ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Dirty Laundry
Don Taylor
Serpent's Tail
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Step aside Kurt Vonnegut here comes Don Taylor! Mr. Taylor puts his pile of dirty laundry together to be aired in front of all in this unsettling, sardonic book of hard-hitting realities of an Englishman's life. Mr. Taylor rides the edge in the Vonnegut style of in-your-face writing that wavers between making the reader flinch at his rawness in sexuality, and yet, at the same time not want to put the book down.

Taylor's main character, Errol Oldfield, is a simple discount shop clerk who is haunted by his lust for co-worker Maxine and the call of his past. Errol poaches salmon as a sideline just as he is poaching on life. Paraphilia, he had to explain, is a dramatic impairment in the ability to love, and a long standing erotic preoccupation and a pressure to act upon the erotic fantasy. "Paraphilia," he said, "which might easily apply in your case, often stems from poor family connections in childhood and can have all manner of spin-offs." And spin-offs we find with Taylor's characters going in a sordid variety of directions. There is Robert who is married to an old friend of Errol's, but is having an affair with Errol's roommate, Bernard. Then Taylor gives us glimpses of Linda and Daisy, Errol's wife and stepdaughter, yet we never know their significance until the end. Each character brings his own haunting ghosts and demons.

The twists and turns in this book as Errol stumbles through his life while recalling pieces of his past keeps the reader curious. The reader never knows what avenue this book will take, and most often is surprised by the ones it does. From the beginning of the book where Errol is found rooming with a gay lover he hates, to his secret lusts, missing past and secret room, the reader is tumbled through this man's Dirty Laundry. Taylor's tale consists of impressionistic memories of sex, madness and abuse that often leaves the reader feeling haunted or "dirty" as well.

Taylor's first novel leaves an impact on his readers not soon forgotten. Taylor lives in County Durham, England and works as a water bailiff.

Michele McDonald