

☰ ABR main menu

☰ ABR features menu

Rachael Mead reviews 'Seabirds Crying in the Harbour Dark' by Catherine Cole

font size

Print (</abr-online/current-issue/4549-rachael-mead-reviews-seabirds-crying-in-the-harbour-dark-by-catherine-cole?tmpl=component&print=1>)

Email (</component/mailto/?tmpl=component&template=ausbookreview&link=621cc170fb37b35e7fd1444dcb616be1bf53966a>)

Comment (</abr-online/current-issue/4549-rachael-mead-reviews-seabirds-crying-in-the-harbour-dark-by-catherine-cole#itemCommentsAnchor>)

RACHAEL MEAD (</ABR-ONLINE/CURRENT-ISSUE/AUTHOR/8431-RACHAELMEAD>)

Published in January–February 2018, no. 398 (</abr-online/current-issue>)

It is a pleasure to read a collection of short fiction in which every story is a work of elegant and meticulous craft. Catherine Cole has brought her significant observational and lyrical skills as a poet, novelist, and memoirist to bear on these stories, and the narratives unfold with cool, restrained style. However, this collection has more to offer readers than a selection of stylistically beautiful pieces. With ingenious use of theme and artful arrangement of individual stories, Cole delivers a cohesive collection that is far greater than the sum of its discrete parts.

In the opening story, a teacher in a remote outback school is moved by the fact that none of her students has ever seen the ocean: 'Forget about nations based on land boundaries, what links us all is our shared origin in the sea.' This idea of the ocean as linking humans rather than separating them resonates throughout the collection. Cole is similarly attentive to notions of home, exploring the concept from a variety of perspectives, yet always working from the position that, at some point in history, the forebears of all non-Indigenous Australians have crossed oceans to make this land their home.

While most of the stories stand alone, Cole plays with mini-cycles, some characters reappearing in multiple stories throughout the collection. Various stories delve into the plight of refugees and the dangers of seeking asylum by sea, but Cole broaches the subject without any sense of didacticism. Cole deftly lifts the edges of people's lives and looks beneath, camouflaging her insights with a deceptively light touch. This intelligent collection reminds us of all that unites us as humans: love, family, and the desire for a safe place to call home.



(/media/k2/items/cache/68dbb6f574e242b2efdd)

SEABIRDS CRYING IN THE
HARBOUR DARK
by Catherine Cole
UWA Publishing, \$24.99 pb, 246 pp,
9781742859503



Rachael Mead (</abr-online/current-issue/author/8431-rachaelmead>)

Rachael Mead is a writer, poet, and bookseller living in South Australia. Her second book of poetry *The Flaw in the Pattern* is

...

By this contributor

Rachael Mead reviews 'The Secret Life of Whales: A marine biologist's revelations' by Micheline Jenner (</abr-online/current-issue/4554-rachael-mead-reviews-the-secret-life-of-whales-a-marine-biologist-s-revelations-by-micheline-jenner>)

Related articles

Dan Dixon review 'The Best of The Lifted Brow: Volume Two' edited by Alexander Bennetts (</abr-online/current-issue/4556-dan-dixon-review-the-best-of-the-lifted-brow-volume-two-edited-by-alexander-bennetts>)

Rachael Mead reviews 'The Secret Life of Whales: A marine biologist's revelations' by Micheline Jenner (</abr-online/current-issue/4554-rachael-mead-reviews-the-secret-life-of-whales-a-marine-biologist-s-revelations-by-micheline-jenner>)

Anna MacDonald reviews 'Her' by Garry Disher (</abr-online/current-issue/4548-anna-macdonald-reviews-her-by-garry-disher>)

Lisa Bennett reviews 'The Art of Navigation' by Rose Michael (</abr-online/current-issue/4538-lisa-bennett-reviews-the-art-of-navigation-by-rose-michael>)

Published in January–February 2018, no. 398 (</abr-online/current-issue>)

Tweet Be the first of your friends to like this.

More in this issue:

« Anna MacDonald reviews 'Her' by Garry Disher (</abr-online/current-issue/4548-anna-macdonald-reviews-her-by-garry-disher>)

Blanche Clark reviews 'Dissent: The student press in 1960s Australia' by Sally Percival Wood » (</abr-online/current-issue/4550-blanche-clark-reviews-dissent-the-student-press-in-1960s-australia-by-sally-percival-wood>)

Tagged under Rachael Mead (</abr-online/current-issue/tag/Rachael%20Mead>)

Catherine Cole (</abr-online/current-issue/tag/Catherine%20Cole>) In Brief (</abr-online/current-issue/tag/In%20Brief>)

Fiction (</book-reviews/fiction>)

Leave a Comment

Sorry, but if you are using an Institutional Subscription to view the website the comment facility is not available.