



Alfred Lewis

Biography

Alfred Lewis (1902-1977) was born in Flores in the archipelago of the Azores, Portugal. He was the son of a nineteenth century whaleman who eventually became a gold prospector in California before returning to his homeland. Lewis immigrated to Central Valley (Atwater) in 1922. He learned English after arriving in America, studied law, and became a municipal judge in San Joaquin Valley town of Los Baños. He was the first and only Portuguese immigrant to capture the attention of the English-speaking public.

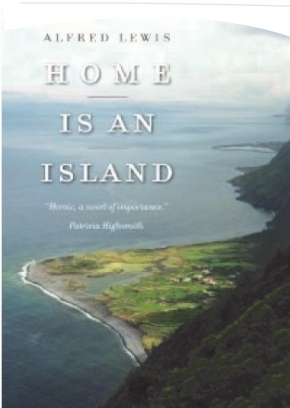
Bibliography

Lewis wrote nine books, six plays, about 200 poems, and 43 short stories such as *Box-Maker de Luxe* and *Fame, Fortune, and Tequila*. His poems are included in a collection of poetry in English and Portuguese called *Aquarelas Florentinas e Outras Poesias*. He is the author of *Home is an Island* which is about life in the Old Country (Azores) at the beginning of the 20th century where a young man is about to emigrate to America, the land of his dreams. He wrote a sequel called *Sixty Acres and a Barn*, describing the life of recent immigrant to America pursuing the American Dream on a dairy farm in California in the 1940s. Both books highlight the balancing act of dual identities and divided loyalties in individuals and communities between cultures. Alfred Lewis captures how the poor in the Azores viewed the promise of America and how Portuguese immigrants made a new life for themselves in America.



Awards and Recognition

As the author of various short stories in a literary journal called *Prairie Schooner*, Lewis was referenced in an anthology of *The Best American Short Stories* in 1949 and 1950. The *New York Times* confirmed that Lewis was the Portuguese immigrant writer of major renown in the United States.



Sample from “Home is an Island”

“These beloved things belonged to the past, and the past marched before him like a magic parade, in which he was the chief warrior, the principal performer. For, very soon now, he would leave. Father, Mother, Maria de Serra, all his friends... It required courage. And yet, as he dwelt on the possibility of his living and dying in this island, all sorrows and doubts fled. How small and afraid was his island, all alone, almost forgotten in the middle of the turbulent sea!” (pg. 1)

Sources

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Group Information

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