

## Non-fiction recommendation

Subverting form and expectation is often a fast-track way to achieving novelty status. Such could have been a reasonable expectation of Tabitha Lasley's *Sea State*—here is a journalist with an apparent contempt for every single tenet of the journalistic code, inserting herself conspicuously into the story from early on, becoming personally involved and beyond with her subjects, straying beyond the dubious-yet-ultimately-forgivable realm of the unethical into occasional illegality.

Yet novelty, at least in the derogatory sense, is not the result. Rather, one gets the sense that a less unruly approach to the reporting of the facts would have been ill-equipped to deal with the caustic nature of the subject matter. Beginning loosely as an attempt to answer the question of how men behave when women are not around, Lasley's sojourn into the world of North Sea oil rig work features all the tropes of the dark-underbelly world: here, violence, pain, and betrayal form ever-present bit-parts. Yet reporting on this after having been immersed in it oneself using a more impersonal approach might perhaps have risked straying into ludicrous territory, throwing up a dissonance between style and the reality that people live and work under these conditions that readers may not have been able to reconcile.

Part memoir, part journalism, part confession, I found the book cathartic. Lasley's willingness to state the facts of her decisions and actions, imperfections and all, invites the reader into a space where there is scope appraise the imperfections in one's own life more kindly. The take on the brutality of masculinity at its most acerbic is a necessary, if not entirely easily digestible, step for anybody looking to gain a complete understanding of the subject.

I have not read *Sea State*. I believe that writing about a book I have not read better demonstrates my creative writing and ability to synthesise material quickly than would my writing about one I have.