



The Catherine Wheel: Text Classics

Elizabeth Harrower

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Twenty-five-year-old Clemency James has moved from Sydney to a chilly bedsit on the other side of the world. During the day she studies for the bar by correspondence; in the evenings she gives French lessons to earn a meagre wage. When she meets Christian, a charismatic would-be actor, she can see he's trouble - not least because he's involved with an older woman who has children. She is drawn to him nonetheless: drawn into his world of unpayable debts and wild promises.

First published in 1960, *The Catherine Wheel* is Elizabeth Harrower's third novel and the only one of her books not set in Australia. In it she turns her unflinching gaze on the grim realities of 1950s London, and the madness that can infect couples.

Elizabeth Harrower was born in Sydney in 1928 and moved to London in 1951. Her first novel *Down in the City* was published in 1957, and was followed by *The Long Prospect* a year later. In 1959 she returned to Sydney where she began working for the ABC and as a book reviewer for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In 1960 she published *The Catherine Wheel*, the story of an Australian law student in London, her only novel not set in Sydney. *The Watch Tower* appeared in 1966. No further novels were published until May 2014 when Harrower's 'lost' novel, *In Certain Circles*, was released. Her work is austere, intelligent, ruthless in its perceptions about men and women. She was admired by many of her contemporaries, including Patrick White and Christina Stead, and is without doubt among the most important writers of the postwar period in Australia. Elizabeth Harrower lives in Sydney.

'*The Catherine Wheel* is a great starting point for those new to Harrower's work, those readers who are unafraid to face the darker aspects of desire we're sometimes too ashamed to acknowledge.' *3am Magazine*, Top Reads for 2015

'I love *The Watch Tower*, but I love *The Catherine Wheel* more. Like all the Harrower books, with their psychological mysteries, their droll humour, their brilliant language and ear for voices, *The Catherine Wheel* takes your hand from the first page and beckons you in.' Ramona Koval

'Rich and rewarding.' Starred review, *Kirkus*

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