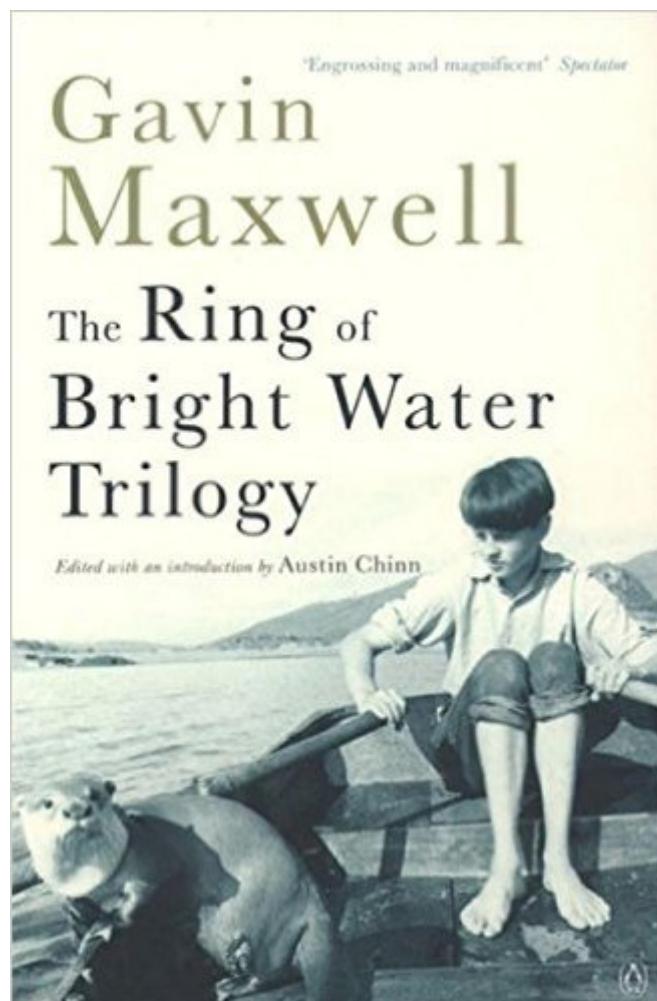


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Ring Of Bright Water Trilogy



Synopsis

Fifty years ago Gavin Maxwell went to live in an abandoned house on a shingle beach on the west coast of Scotland. A haven for wildlife - he named his home Camusfearna and settled there with the otters Mij, Edal and Teko. Ring of Bright Water chronicles Gavin Maxwell's first ten years with the otters and touched the hearts of readers the world over, brilliantly evoking life with these playful animals in this natural paradise. Two further volumes followed bringing the story full circle telling of the difficult last years and the final abandonment of the settlement. For the first time the entire trilogy is available in a single narrative in this beautifully presented book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A difficult book (or trilogy of abridged books) to review, this - I suppose I should start by conceding that, despite the dark moments, the catastrophes, the sadnesses, the nature red in tooth and claw moments and the man blood-stained with gun and whatever comes to hand moments, this trilogy made me laugh out loud with joy and merriment more than any book I can remember reading since adolescence. The writing is superbly Thoreauian at its best, particularly the descriptive passages of natural landscapes and, of course, otters! Maxwell doesn't pack the Transcendentalist reflective heft of Thoreau (What writer does?). But this is a good thing. I can't imagine Thoreau falling in love with an otter and writing so deftly about both them and his feelings toward them. Indeed, reading this book is more than a little like riding an emotional rollercoaster. But it is not in any way what is called "sentimental" - a word which, in so many cases, is simply what those lacking in emotional depth are wont to term the writings of those who possess such depths. The writer is an Oxford-educated stylist

and man-of-learning whose love for the natural world and the wild creatures that inhabit it is deep and abiding. What else can I say? Well, there is a philosophical subtext here. On the first page, Maxwell writes that, "I had yet to learn that happiness can neither be achieved nor held by endeavour." Happiness is something one encounters - A hard lesson, but one which the reader (this one, in any event) feels he has learned, along with Maxwell, at the end.

The story captures the essence of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The beauty and the brutality. The second and third books in the trilogy provide an honesty that leaves you with a respect for and a desire to know more about a man who lived this remarkable life. You will of course fall in love with the otters who allowed people to share their lives for better and for worse.

Gavin Maxwell's stories of his retreat from civilization and love of nature should be read by many, many more people, especially on this side of the pond. While I loved the stories (had read Ring of Bright Water before but not the other two volumes), the readers should know that this compendium does not include all material from any of the three original volumes. As Austin Chinn (editor) points out in his introduction, they were abridged due to publisher's space requirements and none of the three were totally spared. While I understand the modern facts of economic life, this is now one person's (or some committee's) version of what the salient points of the original works were and an unsuspecting reader will be left with a less robust piece of literature. As the original volumes are out of print, this version is better than not reading Maxwell's stories. I intend to find used complete versions of the second and third parts of the story.

I first thought that the title " Ring of Bright Water " (taken from a poem) was a reference to the author's love of Mij , his second otter. But, from a line in the book he indicates it to be a love of nature/life his home in the wilds of Scotland and its animal inhabitants. I rate the trilogy (edited version) higher than the unedited first volume as it is free of most of the unnecessary descriptive details of the landscape, and also because Gavin learned to better provide safety for his animal friends (tho he does take part in a hare hunt, really unforgiveable). That said the pages are crammed with the miserable deaths of many animals under his " care ", and they all seem to take place when he is away. All this leads up to ultimate disappointments and disaster despite massive efforts to set things right by the author and for me it shows most of all that life and the force behind it (the underlying reality) is indifferent to suffering. Never has a voice spoken to me across time and space as has that of Gavin Maxwell. The books leave me distressed.

I saw the movie "Ring of Bright Water" as a boy, and the only scene I remembered was the otter's death. When I purchased the movie as an adult I had to skip that scene. With that said, the writing is superb, and his ability to tell a story equally brilliant but be aware that many animals meet a tragic and senseless death at the hands of humans.

I read this (ROBW) originally when it was published and found it very moving. Recently we saw on tv a visit to his final home. This encouraged me to read it again, and as we are now in the Kindle age I got the trilogy. I have in fact also read his biography. All great reading and Maxwell was actually a very good writer.

Although the first part of this book became a much-loved bestseller, the rest of it is very disappointing. I found the cruel treatment of the otters very upsetting and I would not recommend this book to animal lovers at all.

I saw the movie "Ring of Bright Water" when I was a kid. (No, I am NOT saying how long ago that was.) I enjoyed it " after all, what kid wouldn't like a story about a playful otter! But, I didn't love it " probably because of the ending. Now, X years later, I finally read the book that was the basis for the movie " and the two follow-ups that contributed to it, as well. And, X years later, I once again say I enjoyed it. BUT, I didn't love it. The book " books, as it is an abridgement of all 3 books in the " otter trilogy " is focused on Mr. Maxwell's life and how the otters changed it, rather than on the otters themselves, although there certainly are enough anecdotes and stories of the otters themselves " yes, multiple, as Mij was only the first to come to live with Maxwell. Anyone who expects otherwise should be prepared. " Abridgement " is a dirty word to me " in this case, the editor states that they cut out everything in the 3 books that involved Maxwell but not the otters. While I certainly read the book for the otters more than an autobiography of Maxwell, I expect that some of the items trimmed would have lent additional clarity to some of the points that Maxwell was attempting to make about life while describing his interaction with the otters. Good book " I'll never know if the originals were " great " or not (I'm not going to reread this material to pick up the additional content). RATING: 3.5 stars, rounded up to 4 stars for those sites that cannot handle fractions of a star.

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