



The ACB with Honora Lee

Books Reviewed:

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[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Kate De Goldi is an award winning author from New Zealand who has had only one book ? [The 10PM Question](#) [4] - published previously in Britain. The reaction to that and the quality of the present book suggest that British readers ought to hear a lot more from her. The ACB of the title is a book that young Perry has compiled from her experiences with the residents of her grandmother's nursing home. Her gran, Honora Lee, is suffering from dementia, which accentuates a nature already cantankerous and eccentric. Perry is the subject both of her parents' relative indifference (they live such busy lives) and also their well-meaning attempts to fill her life with out of school improving activities in which, despite her best efforts to please, she has little interest and as much success. With Honora Lee and the other residents and staff at the Santa Lucia home she finds both a new family and an inspiration for her creativity. As she creates her book from conversations and events, sometimes wayward, strange, funny or sad, she learns something of the previous lives of the old people and the patience and humour needed to care for them. What might be a quite worthy book is in De Goldi's hands an uplifting, witty and poignant tribute to the variousness of life. It's told mainly through dialogue and through a third-person narrative infused with Perry's own deadpan, ironic, insatiably curious and defiantly idiosyncratic attitude. It's a gloriously skewed version of what can be a very depressing situation which is supported by some inspired, almost abstract, illustrations by Gregory O'Brien which somehow express both the ordered restriction of Perry's other leisure time and the organic playfulness and community of life at Santa Lucia.

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