

[Page 14 - A New Story by Alistair MacLeod: "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun"](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 42](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1986/6/1

they debated as to whether one should go in the boat and the other remain on the island, but each was afraid to be alone and so in the end they man? aged to drag and carry and almost float him to? wards the bobbing boat. They lay him facedown and covered him with what clothes there were and set off across the still-rolling sea. Those who waited on the shore missed the large presence of the man within the boat and some of them waded into the wa? ter and others rowed out in skiffs, attempting to hear the tearful messages called out across the rolling waves. The cu mor glas and her six young dogs were never seen again, or perhaps I should say they were nev? er seen again in the same way. After some weeks, a group of men circled the island tentatively in their boats but they saw no sign. They went again and then again but found nothing. A year later, and grown much braver, they beached their boats and walked the island carefully, looking into the small sea caves and the hollows at the base of the wind-ripped trees, thinking perhaps that if they did not find the dogs, they might at least find their whitened bones; but again they discovered nothing. The cu mor glas, though, was supposed to be sighted here and there for a number of years. Seen on a hill in one region or silhouetted on a ridge in another or loping across the valleys or glens in the early morning or the shadowy evening. Al? ways in the area of the half perceived. For a while she became rather like the Loch Ness Monster or the Sasquatch on a smaller scale. Seen but not recorded. Seen when there were no cameras. Seen but never taken. The mystery of where she went became entangled with the mystery of whence she came. There was in? creased speculation about the handmade box in which she had been found and much theorizing as to the individual or individuals who might have left it. People went to look for the box but could not find it. It was felt she might have been part of a buidseachd or evil spell cast on the man by some mysterious enemy. But no one could go much farther than that. All of his caring for her was recounted over and over again and nobody missed any of the ironies. What seemed literally known was that she had crossed the winter ice to have her pups and had been unable to get back. No one could remember ev? er seeing her swim; and in the early months at least, she could not have taken her young pups with her. The large gentle man with the smell of animal se? men often heavy on his hands was my great-great- great-grandfather, and it may be argued that he died because he was too good at breeding animals or that he cared too much about their fulfilment and well-being. He was no longer there for his own child of the spring who, in turn, became my great- great-grandfather, and he was perhaps too much there in the memory of his older sons who saw him fall beneath the ambiguous force of the cu mor glas. The youngest boy in the boat was haunted and tormented by the awfulness of what he had seen. He would wake at night screaming that he had seen the cu mor glas a' bhais, the big grey dog of death, and his screams filled the house and the ears and minds of the listeners, bringing home again and a- gain the consequences of their loss. One morning, after a night in which he saw the cu mor glas a' bhais so vividly that his sheets were drenched with sweat, he walked to



the high cliff which faced the island and there he cut his throat with a fish knife and fell into the sea. The other brother lived to be forty, but, again so the story goes, he found himself in a Glasgow pub Louisbourg "*****" Craft Workshops p. 0. Box 83, Louisbourg, N. S. (902) 733-3233 BOA IMO Produced in Our 4/orkshops: Screenprinting, Metal Moulding Local Handcrafts Other Maritime Items Refreshments Available No Admission Fee OPEN MAY 1 TO OCTOBER 31 May 1 - Mid June, Mid Sep. - Oct. 31: Guided Tours weekdays: 9-6, Sat & Sun: 10-6 Of Workshops ', ' m.' c . '5'SS' Mid June - Mid Sep.: Weekdays: 9-9 Sat & Sun: 9-9 J.A.Young&Son INSURANCE SERVICES Commercial Residential Life & Group TRAVEL SERVICES Business & Personal INVESTMENT & FINANCIAL SERVICES Consultants for Nova Scotia Savings & Loan, First City Trust, RRSPs & Certificates 181 Charlotte Street Sydney 539-4800 * QUALITY SAME-DAY DRY CLEANING * 6 DAYS A WEEK * Vogue Cleaners Professional Repairs and Alterations on Ladies' and Men's Garments Prince Street, Sydney (902) 539-0019 (902) 727-2403 The Cabinet Shop Kitchen Cabinets &e Vanities Sales, Designs & Installation Mike Byrne Rear 199 Townsend Street Sydney, N. S. BIP 5E4 Morrison's Stores Ltd Home , Hardware Home Hardware General Merchants Celebrating over 100 Years of Service StPeters Richmond County, Nova Scotis BOE 3B0