

The signification of emotion, drama and unhurried poetic writing style in the lyr...

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“...the tears froze to their reddened cheeks.” Indeed, Calum’s poignant reimagining of the past in *The Road to Rankin’s Point* unveils the dramatic and acute emotion of grief that permeates MacLeod’s narratives. Inspired by a historical context of dispersal and Gaelic clanship, Alistair MacLeod’s anthology of short stories *Island* employs a poetic cadence, underpinned by emotive intensity, to unveil dramatic realizations of loss and unhurried reflections of love. The discursively unhurried nature of MacLeod’s stories traverses the intensity and poignance of moments of existential revelation and reflection on the past. Moreover, the lyrical cadence of MacLeod’s poetic works reveals the entrancing and heart-warming nature of love and kinship. However, the poetic and figurative style of MacLeod’s works contributes, in fact, to dramatic and powerfully theatrical scenes of trepidation and libido.

Discursive and relaxedly unhurried passages are used by MacLeod to contrast scenes of dramatic action and traverse the intensity of realization and yearning. MacLeod’s orchestration of ruminating repetition in James’ realization that “ I do not know when he may die. I do not know in what darkness she may cry out...” endows his recollections with a lyrical quality and an overwhelming sense of uncertainty. MacLeod contrasts this emotive discursiveness with the dramatic scenes of the profane businessman likening the weather to “ hotter than a whore in hell” to underscore the distinction between a crude and apathetic modernity and emotive revelations of the foolishness of attempting to disown family heritage. Similar to this unhurried repetition in “ *The Vastness of the Dark*” is the ashamed and reflective repetition in “ *The Boat*” of “ it is not an easy thing to know that your mother lives alone...it is not an easy thing to know that your mother looks upon you

with bitterness” that unveils the narrator’s guilt at the abandonment of his mother and his yearning to reconcile heritage with intellectual stimulation. Indeed, MacLeod employs unhurried repetition in this passage to reveal how individuals can continuously traverse the emotional states of unsettlement and shame. Hence, MacLeod’s more repetitious passages are not dramatic in quality but rather highly relaxed and reflective, providing insight into regret and epiphany.

However, MacLeod’s poetic imagery adopts a dramatic quality, filled with theatrical innuendo, as MacLeod reveals the frenetic nature of the sexual act and the existential dangers of seafaring lifestyles. In “Island”, MacLeod’s theatrical imagery of “mackerel...turning the water to black with their density” and “snapping off the flesh” from each other vividly alludes to the frenzy of sperm as they compete to fertilize an egg. Indeed, the excitement in this scene portrays the furore and ardor of carnal sexual intercourse that leaves bodies “sticky with human seed”. Contrastingly, the dramatic imagery in “The Boat” of “running between and amongst the waves but never confronting their towering might” reveals the perilous nature of the traditional occupation of fishing. MacLeod, furthermore, underscores the brutality and painfulness of the deaths caused by such occupations in his powerfully vivid imagery of the narrator’s father whose “hands were shredded” and whose “testicles...eaten by fish.” Therefore, the horrific and salacious imagery of MacLeod’s narratives unveil, respectively, the disgusting nature of death and the impetuous nature of sex with dramatic intensity.

Nevertheless, the lyrical cadence and majestic, beautiful imagery in MacLeod's narrative synthesize to poetically unveil the contentment of love and heart-warming unity of familial kinship. Through the metaphor of a family "drawn together in the tableau of their care" around a "Christmas tree" MacLeod illuminates the radiant familial affection that is captured in memories and moments of unity. Indeed, MacLeod emotively proffers that, in spite of families being afflicted by illness that renders individuals "not too well lately" and the loss of innocence as children "journey further and further" from their lives of naivety, the indelible connectedness of families should be celebrated. Resembling this depiction of familial love from "To Every Thing There Is a Season" is the imagery of singing that "makes the hairs stand up on the back of [Archibald]'s neck" in "The Tuning of Perfection." By likening Archibald's wife's signing to an "eagle at the apex of its arc" MacLeod poetically delineates how the intense emotions of romantic love and fond attachment transcend death and the passing of the years. The poetic and emotive nature of MacLeod's work hence reveals the indomitable intensity of familial and romantic love.

Ultimately, in MacLeod's anthology, exciting drama and discursive poetic passages combine to provide powerful insight into the emotiveness of family bonds and reflexivity. Indeed, the implication for readers is that such strong sentiments and connections are powerfully vivid and enduring or, in the words of the miners in "The Vastness of the Dark", "bound to bust your balls and break your heart".