

[PDF] Island

Alasta MacLeod - pdf download free book

Books Details:

Title: Island
Author: Alasta MacLeod
Released: 2002-09-05
Language:
Pages: 448
ISBN: 0099422328
ISBN13: 978-0099422327
ASIN: 0099422328



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Description:

"Once there was a family with a Highland name who lived beside the sea." So begins "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," a 1985 entry from *Island*. The story continues, "And the man had a dog of which he was very fond." And there you have the basic elements of an Alistair MacLeod story: dog, family, and sea. The author--whose 2000 novel won him a measure of long-overdue acclaim--shuffles these elements into a surprisingly infinite variety of configurations, always with the same precise, confident, quiet language.

His big theme is the abandonment of the rural. Though his characters live in the fishing communities of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, the seaside isn't a place where they dwell contentedly. In half the stories, young men and boys feel a pull toward academe and the center of the country. In the other half, academically successful middle-aged men return to the wild eastern coast of Canada to try to reclaim the life they left behind. Both dilemmas are impossible to resolve--no one can be both a city mouse and a country mouse--and MacLeod wisely doesn't offer easy solutions.

What makes the writing sing, though, is the specificity of his descriptions of rural life. He tells you exactly how things work: "The sheep move in and out of their lean-to shelter, restlessly stamping their feet or huddling together in tightly packed groups. A conspiracy of wool against the cold." The people here are ultimately defined by the physical world, and MacLeod has a farmer's visceral feel for geography. As he writes in "The Lost Salt Gift of Blood": "Even farther out, somewhere beyond Cape Spear lies Dublin and the Irish coast; far away but still the nearest land, and closer now than is Toronto or Detroit, to say nothing of North America's more western cities; seeming almost hazily visible now in imagination's mist." This is regional fiction in the best sense: it belongs to one perfectly evoked place. --*Claire Dederer* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Library Journal One of Canada's most important writers, MacLeod grew up in Cape Breton. Here he presents a powerful collection of short stories set on Canada's Eastern shore, where the traditions and Gaelic language of transplanted Scots continue in a harsh new world. All of these affecting, elegiac tales focus on the strong ties of loving kin, particularly the link between fathers and sons. Fathers share the experience of work with their sons, and boys puzzle over family events and tragedies and learn to be men in the close-knit communities. Sadly, as times change, fathers lose their sons, who become educated men and leave the land and sea for professions in the city. MacLeod's characters are deeply touching and memorable, and their simple lives are rich with loyalty and affection for their families and way of life. The sumptuous language, which immerses the reader in this stunning but unrelenting land, begs to be read aloud. A very special collection; recommended for all public libraries. DCathleen A. Towey, Port Washington P.L., NY
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