

## **Waves**

by Jared A Carnie

Urbane Publications

Reviewed by Gabrielle Barnby

There are many aspects of island life that will strike newcomers as unusual. There is the horizon, long and low, there are the turbulent interstitial spaces where water moves. For a visitor, all these things are moderated by state of mind and purpose.

In Carnie's novel the central character Alex has arrived at a moment in his life when the world seems utterly closed; he feels like an island. His best friend James' purpose as they travel to Lewis is to help him discover a more positive perspective.

The reader is introduced to the landscape of the Hebrides from the point of view of a naïve visitor. As Alex passes through a series of social events and experiences in the new environment his perspective does indeed begin to change. However, there were occasions when I found myself wanting more precision in Carnie's descriptions, more of the writer's interpretive eye.

The narrative itself is firmly grounded in everyday life – music and popular culture references abound. The novel exudes a sense of comfort throughout – although at times this undercuts the tension of Alex's underlying emotional state, the reader is well furnished with musings on familiar preoccupations to carry them along.

Carnie also gives the reader a determinedly sober protagonist, strikingly opposite to many dramas exploring the same topic for a similar age group, where drinking and its consequences can frequently be used as a short-cut to emotional accessibility.

The journey of Alex's emotional change is soothed, aided and mid-wifed by the Hebridean landscape and some exceptional hospitality. Carnie's prose is fluent and well-paced, he handles social gatherings with ease and the Ceilidh is certainly a well-observed set piece. As a first time novelist he shows much promise and is sure to offer us more in the future.