived there. I imagine it's similar when an artist makes a drawing of a landscape – it's only once you start hatching in the detail that you realise how many rocks and trees and grasses and birds there actually are.

The structuring came after the writing, mostly. I wrote a series of texts for each character, animal, plant, weather condition, work routine, village tradition, location, etc (statisticians might care to know that there were 13 of these categories, with 13 examples in each category...) and once I was done I laid that text out across my timeline of 13 years. There were a lot of ring-binders involved, and scissors and Sellotape. It was rather chaotic, but I quite quickly landed on the rhythm I was looking for – the rhythm of the non-sequitur, where things are just happening one after the other and in fact one and the other at the same time, without having to gently guide the reader between events and observations.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/...>

The Reservoir Tapes was (were?) commissioned by BBC Radio as a prequel to Reservoir 13 - and thanks the publisher via Netgalley for the ARC.

It contains 15 (a little disappointing it wasn't 13*) 'tapes' or chapters, in the form of monologues, told as a 3rd person limited narrative, giving the story and perspective of one particular character. The organising idea - hence the name - is that an interviewer has gone around taping interviews with local people about their lives in the months leading up to Becky's disappearance and in the immediately following days, then transcribed them in the form of these accounts.

(* from an interview I subsequently found, the BBC were at fault here: *I asked if I could 13 stories at 13 minutes each, and they wouldn't have it*

Although McGregor doesn't adhere too rigorously to the form. In the first tape where we hear only side – the

policewoman's – of the official interview with Becky's mother, here named as Charlotte, after Becky officially becomes a missing person. Some of the tapes are more told as stories, and others are private recollections very unlikely to have been shared with anyone.

McGregor has referred to the Tapes as a detective story where the reader is expected to do some work and fill in the gaps, and part of the fun for the reader is tracing links between them – a scream heard in one story can be traced to an incident in another, similarly an argument in a pub in the neighbouring village.

In particular several of the stories (those of Graham, Liam, Claire, Donna, Ian and Ginny) are set on one summer day a few months before the start of Reservoir 13, on the Shaw's first visit to the village. Becky first meets the rest of the local teenagers, they go rather feral at the quarry, and later Becky herself goes missing for a while, prefiguring her actual and more permanent disappearance on their 2nd visit that winter. Meanwhile – and perhaps a little too much of a narrative coincidence – a girl guide falls into a sinkhole on the local moors and is rescued after an extensive search.

Another group are set in the immediate period before and also after Becky's disappearance, as the search and police investigation commences, most poignantly the final story, told from the point of view of her father, named here (but not in Reservoir 13 where to the villagers he just remains 'the girl's father) as Joe.

And others journey back through time, some to incidents completely unrelated (or at least it seems so) to Becky's story.

And we're introduced to some brand-new characters, notably Donna, Claire Jackson's best friend, and Vicky an old friend and now colleague of Graham at the Visitor Centre.

But the biggest attraction to Reservoir 13 aficionados (which should be everyone) lies in recognising the various familiar characters and learning more about their back stories. If I was writing a blurb for such a reader, it would be:

Discover:

- The truth behind the façade of the Hunter's marriage**
- To whom arch-seducer Gordon Jackson lost his virginity**
- Why Liam is the butt of all the jokes amongst the teenage gang**
- When Martin the butcher first met Woods, his later partner in red diesel smuggling**
- How a quarry accident to Irene's husband led to Tony acquiring the Gladstone Pub**
- And what Becky's parents were going to tell her on their last walk together**

The Tapes don't explain what happened to Becky – McGregor has made it clear that he himself doesn't know, and there is no between the lines solution to be found. But we do learn quite a lot more about her character - quite wild, prone to going off alone, distanced from her parents - which if anything extends the range of explanations. The various characters and stories do raise a number of possibilities: she succumbed to exposure; she fell down a sinkhole; she drowned in the quarry; she was kidnapped by the sinister man with the gun who also tried to abduct Deepak (albeit a later story resolves this one) or perhaps another character whose sinister side we learn in one story set 15 years earlier; she ran away from home – possibly as a result of what was said on the walk, or perhaps general teenage angst. And Irene's autistic son Andrew claims to know the truth but will only assure Irene that 'she is safe.'

I am not generally a fan of audiobooks – but here the words were written to be read on the radio, so an audiobook –or the BBC podcasts (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b097n5h3>) – is the more natural format

for this, but, that said, it still works surprisingly well on the written page.

And as a stand-alone book (or audiobook) it doesn't have quite the same stunning originality as *Reservoir 13*. Indeed the style is very different to *Reservoir 13* – none of the non-sequiturs, and the focused perspective and the entering into characters thoughts is actually a complete contrast – but it complements it beautifully.

A wonderful Christmas present for the *Reservoir 13* fan in your life (which may be yourself) – and if he/she isn't yet a *Reservoir 13* fan, buy them that as well.

Teresa says

Reservoir 13 was a world unto itself. Despite a certain lack of character development and sometimes only mere hints about characters' lives, it needed nothing else. But since I've read everything else Jon McGregor wrote, I was excited to read this prequel/companion to *Reservoir 13*. Each short chapter takes up a different character, one you'll remember from the earlier novel, but I regret to say this ended up feeling superfluous to me. (And if you haven't read *Reservoir 13*, I don't see how this book can have much, if any, meaning for you.)

I read it in one night (not only are the pages few, but there's a lot of white space). Perhaps due to its origins as a BBC radio serial, the prose is simple, not a bad thing in itself; but in many cases it's too simplistic and (if nothing else) I couldn't grab on to the rhythm of McGregor's language as I usually can.

In some ways the chapters are like short stories, though with none being able to stand on its own; and when I finished, I was reminded I didn't care nearly as much for McGregor's short-story collection *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You* as I did his novels. I was also reminded of my experience reading Michel Faber's *The Apple: New Crimson Petal Stories* after reading his *The Crimson Petal and the White*: it didn't need to happen.

Hugh says

I find it impossible to review this without reference to the book that spawned it, *Reservoir 13* which was my favourite book of 2017 and finally gained the award it deserved from the Costa prize after missing out on the Booker and the Goldsmiths.

These 15 monologues were commissioned by BBC Radio 4 and broadcast over the last few months. I caught most of them then but to be honest was a little disappointed because my expectations were so high.

Now, brought together as a book, I was able to read them almost uninterrupted and in this form they impressed me much more. The order seems less random and I spotted a lot more nuances and connections. Maybe I am not a good listener or maybe a week between episodes is too long for my memory.

Those who disliked *Reservoir 13* will probably find this almost as frustrating since once again little is resolved and there are more questions than answers. This version is more focused on the characters and less on the landscape and the seasons.

This time all of the episodes are set either where Reservoir 13 started, in the aftermath of Becky's disappearance or the previous summer, but some of the newer story-lines are pursued through several episodes. Each episode focuses on a different character but a variety of narrative styles are employed - for example in the first part we get a police interviewer's side of a conversation with Becky's mother without the responses.

Both here and on the radio version the final part, in which Becky's father reviews the history of his failing marriage was the most moving. Other episodes are more comic or fill holes in the back story, creating new questions in the process.

I have no idea how I would have responded to this one without having read Reservoir 13, and it made me want to go back and reread that, but my to-read pile is too overloaded for that to happen any time soon.

Jaline says

An interviewer comes to the small English village to interview Becky Shaw's parents after she has disappeared. On the tape, we only hear the interviewer's words, not those of Becky's parents. What happened to the tape?

Where we previously (in Reservoir 13) experienced this village from a more distant perspective, we are now invited to see the lives of several villagers much closer in a time frame that is months, weeks, or days before Becky went missing. We catch glimpses of her through incidents in the various character's lives. In exposing the branches hidden among the leaves of their daily lives, we see a kaleidoscope of colour.

The colours are shades of brown and darkness and have a strange bitter taste, like tea steeped too long or coffee that is left on the warmer an hour or two past its time. I was compelled to keep turning the kaleidoscope, hoping for a glimpse of a possible happy ending. Or for clues or answers that would tell me where Becky is.

It was too soon. Even then, in the days prior to 13-year-old Becky's disappearance, there is a sense of wrongness. Just under the surface, it breaks through at the moment I pass it by, yet when I look, it is gone. The surface is smoothed over again and all I see are the daily concerns, the fears and deceits, the hard moments and the soft – all the ordinariness of village life.

Did I glimpse a girl who could be golden? Tarnished? Caring? Mean? Over-confident or insecure? Bold or brash? Did I glimpse motives of harmful intent? Of neglect? Of retaliation? Of defiant will meeting a solid wall of non-forgiveness? Or nothing at all?

The puzzling queries surrounding Becky's disappearance take on shape and form in this novel. They multiply into possible answers that meet dead ends; they multiply until they become more of themselves: more questions.

Jon McGregor's writing found me invested in this prelude from the beginning. I don't know how he does it, but there is definitely an alchemy with his words and the story he is telling. The Reservoir Tapes crackles with that alchemy, and all I know for sure is that I want more.

Note: I strongly recommend reading Reservoir 13 before attempting this book. Although this is a

prequel, it will lose most of its meaning without the framework of Reservoir 13.

With gratitude to Annesha of the Publicity and Marketing team of Catapult for sending me this book with no obligation to read or review.

Sarah says

This was advertised as being 15 mini "prequel" stories to Reservoir 13, and I was intrigued that it was being serialised as a podcast on BBC radio 4 so decided to give it a go. I had been meaning to read Reservoir 13 but had seen really mixed reviews of it, and this seemed an easy way to see if I would like it without actually having to do any reading (yes, I'm lazy).

I have to admit I found this kind of disjointed - each story was pretty stand alone and seemed barely linked to the others, besides the fact that they took place in the same area and a couple mentioned the missing girl. This is a personal quibble but I don't think listening to this in audio form helped with my disconnect from the characters. It was good that each episode/chapter was recorded by a different actor, but I have to admit to zoning out when listening to some of the stories. I'd be interested to hear from people who read Reservoir 13 before they read/listened to this... does it make more sense as a prequel read after, knowing what happens in Reservoir 13?

Not sure what else to say other than I don't think the format worked, I didn't feel very engaged in the story or that I had enough time to get to know any of the characters to feel attached to them or invested in what happened. I mentioned while I was listening that I would have DNF-ed if it hadn't been in podcast form (which does sound like a bit of a contradiction given that I said in the previous paragraph that I didn't like the format but hear me out), but it is super easy to put on a podcast for 15 minutes once a week and just listen! Not sure if I'll bother with Reservoir 13 now as it sounds like it might be more of the same. Just a general feeling of ambivalence with this one unfortunately.

Emer says

'The Reservoir Tapes' are a companion piece to Jon McGregor's novel, 'Reservoir 13', that was recently long listed for the 2017 Booker Prize. 'Reservoir 13' was my favourite of all the long listed books and I was disappointed when it didn't emerge the eventual winner. 'The Reservoir Tapes' were initially commissioned by BBC radio as short radio pieces that act as a prequel to 'Reservoir 13'.

In 'Reservoir 13' we were introduced to the inhabitants of a quiet English village that were all reeling from the impact of the effects of the disappearance of a young girl named Becky. In that main book the events took place over the course of thirteen years following the mysterious and tragic occurrence with each chapter taking place over the course of a single year. This format gave the 'Reservoir 13' a beautiful ebb and flow of natural life as people moved in and out of the village. There were births, deaths, marriages etc with a purposeful lack of focus on any specific character that gave the book the feeling that as a reader you were quietly eavesdropping on the village as a whole.

'The Reservoir Tapes' differs in that it is a collection of short stories that, in contrast, focus entirely on specific characters most of whom appear in some guise in 'Reservoir 13'. There are fifteen short stories in total each following a distinct character in a variety of events both preceding (in the longterm and short term) and in the immediate aftermath of the disappearance of Becky. And yet, it being a snapshot of village life, the stories are loosely interconnected as the collection is revealed to be the village's story as opposed to any one person's tale. When you step back from the book you can see all the different threads being woven to create a piece about the connectivity of everyday living in this community.

This being Jon McGregor the prose is absolutely stunning. He can capture the ordinariness of people with the most beautiful and yet stunningly simple turns of phrase. As with 'Reservoir 13' this collection feels almost ethereal in its beauty as it contrasts the flaws and sometimes coldness of everyday living with rich-feeling prose.

There was a gap of approximately 9 months (and the reading of at least a hundred other books) between when I read 'Reservoir 13' and this collection of short stories so I had very much forgotten the names of the individual characters and what roles they had exactly played in the main book. However this did not diminish my enjoyment of the short stories in any way. The first story, about Charlotte, really grabbed my attention and brought me straight back into the world of 'Reservoir 13'.

As is to be expected I loved some stories more than others and was most moved by the ones featuring Charlotte, Clive, Donna and Jess. Other stories such as the one featuring Martin and Stephanie left me with a distinctly unsettled feeling that gave me great pause for thought. My least favourite was probably Vicky's. However, it must be said that each story caught my attention and made me feel something; whether that was moved to tears or uneasy due to the callousness of humanity. I found this to be quite impressive as each story was relatively short.

I would recommend 'The Reservoir Tapes' to anyone who was a fan of the original novel Reservoir 13 as I thoroughly enjoyed my sojourn back to that quiet, unnamed English village and the beauty of the ordinary people found therein. I am rating it a very strong and very positive three and a half stars rounded up to a four.

If you have not yet read 'Reservoir 13' then I wholeheartedly urge you to pick up a copy and read it as soon as you can as it is a thoroughly rewarding read for anyone who is a lover of beautiful prose.

E-copies of both 'The Reservoir Tapes' and 'Reservoir 13' were kindly provided to me by the publisher, Harper Collins UK: 4th Estate, via NetGalley in exchange for honest reviews.

Click [HERE](#) to read my review of 'Reservoir 13'.

Click [HERE](#) to head to the BBC Radio website where depending on your geographic location you may be able to listen to the original radio production of these stories.

Roman Clodia says

Comprising 15 short character studies, this is both prequel and complement to *Reservoir 13*, filling out backstories and details of people in the first book. Read as a standalone, it feels like a literary exercise: all the characters and tales are deft and full of possibilities but they don't come to fruition in this volume.

An interesting idea to back-fill an existing text.

Thanks to the publisher for an ARC via NetGalley.

Paula Bardell-Hedley says

First there was *Reservoir 13*, Jon McGregor's highly acclaimed 2017 novel in which a teenage girl on holiday with her family goes missing. Eight months later we have *The Reservoir Tapes*, a companion piece, offering insights into the events leading up to Becky Shaw's perplexing disappearance.

Set in a rural village in England's Peak District - an upland area at the southern end of the Pennines - *The Reservoir Tapes* was first aired on BBC Radio 4 as a specially commissioned short fiction series (read by Neil Dudgeon), and has now been published as a volume of fifteen 'prequel' stories.

McGregor is a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Nottingham, where he also edits the in-house literary journal, *The Letters Page*. Born in Bermuda in 1976, he grew up in Norfolk before moving to Nottingham, where, in 2002, he wrote the first of his four novels, *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*, while living on a narrowboat. Since then he has won the IMPAC Dublin Literature Prize, Betty Trask Prize, and Somerset Maugham Award, and has twice been longlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

He now gives us the opportunity to scrutinize the thoughts and actions of individual villagers associated with the *Reservoir 13* investigation, looking back at events in their lives and focusing on their precise memories of the girl. He is a perspicacious observer of ordinary folk – in this case an old quarry worker, a cleaner, a young wife, park rangers, the local butcher, a newspaper delivery lad, an adolescent boy, a journalist, a prostitute and several others - giving us a tantalizing coup d'œil of a community with its own tale to tell.

McGregor is equally attentive of the surrounding wildlife and writes with exactitude of a deep, unstable quarry reclaimed by the natural world. A quarry at the very centre of this mystery. He leaves us wanting more.

Many thanks to 4th Estate for supplying an advance copy of this title.

SueLucie says

If I had come to this fresh, without having read *Reservoir 13* first, I might have considered it a mystery. I would probably have thought I was invited to guess what happened to Becky from clues in each of the stories and character studies. Certainly it does fill in some of the gaps in *Reservoir 13* and sheds light on some characters' motivations so I feel I could take an educated guess to Becky's fate now. But that wasn't my main consideration when I read *Reservoir 13* and still isn't. The *Reservoir Tapes* complements my reading of

Reservoir 13 but lacks some of the aspects I so loved in the first book - the cycle and rhythm of nature in particular. I very much enjoyed the variety of voices and styles of reporting/narration, my favourites being the Ginny, Irene and Charlotte chapters. An original concept that I'd recommend highly, but it will certainly have most impact for those who have already enjoyed Reservoir 13.

With thanks to Harper Collins 4th Estate via NetGalley for the opportunity to read this.

Joseph says

Jon McGregor's Reservoir 13 was longlisted for the Booker, and appeared on several "end of year" lists as one of "the books of 2017". It deals with the disappearance of a teenager holidaying in a fictional village in the Peak District and its chapters spread over the 13 years following the incident. Following the novel's success, BBC Radio 4 commissioned a set of fifteen short stories which are currently being broadcast and will be published in one volume. "The Reservoir Tapes" has been described as a "prequel" to the novel since it is set in the same community, with each of the chapters introducing us to a particular character with some link to the events described in the main novel.

Most of the reviews I read seem to be written by readers who enjoyed Reservoir 13 and were eager to revisit the world of the novel. Generally, the comments seem to be positive but raise doubts as to whether this collection of stories can be fully appreciated as a free-standing work. In my case, I have yet to read the novel but, in the meantime, I have greatly enjoyed this collection. Perhaps, rather than short stories, the pieces within The Reservoir Tapes are best considered as character vignettes – significantly, each chapter title gives us the name of the its protagonist. McGregor deftly differentiates between the characters through subtle changes in narrative voice and approach and yet, the more we read, the more we become aware of a web of connections between these disparate (and some desperate) characters.

Most of the chapters evoke a sense of danger and menace, and yet there is often also an underlying streak of dark humour. The stories are also minimalist in the best sense of the word – one gets the sense that no word is out of place, and no incident, however minor it may seem, is mere padding. In other words, this volume might be slim, but hardly slight.

Emma says

Just as wonderful, if not even more so than Reservoir 13. McGregor writes so lyrically and beautifully that it is a joy to read the words on the page. I particularly liked Ginny's chapter. This is best read after Reservoir 13, and probably would benefit reading fairly quickly after it, as it has been a while since I read the first book, and had to remember all the characters.

McGregor has an uncanny knack of always leaving readers wanting more, and this book is no exception. There are more questions than answers in the book, and I've had to learn to go with that rather than be frustrated by it.

He is my favourite contemporary writer by far...

Gumble's Yard says

Reservoir 13 was without doubt, one of the standout books of 2017.

A book which was shortlisted for two prizes at either extreme of the Book prize spectrum: the Goldsmith Prize (designed to reward fiction that breaks the mould or extends the possibilities of the novel form) and the Costa Prize (which focuses on recognising the most enjoyable book of the year) – a book both mould breaking and hugely enjoyable and which was inexplicably omitted from the disappointing Booker shortlist (despite making the much stronger longlist).

My review of that book (which I read twice in 2017) can be found here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

I particularly enjoyed reading a recent profile of Jon McGregor and his work by James Wood in the New Yorker.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/20...>

This article draws out the common themes in what seems like a very disparate set of novels that McGregor has written in his career (4 novels – one of which won the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award and the other three of which were Booker longlisted) and identified that one of these is a sense of McGregor capturing an entire community, but that in Reservoir 13 with its innovative style “*There is little direct dialogue. There are no moments set aside for privileged epiphany or revelation*”.

Another key part of Reservoir 13 is that it starts with the disappearance of a young girl – Becky Shaw – staying at a holiday cottage in the village, but the impact of that disappearance fades over the 13 years in which the book is set.

The Reservoir Tapes is very much a companion piece to Reservoir 13 – one that explores more the community of that novel, but in this case in a much more conventional way and with little other than individual reflection and with more space for privileged epiphany or revelation. Further Becky’s disappearance, the events leading up to it and those immediately following it are much more central to this book.

The Reservoir Tapes is a series of 15, 15 minute radio episodes (Mc Gregor had hoped for 13 episodes of 13 minutes each, as the number 13 plays more than just a role in the title of the previous book) which are being broadcast on Radio 4. Each episode is named after a character and written from their point of view – some are familiar characters from Reservoir 13, some characters unnamed but present in that book, and others new characters but with strong links to the village. This book is the script of those broadcasts.

To say too much more would be to dampen the pleasure of the book itself.

If you have read Reservoir 13 and loved it then this book is a must buy (I can only equate it to finding that Jane Austen had actually written a Pride and Prejudice companion), if you have not read it then but that first but then this.

And if you have read Reservoir 13 and did not love it then well I really have nothing to say to you.

My thanks to 4th Estate for an ARC provided via NetGalley.
