



# Clean

Books Reviewed:

[Clean](#) [1]

Issue:

[229](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Alexandra Volkov, known as Lexi, is a seventeen year old of Russian origin who leads a privileged life in Britain. She has access to plenty of money. She has a brother who looks out for her after a fashion. She has a father who is mostly absent working and a mother who is absorbed in developing her relationship with a new partner. Her lack of effective teenage supervision has led to her becoming a heroin addict.

When Lexi suffers the most recent of a series of collapses, her brother Nicholai or Nic takes her to a rehab centre on a privately owned island. The clinic is known as the Clarity Centre. Nic is the only member of Lexi's family who knows she is on the island. Dawson's novel charts the reasons underlying Lexi's addiction and her struggle to overcome it. Once the book turns to the reasons for her situation, of course the complexity of the narrative increases.

The merit of Dawson's book is its utter candour. It spares nothing. The language is in places believably profane. An addict dies. The torment of Lexi's initial period of treatment as she begins to combat her addiction is frankly terrifying. Any teenager who read this passage before taking her first shot of the drug would flush it down the loo.

At one point only Dawson strikes an unconvincing note. When Lexi is in psychotherapy with Dr Goldstein, the director of the centre, he talks about his own experience in therapy. This violates the first principle of psychotherapeutic counselling, namely that the process is exclusively about the patient.

This remarkable book takes up the same existential challenge that Melvyn Burgess took up with his novel [Junk](#) [4], the challenge of alerting young readers to the reality of a world they may be tempted to enter. It is a noble cause and one never more needing to be taken up than today. To the librarians of senior schools, the message is clear: order this book and ask your teacher colleagues to talk it through with the pupils.

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[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/clean>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/229>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/rebecca-butler>

[4] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/218/childrens-books/articles/junk-at-twenty>