



The Birds

Daphne du Maurier, Herbert Geisen (Translator)

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"The birds kept coming at him from the air, silent save for the beating wings. The terrible, fluttering wings. He could feel the blood on his hands, his wrists, his neck. Each stab of a swooping beak tore his flesh. If only he could keep them from his eyes. Nothing else mattered."

The Birds Details

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Author : Daphne du Maurier , Herbert Geisen (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Birds for online ebook

MaryannC.Book Fiend says

I read this awhile ago and I have to say this book still resonates with me. I'm not one for horror books as this is classified, but I did like this a lot. It creeped me out more so than the movie did.

Becky says

I'm a little behind on my reading goal for this year, (4 books!) and so I was counting on Audible to help me out with some short horror that I could listen to and multitask and feel productive. I found this, which comes bundled with "Don't Look Now", on sale, so I snagged it. So what if they are technically novellas? Counts as a book in my... book.

Anyway, so I listened to it last night, and there were things I liked, and things I wanted more of, like story resolution.

I've only read one other du Maurier story, the one named after me *cough*, and I'm coming to realize, based on the two I've read, that du Maurier really enjoys leaving her stories with an air of mystery. Nothing is ever really explained or fully resolved by the end, and the reader is given the chance to play god (so to speak) and fix things up in their mind regarding the way the story wraps up. She just sets the stage and gets the thing rolling along.

In this case though... hmm. It feels like the story ends just when things are starting to get crazy. I'm OK with leaving the story open ended so that the reader can resolve things in the way that they are most hoping to see. Sometimes I think authors can give too much resolution and take away some of the enjoyment of the story. Seems like a fine line to walk - too much? too little? just right? and according to whom? Everyone will feel differently.

So, I'm kind of undecided. On the one hand, I really liked the story right up until the abrupt ending. It's suspenseful and there's that air of mystery I mentioned. The characters were pretty well fleshed out, and there was real, palpable danger. There were plausible theories provided for why the birds were acting this way, and what was driving them, and enough detail given to let the reader continue on with the story on their own. But at the same time, I really wanted to SEE how Nat would handle the crisis and protect his family. I wanted to see him fight and try to win.

I wanted just a bit more from this, but what was there was good. I also really, really liked the reader. I loved his voice and the low urgency he gave the reading when not doing the character dialogue. It really set the tone of the book quite nicely.

Horror October #13

Bob says

If all you know about The Birds is the Hitchcock movie, I suggest you go ahead and read the book. The only thing the movie and the book have in common is that Birds go homicidal and attack humans. As different as the movie and book are, there both great stories.

Missy J says

WOW! What a short story!

I haven't watched Alfred Hitchcock's film adaptation of this book and I only vaguely glanced over the book summary. But when I started reading this story today I was instantly hooked. I had to take breaks in between. And boy, did that only add to the suspense of the story!

The Birds is a short, apocalyptic type of story. Nat and his family live on the British coastline when one night a variety of birds attack the children's bedroom. The next day, Nat inquires with his neighbors, but they treat him like a lunatic. However, his wife confirms his suspicions when the BBC reports of bird attacks in London and across the nation. What has happened to the birds?

I enjoyed that the story was very suspenseful. When I read this book, it flashed like a movie in my mind. The landscape description and Nat's train of thought were impeccable. The story makes you think of what matters in life and that ultimately, nature is more powerful than man. I live in Hong Kong and in the summertime (May-October) we get a lot of typhoons. When a big typhoon is expected to hit the city, we usually stock up on food. But even big typhoons only last for a day or two. In this story, Nat has to not only think about food, but also fuel, candles, timber (to secure the windows)....

We live in a world that is so interconnected and interdependent, if a major AND unexpected disaster strikes, what are we going to do?

Connie says

Very atmospheric horror story about birds attacking humans in England. They come in like the planes in formation during the Blitz. Nat, a resourceful veteran, tries to protect his family. (I shouldn't have read it right before bedtime!)

Anatoly says

Captivating from the start, this was a thrilling read. Though short and predictable, du Maurier is able to keep the suspense real and evident throughout the story.

Duane says

While I liked Hitchcock's movie "The Birds", and admittedly it is a classic in film history, to me somehow, it doesn't quite equal Daphne du Maurier's original tale. They are very different, almost unrecognizable, and

the novel delivers its horror much more subtlety than the film, but just as effectively. There are other noticeable differences also, the setting most obvious. The novel is set in Cornwall England on the seashore. The movie, for reasons of convenience, is set in Bodega Bay, California. The characters and events in the story are also much different. Both are very good, I just prefer the book.

Yoana says

A lot more terrifying than the film.

The various species of birds, so different in size, behaviour and place on the food chain, consolidate in a mass homogenous threat, like a natural calamity the humans are helpless to stop or hide from - like a faceless, indifferent force driven by an unknown but relentless impulse to destroy. Attacking as a single unit, they're invulnerable to violence and undeterred by reinforcements. It's not your generic "smart beast" story where animals suddenly gain reasoning powers and use them to massacre humans for revenge or for the heck of it. The birds don't seem motivated by anything, they don't appear to have determination or a purpose - they're like a force of nature, like the persistent east wind, uncontrollable, impenetrable, impossible to reason with or scare, or stop by any means known to man. And that makes them much more terrifying than any intelligent shark or cunning dinosaur.

Badseedgirl says

September 2017

I read this book in 6th grade, along with Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart, and Hawthorne's Rappaccini's Daughter. All were made for the horror-loving tween. I guess I am trying to relive my youth, bibliographicly so to speak.

At 10 year old, I loved the starkness of the story. A bleak outcropping with a house jutting over the sea. The 43 year old me loves the same.

The movie The Birds is loosely based on this story. And by loosely based I mean they both have birds, and the birds attack people, but other than that, they are worlds apart.

Gary says

I loved the Alfred Hitchcock film taken from this book and that was probably what drew me to reading this novel but although the story is similar the book is a completely different experience. Written in the classic style that du Maurier uses so well the book is thought provoking and although different from the film it is still packed with suspense. Another classic read from this master of suspense.

Ellie says

For a short story, it's amazingly frightening. du Maurier is brilliant. I had nightmares for months after this one and never felt the same about birds!

Yani says

La idea de *The Birds* es aterradora. Sencilla, pero aterradora al fin. Me hubiera gustado un poco más de desarrollo y no tanta rutina de supervivencia (que puede tener un motivo) para que el miedo que transmite se volviera más palpable, más presente. Lamento que no me haya gustado del todo.

Nat Hocken es un hombre que, debido a una incapacidad que le dejó la guerra, trabaja haciendo algunas tareas de granjero. Su gran capacidad de observación le advierte que algo extraño está pasando con los pájaros. No se comportan de la manera en la que deberían hacerlo, tampoco se agrupan como siempre... Los pájaros están formando un ejército porque tienen hambre. Ni más ni menos.

Con este relato uno se encuentra con especies de aves que tal vez desconocía o que no recordaba cómo eran físicamente. Puede llegar a ser muy útil tener una enciclopedia del reino animal al lado (o Google, en caso de haber olvidado también qué era una enciclopedia), sobre todo porque al enemigo es mejor conocerlo bien. *The Birds* recrea la eterna pelea entre el ser humano y la naturaleza desde un punto de partida interesante pero se excede en algunos aspectos, como la acumulación de nombres de pájaros. La información se dosifica poco y no se detalla.

Los personajes me parecieron similares a los que se ven en las actuales películas sobre catástrofes y tienen una clara distribución de roles, algo que a mí particularmente no me genera mucho aprecio. Nat es el que conoce a los pájaros, los entiende y el lector empieza a pensar en por qué el gobierno de Gran Bretaña no lo llama a él para solucionar el problema. No diré si esto sucede o no, por supuesto. Los demás no colaboran demasiado: la esposa es la típica asustadiza que siempre lleva la contraria, los niños no comprenden la situación, los vecinos creen tenerlo todo controlado, la gente de la ciudad no se toma nada en serio. *Team Bird*.

Hay algo que no se puede negar: la historia es horrorosa y deja mucho para pensar, sobre todo por el contexto que envuelve a Nat. A excepción de la acumulación que mencioné anteriormente, la narración es muy buena y provoca tensión en momentos clave. Las imágenes podrían haber sido más espantosas, pero se pierden entre otras. Ojalá me hubiera gustado más en su conjunto. De todos modos, quiero seguir leyendo a la autora.

Mohsin Maqbool says

Birds about to cook up something.

I absolutely loved reading Daphne du Maurier's "The Birds" and finished it in one sitting. Actually, it is a short story but is really not that short either.

Birds lead their attack.

Even though the cover of the book shown here has a shot from Alfred Hitchcock's film which goes by the same name, the director changed most of the book. The book keeps you guessing as to the outcome of the story, while Mr Hitchcock has the family leaving their sea town towards the end of the book to escape the horrifying birds.

The book has no cage in which a bird is kept or rather has been imprisoned (if you see things from a humane point). The film has Rod Taylor's young sister keeping a canary (please feel free to correct me if I am wrong) in a birdcage. She even takes it with her towards the end of the film. Many people believed that misery had befallen the family because of this reason, meaning birds had become the town's enemy because of one of their species being kept imprisoned.

Film poster of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" (1963).

The book has no bar where the town's folk keep blaming Tippi Hedren for bringing misfortune to their town as she is "an outsider" and does not belong here. The film's hero is involved with her and wants to marry her. The book's protagonist is a happily-married family man with a wife and two children, a daughter and a son who is the baby of the family. The film not only has a sister for the protagonist but also a mother. Mr Hitchcock added all these characters on his own maybe to add more spice to the story. And I must say he succeeds, as the film also happens to be a big favourite of mine.

Daphne Du Maurier at Menabilly.

Having said that, I must say that Miss Daphne has done a stupendous job with her story as it keeps you turning page after page and has you on the edge of your chair right till the very end.

Immediately grab hold of the book as you will truly be missing something if you don't read it!

Tippi Hedren along with the schoolchildren being attacked by the birds.

Melanti says

A very creepy and claustrophobic novel.

I really liked all the WWII references. I have to wonder, how much of England is left alive? How many could have survived? Managed to take refuge in their former bomb shelters, or had a well-built closet they could hide in? Could the London subway system - which was a vital shelter during the blitz - be nearly as secure against an enemy like the birds as it was against German bombs?

And I also have to wonder about all the references to Communism... Cold war terrors certainly play a big part here - with the winds from the east, and whispers that the Russians are at fault. But is du Maurier just pulling in the paranoia from the time to make a point about that, or is she actually trying to predict what the Cold War might evolve to?

Ahmad Sharabiani says

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Pink says

Daphne du Maurier is never a disappointment and this short story was no exception. Always atmospheric in her writing and gripping to the end.

Laura says

Creepy short story in true du Maurier fashion.

Michael says

Ist es der Temperatursturz oder der Wechsel der Windrichtung? Eine Erklärung dafür, dass sich unterschiedlichste Vogelarten, angefangen von den niedlichen Singvögeln bis hin zum Seeraben, plötzlich gegen den Menschen zusammenschließen und durch ihre zahlenmässige Überlegenheit selbst eine Metropole wie London im Sturm nehmen, gibt es nicht.

(hier: ein hinterhältig-bösartiger Seerabe)

Nat Hocken ist einer der ersten, der die Gefahr erkennt und verschanzt sich mit seiner Frau und seinen beiden Kindern in seinem Farmhaus. Doch wie lange kann der Belagerung stand gehalten werden, von welcher Seite ist Hilfe zu erwarten?

Du Mauriers THE BIRDS (1952) ist einer der Ahnherren des Tier-Horrors, der sich ab den fünfziger Jahren wachsender Beliebtheit erfreute.

In mehr als einem Punkt hat sich Guy N. Smith mit seiner Crabs-Serie an die Novelle angelehnt; so greifen auch die Vögel in Abhängigkeit von den Gezeiten die Menschen an und Militär und Regierung sind unfähig, geeignete Gegenmaßnahmen zu ergreifen (warum die Vögel nun aber gerade im Dunkeln angreifen sollten, hat sich mir trotz allem nicht erschlossen und ist nur als dramatisches Mittel zu verstehen).

Was THE BIRDS auch heute noch hören- und lesenswert macht ist aus meiner Sicht die klaustrophobisch apokalyptische Grundstimmung, die mit großer Eindringlichkeit transportiert wird.

Du Maurier beschreibt das Szenario auch mit Begriffen aus der Kriegsführung und so entstanden beim englischen Leser der frühen 50er Jahre sicherlich Reminiszenzen an die Traumata der englischen Landbevölkerung durch Fliegerangriffe im zweiten Weltkrieg. Ist vielleicht sogar der Krieg schuld an der Aggression der Vögel? Und sind diese ihrerseits nur Sinnbilder des Kalten Krieges? Gerade weil Du Maurier keine Erklärungen liefert, ist THE BIRDS eine so spannende wie geheimnisvolle Geschichte, die literarisch

anspruchsvoller als die üblichen Horrorgeschichtlein daher kommt.

Fast jeder dürfte Hitchcocks Verfilmung kennen, die sich an die Novelle anlehnt. Interessant ist, welche Änderungen der Meister des Suspense vornahm, damit aus der ungewöhnlichen Story ein Hollywoodstreifen werden konnte, der Kultstatus genießt.

Wo Du Mauriers Geschichte schlicht und trostlos wie die Landschaft daher kommt, in der die Handlung ansiedelt ist, reichert Hitchcock das Menü fleißig mit Romantik, Humor und Heldenmut an; und das offene Ende muss einem neuen Morgen weichen, der Anlaß zur Hoffnung gibt.

Fazit: Unbedingt lesen, es lohnt sich! Den Film zu kennen ist keine Entschuldigung dafür, das Buch links liegen zu lassen. Und alle, die sich als Kind unter Tischen eine Höhle eingerichtet und sich dort versteckt haben, müssen THE BIRDS sowieso lesen.

Kathy says

I have loved the movie since I was a kid! I have wanted to read it for awhile now! I listened to the Audible version, which is new to me, and I loved it. I wasn't feeling well, and having someone read to me, was so cool! I could get used to that! The book is very different than the Alfred Hitchcock movie, but that didn't bother me at all! I was truly scared and worried for these people. The story really did unsettle me. Even though, I knew what the premise was and there were no surprises, DuMaurier really drew me in and did more than just tell a story....I experienced the story!

AdiTurbo says

A brilliant novella (and much better than the movie) which transforms the horrors British families have lived through during WWII into an atmospheric horror story about birds amassing and starting to attack people. The sense of loss of control over their lives and their inability to protect their families as they would wish turn the characters in this story into tragic figures that are at the mercy of unknown powers which can snuff their lives out on a whim, with no explanation given. There is a deep sense of dread prevailing throughout the story, and you feel as helpless and as frustrated as the people in it in your inability to do anything to save them, or even understand what is going on and why. The birds are such a brilliant metaphor for almost any bad force that is affecting your little life. It happens a lot in my country that people mostly feel they have no control over security threats from all around, dangerous political trends such as Fascism, messianic and religious darkness, corruption and dysfunctional state systems, and financial threats that can hurt themselves and their families. Birds are dark and come from above, you can't communicate or haggle with them and you can't understand them, just like most things that happen in people's lives. In the new Hebrew edition, illustrations by Dan Birnboim show black birds hovering over the urban streets of Israel, which just goes to show how relevant this story still is.
