



Bed

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WHAT MAKES LIFE WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR? Mal isn't like the other kids. So remarkable is his childhood that his family wait for the incredible things he seems born to do. Then one day he goes to bed, never to get out again. Recounted by Mal's younger brother, Bed is a coming-of-age story like no other. It chronicles the metamorphosis of one extraordinary man, and explores what love, loss and family can do to you in a lifetime. Enchanting, funny, surreal and heartwarming, David Whitehouse's novel presents one of the most thrilling and unique voices to emerge from Britain in years. Longlisted for the 2012 Desmond Elliott Prize.

Bed Details

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Author : David Whitehouse

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From Reader Review Bed for online ebook

Michelle says

(See more of my reviews at www.insearchoftheendofthesidewalk.com)

Bed by David Whitehouse

Any book that, on page one, includes the sentence, “He was an enormous meat duvet” is a winner in my opinion. I need to go no further than that initial few paragraphs to know I am hooked!

Bed is the tale of an obese, bed-ridden man named Malcolm, who weighs it at over one hundred stone. (For all of us living on the rebellious side of the Pond, one stone is equal to fourteen pounds.) While Mal is the central focus of the story, the narration is given by his younger brother, who, like all of the characters in the book, has been drawn into Mal’s orbit, unable to break away from the strong gravitational pull his lifestyle choices have created.

This book could easily have veered into the realm of mockery and disdain for a person who has made the conscious choice to never again leave his bed, but instead, the heart of the story lies in pondering what exactly it means to love another human. Each of the characters feel love for others, but the way that emotion is expressed (or hidden) varies widely, as do the results of that love.

Mal decides on his twenty-fifth birthday that he doesn’t want all the “ing’s” life has to offer. He doesn’t want to be a part of marrying, buying, working, parenting, etc. The view he holds of his future is one in which he is expected to follow in the footsteps of the generation before, just plodding along until death finally comes for him. Rather than partake of those unwanted “ing’s” for several more decades, he resigns himself to his bed, and, as it turns out, his food.

While some parents would be horrified by this turn of events (I highly doubt mine would be thrilled if I were to move back in full-time), Mal’s mother sees her only purpose in life as caring for others. She cared for her mother until disease took her away. She cared for her husband and family for years. Once her two boys are grown, she was at a loss as to who she really was, until Mal moves back in that is. Now, with Mal ensconced in his childhood room, his mother can devote her time and energy to his constant care, which becomes a huge task as he grows larger and larger, losing mobility and the means to complete even simple personal hygiene tasks on his own.

Mal’s father, younger brother and girlfriend are also forced into lives that are dictated by Mal. All seem to have lost the ability to break the chains that connect them to this aging anchor of a human being. While physical escape (to the attic, to a tent in the yard, to America even) is attempted, all are soon sucked back into the vortex of Mal’s needs- “selfish obesity,” rather than just morbid obesity, as it is referred to at one point in the novel.

Each character is connected to others through unique relationships, yet the binding tie throughout the book is the question of whether these relationships are healthy. All are love. There is no doubt about the emotion behind the ties that keep them together, but it seems that love on its own may not always be enough for a healthy relationship to exist. Love pushes each character to do the things s/he does, but the results of those choices aren’t always the best for that individual in the long run, nor are they pointing people in positive directions. Whitehouse does a great job of taking an emotion usually associated with affirmative and progressive interactions and casts it in a light where the reader is forced to look again. Is there something a bit malevolent lurking in the shadows of the family’s love for one another?

The tale is an odd one, I must admit. A book about a man weighing in at over a half ton is not something I would normally gravitate towards, but the dust cover was intriguing enough to make me want to know where the story was going to lead. The writing of this book is great! The descriptions are superbly written, not only of Mal’s condition and the physical toll it takes on his body, but of how each family member struggles to make a place for themselves in world shrinking as Mal’s corporal domination continues. David Whitehead’s

Bed earns:

3 SHELLS

Emir Ibañez says

Lo abandoné porque la historia no me... Importó. La historia de un chico con obesidad mórbida contada por su hermano menor que está enamorado de la novia de su hermano y sus problemas de comportamiento en la pre adolescencia y unos padres traumatizados por experiencias en su juventud realmente no me importó. Quizás si a vos esta premisa te parece prometedora, metele, éste es tu libro entonces. Lamentablemente para mí no funcionó. Y tiene una prosa muy presuntuosa para el tipo de historia que se está contando. Next.

Jim says

What makes life worth getting out of bed for? Mal isn't like the other kids. So remarkable is his childhood that his family wait for the incredible things he seems born to do. Then one day he goes to bed, never to get out again. Recounted by Mal's younger brother, Bed is a coming-of-age story like no other. It chronicles the metamorphosis of one extraordinary man, and explores what love, loss and family can do to you in a lifetime. Enchanting, funny, surreal and heart-warming.

The Bookseller called this novel "momentous". It certainly has its moments although I'm not sure that "momentous" is the right word for this book. "Momentous" suggests something . . . 'mountainous' keeps coming to my mind, something to be scaled but it's really not that kind of book. It's not a grand book. Let's face it, a lot of its (in)action takes place in a bedroom. It's a chamber piece and, well, you just don't call chamber pieces "momentous". I prefer how the reviewer in *The Observer* put it: "Sad and funny and pretty brilliant, too" and I have to agree with that: that hits the nail on the head. Is it perfect? No, but I'm not sure I've ever read a perfect novel. I've certainly never written one.

My own personal gripe is that I would have liked a bit more of that first year. We jump from day four to the end of the first year and I had questions, practical questions, procedural questions: when did he stop going to the toilet or bathing for example? Considering how short the chapters are – there are eighty-four in the book – a couple of pages could have dealt with that but that's me being nit-picky, that's all. This is an excellent book. As soon as I got my review copy I made a start on it and I'm usually quite good at taking books in their turns. And, of course, once I'd started I couldn't put it down.

You can read my full review [here](#).

Kinga says

'Bed' is about Mal, a man who weighs a hundred stone and hasn't got up from his bed for the past twenty years. Yet, the book is not about being fat. Just look at the author's photo – what would HE know about being fat?

If you are looking for some sort of self-help motivational book then I wholeheartedly recommend 'Run, Fat

'Bitch, Run' by Ruth Fields. Read 'Bed' if you want a piece of good contemporary literature about people who are just not very good at life. I know I could now say 'but who really is?', but that would just be a clever bon mot, because really, most people I know seem to handle this whole living business a little better.

The characters of 'Bed', mostly Mal's family, are weighed down, literally and metaphorically by his heavy presence. He has become their centre of gravity and they are not able to set themselves free.

Mal himself is less of a character and more of an inanimate object casting shadow on the lives of everyone who comes close to him, he is the elephant in the room, so to speak, impossible to ignore but not to be discussed or questioned.

Of all the family members, it's the mother who is most devoted to him. He is the apple of her eye. It's like in this Anne Sexton's poem (surely the world must be ending if I am quoting poems in my reviews):

"The unusual needs to be commented upon . . .

The Thalidomide babies

with flippers at their shoulders,

wearing their mechanical arms

like derricks.

The club-footed boy

wearing his shoe like a flat iron.

The idiot child,

a stuffed doll who can only masturbate.

The hunchback carrying his hump

like a bag of onions . . .

Oh how we treasure

their scenic value.

When a child stays needy until he is fifty —
oh mother-eye, oh mother-eye, crush me in —
the parent is as strong as a telephone pole"

Mal has always been special to his mother, wayward as a child, difficult as an adult, he gives her purpose. Handling him has become the essence of her life. And why does he decide to never get up after he's turned twenty-five? I suppose to escape the fate of his peers, who 'get older and start drinking. They meet someone and get pregnant. They work and work and work. Buy a house and sit in it in silence listening to the baby cry. Have another to keep it company. Waking up early, going to work, packing lunch, coming home, watching the television, paying the bills, thinking they're happy, having another baby just in case. No thanks."

Quite right, "if this is life, then why get out of bed?" Only this isn't life. Life is all that happens in between. Life is what you make of it. It is hard to be happy and it requires greater sensibility. It is easier to give in to nihilism and decadency but this is not a noble way out. Mal might be convinced that him giving up on life will give someone else (that is, his mother) a purpose in life and therefore he is a hero, but he goes about it all wrong. Lou, Mal's girlfriend has the same need to give meaning to the lives of her loved ones but she is doing it in a constructive way. She brings people up, rather than dragging them down with her.

'Bed', despite its grotesque, tabloid hook, is a quiet, understated novel and I believe it was ghost-written. I happen to have met David Whitehouse and he is ironic, blunt, very fond of obscene gestures and generally quite obnoxious. There is no way in hell he would ever write anything borderline mushy like this:

"I saw it on her face that day, a look like her heart would float upward through her throat, topple from her mouth, clip her front teeth on the way out and drift into the sky."

If this sounds like your cup of tea, give this book a go; it's a very strong debut. My only minor complaint is that the first person narrator, Mal's nameless younger brother, becomes omniscient at random. It doesn't happen very often but often enough for me to notice.

Holly says

I couldn't wait to read this because the idea of a man not getting out of bed for over 20 years, and weighing over 500 pounds, fascinated me. You'd think it would disgust me more, since I've battled my own weight issues my entire life, but I wanted to know WHY. Why did he do this? And that was the same question his brother, the narrator, kept asking.

This is a little quirky and all of the characters were not fleshed out as much as they could have or should have been, but I still really enjoyed it. And the man's reasons why he didn't get out of bed? It was all about family relationships. You'll have to read it to get a more definitive answer. Good stuff.

Katie says

OK, this review contains some spoilers, so be warned.

I find it impossible to talk about this book without revealing something about the ending, although I usually try not to do that. This book is about a very eccentric guy (used to be obsessed with taking off his clothes in public as a child) who decides not to leave his bed on his 25-th b'day, and then becomes morbidly obese. It's a mystery for the entire book as to why, and when I found out why, I must say I was sort of irritated.

The upshot is the guy thinks he's some sort of martyr: his mom is only happy when taking care of someone (so she has to take care of him), the dad is only happy having a "project" (he builds a crane to lift the guy out of the house), and his brother is only happy when he finally gets the guy's girlfriend to fall in love with him, which he could only do if he became disgustingly obese and therefore she didn't want him. See what a nice guy he is? Please!! I didn't buy it at all. Not just because this is a ridiculous premise (becoming obese and bedridden to make your family happy??) but also because of how spoiled and privileged he is--how nice that he got to live rent-free forever and have his mom cooking his enormous meals and waiting on him hand and foot. A martyr?? Give me a break.

However, oddly, I did like the book. I thought it was very well-written... one of those books where the writing is so good that you savor it and re-read paragraphs. So I'm glad I read it, and it was certainly food for thought, but the last page irritated me.

Jo says

Good writing? Give me a break. This is one of the most appallingly over-written books I've ever dragged myself through. I don't know which editor approved this for publication, but they should be sacked. I quite

liked the idea of the book; man takes to his bed on his twenty-fifth birthday and stays there, but everything about the way it is written revolts me. Unconvincing dialogue. Unappealing characters. Implausible, even. Love-interest Lou and the boys' mother are so ridiculously self-sacrificing that I couldn't believe in them at all. All the dads in the book spend their lives dozing in armchairs, unable or unwilling to assert themselves over their domineering but doting wives. Mal the Bedbound is too grotesque to contemplate; I had to skim several chapters of narrative describing his mounds of reeking flesh and the meals his stupid mother pours down his gullet. And there's no story arc. Mal goes to bed and stays there! No-one else in the book does anything much either! And then there's Whitehouse's highschool creative writing class prose style: every noun is saddled with an unnecessary adjective or inappropriate simile. Metaphors pile up in great steaming mixed-up contradictory heaps. Sentences. Lots of them. Minor ones. And grammatical errors: "Me and Lou..." I would have thought Whitehouse's background in journalism would have beaten the verbiage out of him, but sadly not. This is five hours of my life I won't get back.

Kristina says

First, I warn you to NOT read this book while eating. Also, if you are getting lazy and need motivation to hit the gym, this book is good for that. In fact, if I were marketing this book, I would publicize it as a weight-loss book because when you read about Mal, you get seriously grossed out and I don't care how healthy and in-shape you are. You think, "Damn. I'm going to hit the gym today and never eat carbs again." That's how gross parts of this book are.

This is the book about a dysfunctional family. Well, a group of people since I consider Lou also not quite right either. In fact, all of the main and supporting characters are daft. This is the story of Malcolm Eade and his unnamed younger brother and their family and all the other people who get caught up in Mal's orbit. The book goes back and forth in time to tell its story and presents Mal on Day Seven Thousand Four Hundred Eighty-Three of being in bed then flips you to Mal at eight or so when he is an odd child and likes to run around naked (everywhere). Mal is the ultimate individual; even at a young age he is impervious to others' opinions and advice. As he grows up, he tries to conform to what he thinks life should be (getting a job, moving in with his girlfriend Lou) but he fails and on his 25th birthday takes to his childhood bed and decides not to leave again: "I couldn't sit back and be content with a life of *ings*. Saving. Paying. Breeding. Working. But never living" (245). Twenty or so years later, he is still in his bed. He has grown to a huge size (over 100 stone, whatever that translates to in American pounds) and is cared for slavishly by his mother who waits on him literally hand and foot and makes huge amounts of food for him.

Here's a passage in which the brother is describing Mal's weight gain:

"Mal didn't read the letters. His fingers had grown too fat and stiff to hold something with the fragility of paper. He'd once worn a silver ring on his right forefinger but it had long since been swallowed up, his skin and flesh having grown over it, incorporating it into his all-consuming mass. He was part jewelry. I looked at his chin. It blended almost seamlessly into his shoulder blades, and I imagined his body consuming itself, the edges smoothing out. There was no outward evidence that he even had bones in there anymore. If he were to live forever, perhaps he'd eventually become one huge, amorphous pink blob. A globe without oceans" (161).

When Mal decides that life wasn't worth living the (normal) way and takes to his bed, his decision affects not

only his family, but others around him. His girlfriend Lou, who the nameless brother has been in love with for years, and a woman in Ohio who sends the family a trailer, are also drawn into his orbit and affected by him--even though all he does is refuse to leave his bed. I wasn't crazy about this book, but it is well-written and would be a good book for a book club discussion. Why does the mother dedicate her life to taking care of Mal? Why does he have this magnetic hold on the family? The brother says several times that when Mal is "on," his love and attention are special, magical. Problem is, I see no instances of Mal ever being "on." I see a highly unconventional guy (which I can respect, being an oddball myself), but I never see what is so special about him that makes everyone decide Mal in bed as a giant lump of flesh is still a delight to be around. And what did Mal think he was solving by becoming a giant lump of disgusting flesh? How is life any better by getting so fat you can't move? I mean, working in an office with people you don't like is not fun, but that's the challenge of life: find something that makes it worthwhile to leave your bed. Granted, some days I really could just stay in bed because I'm warm and comfy and safe, but eventually I have things I not only have to do but want to do. Plus all the food's in the kitchen. So how is being a giant lump of flesh better than working a life of drudgery? Why didn't he just kill himself?

As much as I didn't like this book or the characters, it's a good book to discuss and think about. Plus, there's that whole gym/dieting motivation factor. I recommend this book just because it is odd and interesting and quick read.

F says

Read this in one day. First time i've done that in ages.

This was an easy read.

It was an unusual story but the characters were all a bit soft.

The family just seemed to accept Mal's change without much explanation.

Not a huge fan.

Filiz ?akar says

Çok farklıydı?

Roberto says

“Immagina di avere una fotografia di ogni cosa importante che ti è successa nella vita. Il tuo primo figlio. Il tuo matrimonio. Un lutto in famiglia. Il tuo primo lavoro. Un incidente d’auto. Il giorno in cui eri ammalato. La sera in cui hai vinto una competizione. La volta in cui hai perso una gara. Tutto quanto. Immagina di averle tenute in tasca. Immagina che, in base all’importanza dell’evento nella fotografia, questa diventi più leggera o più pesante. Più pesante è la foto, più importante è l’evento. Alla fine alcune delle fotografie sono diventate così leggere che non ti rendi nemmeno conto che non le guardi più, ti cadono dalla tasca, e scompaiono per sempre, punto. Ma una fotografia, una tra tutte, diventa sempre più pesante, e quella non la perderai mai e poi mai. Ce ne sarà sempre una con te, che ti piegherà con il suo peso finché non sarà un fardello così grande che quando ci pensi, è come se il tuo cuore venisse trascinato a terra. E non sarai più in grado di raccoglierlo. Questo è ciò che accade quando invecchi. Perdi tutte le tue fotografie, diventano leggere, come l’aria, non le puoi più distinguere dai sogni che avevi e dai luoghi che hai immaginato. Ma

non puoi mai liberarti di quelle più pesanti.”

Malcolm è un ragazzino sveglio, ma strano. È brillante, curioso, ma ha la tendenza a denudarsi in qualunque luogo in cui si trovi. Ma il giorno del suo venticinquesimo compleanno decide di non alzarsi più dal letto, di sottrarsi dalla vita “normale”. Perché non si è in grado di dare una ragione alla propria di vita banale:

“Non potevo restarmene a guardare e accontentarmi di una vita di verbi all’infinito. Risparmiare. Pagare. Fare figli. Lavorare. Ma vivere, quello mai.”

“Che vita è mai questa, in cui ogni cosa che ti hanno insegnato ad aspettarti si rivela un buco nell’acqua?”

La madre, invece di spronarlo a muoversi, si annulla per lui, inizia a portargli da mangiare continuamente, lo lava, gli porta il giornale, gli passa il telecomando della tv. Malcolm ovviamente, con questo trattamento, inizia ad ingrassare, raggiungendo, dopo circa vent’anni, i seicento chilogrammi di peso. La sua scelta condiziona ovviamente la vita di tutti quelli che lo circondano, che vorrebbero separarsi da lui e dimenticare, ma non possono.

“La morte di Mal è l’unica cosa che può salvare questa famiglia, perché la sua vita l’ha distrutta. Ed eccomi qui, alla fine, a dividere la stanza con lui. La stanza in cui tutto è cominciato. O almeno una sua parte. Una volta papà mi disse: Amare qualcuno è guardarla morire”.

Un libro ricco di metafore, che rendono la lettura estremamente interessante. Tantissime le riflessioni che questo libro stimola. Riflessioni su quanto gli altri condizionino le nostre scelte, su quanto il mondo si attenda da noi, sull’amore disinteressato, sull’amore malato, sui problemi di comunicazione. Ma anche sul diventare adulti, sullo scendere a patti con le speranze dell’adolescenza, sulla realtà spesso illusoria dei grandi. Un romanzo drammatico, con messaggi quasi spietati molto ben immersi in una trama all’apparenza ironica.

Dolceluna says

Appena ho avuto fra le mani "Buon compleanno Malcolm" e ho passato le dita sulla splendida e particolare copertina raffigurante nient’altro che un pigiama, ho fatto una cosa che, per curiosità, faccio sempre: sono andata a leggere il titolo originale, convinta di trovarmi un altrettanto squillante "Happy Birthday Malcolm!". E invece no.

Ho trovato un secco "Bed". Una sentenza piatta, dura, senza ritorno, senza redenzione. E da questo titolo, più azzeccato del nostrano, ho immediatamente intuito che in questo romanzo avrei trovato soprattutto tanto dolore.

E così è stato.

Nella storia, per tanti versi paradossale e simbolica, di questo Malcolm, che, nel giorno del suo venticinquesimo compleanno decide di non alzarsi più dal letto e così farà, fino a diventare un omone di oltre 600 kg, ingrassato dai manicaretti preparati ogni giorno dalla madre, ho letto la storia dell’uomo che, consapevole di non poter vivere come vorrebbe, raggiungendo ciò che vuole, decide di lasciarsi morire. Ho letto arresa, sconforto, mancanza di vera comunicazione, tra l’altro alla fine fatta quasi passare come una sorta di "sacrificio" perché Malcolm s’illude che la sua infermità abbia in qualche modo aiutato la famiglia a riscattarsi.

No, no, no.

Ho adorato lo stile di David Whitehouse, una penna sensibile e profonda, ma quanto al messaggio che mi è arrivato, io dico no. Mi dispiace Malcolm, ma io non si sto. E per quanto possa essere spietata, sfortunata,

dannata e sfuggevole, io sono per la vita, sempre... vale la pena di essere vissuta, sempre, anche se tutto ti sembra vano, anche se sai già che non potrai viverla al massimo ottenendo ciò che vuoi, anche se ti senti un burattino fra le mani di un destino beffardo e incontrollabile. E' difficile un po' per tutti, anche per me. Ma la vita è l'unico dono che non avremo due volte e se bisogna battersi, è solo per conquistarla, viverla e tenerla stretta. Mentre leggevo questo romanzo mi sono tornate alla mente le parole della canzone di Vasco Rossi, "Vivere"..."Vivere, anche se sei morto dentro, senza perdersi d'animo mai e combattere e lottare contro tutto contro!..Oggi non ho tempo, oggi voglio stare spento"...

O io non ho capito il messaggio del libro, oppure, tu, Malcolm, hai voluto stare spento.

Quattro stelline comunque, per stile, scrittura, approfondimento psicologico dei personaggi.

Todd says

This is my favorite read of 2011.

There is a lot of hype surrounding this book, because it centers on a man who gets in bed at 25, becomes morbidly obese, and never leaves. The story though isn't really about Mal Ede, it is about his loved ones, especially his brother who narrates the story. David Whitehouse's language and writing style is beautifully counter-intuitive; he describes situations with such wit and insight that you cannot help but become attached to the story.

The emotional complexity and social commentary within this story is certainly praise-worthy. Mal says few words throughout this book, but I think that he is the voice for Whitehouse; Mal does not understand why people follow the path of marriage, children, and work when it seems to be making everyone miserable. He says something about not wanting a life of "ings" - working, breeding, marrying but not living. I hate to invoke Kerouac so frequently in my reviews, but this book's message is very reminiscent of The Dharma Bums. In regard to emotions, the one psychological issue that Whitehouse addresses perfectly is co-dependence. Mal's mom and girlfriend are both severely co-dependent and it plays out within the story.

I could go on forever about this book. If you think the premise of the book is unsavory, please give it a chance. This is a story about love, family, life and more.

Allison says

I wanted to love this book from the minute I first read about its premise. Unfortunately, a good idea for a story and huge potential for fascinating characters are mostly wasted here. Whitehouse has some moments of amazing (and vulgar) descriptions, but the characters are just not developed enough. It's hard to buy the romantic relationships, Mal's motivations, and the parents' philosophies as well. That said, it was good enough for me to finish it, since I will definitely put a book down after ~50 pages if it's not gripping me. I would definitely give this author another chance in the future. Too bad about this book though, really wanted to love it!

La.Silbia says

Buon compleanno Malcolm: il titolo italiano in realtà è fuorviante, perché il protagonista di questa storia in

realità non è Malcolm. O almeno non dovrebbe essere lui, dovrebbe essere il narratore, ovvero "il fratello di Malcolm".

Il fratello di Malcolm non ha un nome, non ci è dato saperlo. Per tutta la vita si è sentito definito, fino a definirsi lui stesso, in questo modo. Mal ha preso possesso della vita del fratello e dell'intera famiglia fin dall'infanzia, con la sua sola presenza sempre ingombrante al di là del proprio peso. Le esistenze degli altri ruotano intorno alla sua, come se esercitasse una potente forza di attrazione gravitazionale, ancora prima di quel fatidico giorno in cui decide di mettersi a letto per non rialzarsi più, in una apparente protesta e arresa contro il mondo esterno che lo vorrebbe inserito in un percorso secondo lui senza senso.

E allora questa dovrebbe essere la storia di come il fratello di Mal abbia lottato per tutta la sua esistenza per conquistarne una propria, di come si sia a volte rassegnato, a volte dibattuto contro la costante ombra di Mal su di sé. In ogni caso, di come lui e il resto della famiglia altamente disfunzionale possano solo riadattarsi intorno alle scelte operate da Mal, che sembra essere sempre il padrone dei destini altrui nel bene e nel male. Forse ben pochi avranno un fratello di seicento chili che si rifiuta di lasciare il letto, ma sicuramente tutti abbiamo o abbiamo avuto un qualcosa che ci attrae inevitabilmente nella propria orbita, in positivo e in negativo, in un circolo confusivo di abnegazione, senso del dovere, e in fondo piacere per non dover noi essere attori delle nostre vite, demandando le scelte a qualcun altro. David Whitehouse, con la sua scrittura allo stesso tempo profonda e pulita, ci apre le porte di questa casa, dei suoi fantasmi e dei ricordi appesantiti dal tempo che ciascun personaggio porta con sé; ci accompagna con leggerezza e introspezione nel percorso di ricerca di individuazione del fratello di Mal.

Grazia says

Il triumvirato dell'appagamento: dormire, mangiare, amare

Se nel triumvirato non vi è equilibrio tra i regnanti, o ne viene a mancare uno, possono accadere cose strane. E' la storia di Malcom che decide di non potersi accontentare di una vita vissuta all'insegna di verbi all'infinito: "...Risparmiare. Pagare. Fare figli. Lavorare. Ma vivere, quello mai."

E quindi Mal, ragazzo speciale, particolarmente dotato ed amatissimo dalla fidanzata Lou, a 25 anni decide di non alzarsi piu' dal letto e farsi accudire dalla mamma.

Incredibilmente la mamma per compiacerlo, perchè lo ama di quell'amore insano, pur di averlo sempre accanto a sè, lo nutre, lo lava e lo cura... Non lo esorta ad alzarsi da letto e Mal diventa 600 kg e un caso nazionale.

"Devi capire che l'amore è come una lunga linea. E' sempre amore ma ha due estremità opposte. Quella buona su cui si scrivono le canzoni... E c'e' quella cattiva, perchè l'amore ti puo' distruggere."

... ed è cosi' che la mamma distrugge Mal...

... Molto ben scritto, riflessioni molto profonde, ma che grande angoscia!

Kim says

The book was well-written, but I felt like it tried too hard to be profound. Halfway through, you still don't even know why Mal has stayed in bed all these years. So, I flipped to the last couple pages, where you

finally find out. His reason makes sense, but in a very vague sort of way, and only raised more questions for me.

Whitehouse is obviously very intelligent, and knows how to write well, but his metaphors within metaphors within yet another metaphor was a bit too much for me. And maybe that whole style of writing was just another way for him to say that not everything is as it seems. Maybe he had some higher purpose for it, that I'm not intelligent enough to understand. Or, maybe I'm right, and he was simply doing it to show off his intellectual capabilities, and it had no real point.

The book had its inspiring parts, but it also had its "for fuck's sake, enough with the flowery language" parts as well. At the end of it, I felt like the characters were more like the metaphors strewn through the book—captivating, but not altogether tangible. I don't know about you, but when I read a book, I need the characters to be more than tangible; I need them to be relatable. It can be a refreshing perspective to instead sit and observe the characters and think, "Well, they're really weird" and feel like you're witnessing something really strange that you'll never completely grasp. But for me, not enough was explained. The characters seemed made up of oddities and actions that were at times not altogether explicable and seemed to be there to add to the profoundness of the story, rather than to the actual characters themselves.

All in all, an interesting book by an intelligent author, but not one of my favorites.

Beverley says

Bed is almost too good. Every once in a while I read something so special and unique to me that I want to hide it away from a world of prying eyes, criticism and make it mine. Despite being long listed for the Desmond Elliot Prize this novel hasn't got the critical acclaim it deserves, and its 3.19 rating on Goodreads is quite frankly a disgrace.

So what went wrong and why is this book so misunderstood?

Bed is about Mal, a discontented 25 year old who hounded by an unbearable ennui, decides he's going to bed, and staying there. After 20 years laying naked in bed doing nothing but watching TV and eating food cooked by his over-zealous mother he weighs 100 stone. But this isn't a book about being fat and if you're reading it in the hope of an insight into obesity then you should look elsewhere.

Bed is a book about love, the bonds between family, how one person's selfishness can bring people together and at the same time tear them apart. Told from the perspective of Mal's younger brother (we never learn his name) he describes Mal as a planet which the family are orbiting. An ambitious young man, Mal left school telling the careers officer he wants to change the world, but like so many of us 2 years later he finds himself working a 9-5 office job with a steady girlfriend. This isn't the life Mal wants, he hates the banality of the weekly grind but feels that there is no way out.

I view Mal as the ultimate individual, a man with a voracious appetite for the extraordinary who is unable to find fulfilment in the real world outside his dreams. So he goes to bed. The only rightful protest he can make against the cruel disappointment of living in a society that raises its children with an expectation of future greatness, and fails to deliver.

You may not like Bed, a lot of readers hated the graphic descriptions of Mal's obesity. It's certainly not a

book for the squeamish and some scenes will probably shock you. But if you can get past the imagery and read Bed with an open mind it will repay you in buckets. Some books feel like they can tear a fissure in your life leaving an invisible before and after, it's an unsettling experience but also quite mind blowing. I love this book, a day later i'm still reeling.

Min Li Li says

Kitaba puan vermiyorum zira hala anlamadım kitabın yazıldığıma nedenini.
Daha sonra yeniden okuyacağım. Kinci okuyuştan kavrarım bir seyler diye düştünüyorum. :D

Onun dördüncünda ilginç bir kitaptı.

Bookguide says

Read in Dutch. I also originally wrote the review in Dutch, but Goodreads lost it because it had logged me out overnight. I'd already deleted the Dutch, but still had the English in a Word document. Not very happy! So here is the English review for the time being.

Despite the disturbing descriptions of the more than obese Mal, I couldn't put this book down. We know from the word go that Mal has stayed in bed for years. The flashbacks and stories from the past build up an incremental picture of the motivations of the people in his family and their various ways of dealing with the situation. His father retreats to his workroom in the attic; his mother becomes his personal cook, nurse and carer; his girlfriend Lou stays away, but is unable to break free. The story is told from the viewpoint of his younger brother who is also in love with Lou and keeps hoping that she will finally leave Mal behind her and notice him.

The central question of the book is why Mal takes his radical decision. If we look back at the boys' childhood, we see that Mal behaves strangely and negatively influences the lives of his family. I had a strong suspicion that Mal had a form of autism, with his hate of wearing clothes and his extreme reactions, his stubbornness and his obsessive behaviour. He wanted to be the first one who did things, not only at home or school, but the first in the world." If he does something, he does it to the extreme, including becoming fat, including never getting out of bed again. In spite of this, he was flexible enough to adjust himself to an office job and a relationship with Lou, but when the job turned out to be boring and his relationship hit problems, he withdrew in the most radical way possible. His later explanation that he sacrificed himself to save others seems simply an excuse to excuse his own selfishness.

As the book progresses, various reasons emerge which explain the behaviour of the people who are close to Mal. His mother has a pathological need to take care of somebody, his father is trying to free himself from the shadow of a terrible event; Lou needs somebody to need her. Mal's brother is trapped by his unreasonable love for Lou, paralysed and without feeling, unable to choose a career or a direction, eternally waiting for Mal's permission to continue his life and waiting until Lou finally notices him.

All the relationships in this book are unhealthy and nobody stays happy. The story isn't about somebody with extreme obesity. It is about depression and obsessive love, love which strangles, hopeless love, unrequited love. About how love can destroy.

Well-written and well-observed. A book which leaves an impression. I enjoyed it.
