



[Home](#) > Rotten Island

Rotten Island

Books Reviewed:

[Rotten Island](#) [1]

Issue:

[176](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Brian Alderson](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

First published in the USA as **Bad Island** in 1969, this was Steig's third picture book for children (he was 62 at the time). It arrived in Britain in a revised edition, under the present title in 1986 and its republication now ? how come by the NMM? ? gives a fresh chance to hail his genius. By the time that he died in 2003 he had written more than 30 more children's books with barely a dud among them (**Shrek** is now the most widely known, but, so far as I recall, he did not figure in the movie credits) and one wonders if the reissue of **Rotten Island**, with its joyous encomium by Quentin Blake, will result in a revival. (If so, let's have some of his longer stories too, like **Abel's Island** and **The Real Thief**, with their superb line and wash drawings.)

Rotten Island admirably sets the pace for such a move. It is a wild account ? hardly a story ? of a place of terror, fear and ugliness which comes to be transformed by flowers. 25 pages are given over to a menagerie of monsters, whose almost chewable descriptions are as hilarious as their portraits: ?fat or scraggly, dry or slimy, with scales, warts, pimples, tentacles, talons, fangs... clacking shells covered with grit and petrified sauerkraut...? There is an electric ferocity to the drawing which brilliantly shifts gear as a night of cleansing rain brings an irenic ending and: ?it wasn't long before the first birds came to the new, beautiful island?.

Steig aficionados will be interested to know that in 2007-8 the Jewish Museum of New York held a Steig exhibition accompanied by a volume of drawings and essays celebrating Steig's life: **The Art of William Steig**, Yale University Press, 2007, 978 0 300 12478 1.

Running Order:

52

Source URL (retrieved on Feb '20): <http://savfikn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/176/childrens-books/reviews/rotten-island>

Links:

[1] <http://savfikn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/rotten-island>

[2] <http://savfikn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/176>

[3] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/brian-alderson>