



## Jamaica Inn

*Daphne du Maurier*

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# **Jamaica Inn**

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## **Jamaica Inn Daphne du Maurier**

The coachman tried to warn her away from the ruined, forbidding place on the rainswept Cornish coast. But young Mary Yellan chose instead to honor her mother's dying request that she join her frightened Aunt Patience and huge, hulking Uncle Joss Merlyn at Jamaica Inn. From her first glimpse on that raw November eve, she could sense the inn's dark power. But never did Mary dream that she would become hopelessly ensnared in the vile, villainous schemes being hatched within its crumbling walls -- or that a handsome, mysterious stranger would so incite her passions ... tempting her to love a man whom she dares not trust.

## **Jamaica Inn Details**

Date : Published June 1st 1995 by Avon (first published 1935)

ISBN : 9780380725397

Author : Daphne du Maurier

Format : Paperback 302 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Gothic, Romance



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## From Reader Review Jamaica Inn for online ebook

### Ahmad Sharabiani says

Jamaica Inn, Daphne du Maurier

Jamaica Inn is a novel by the English writer Daphne du Maurier, first published in 1936. It was later made into a film, also called Jamaica Inn, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. It is a period piece set in Cornwall in 1820. It was inspired by du Maurier's 1930 stay at the real Jamaica Inn, which still exists and is a pub in the middle of Bodmin Moor. The plot follows a group of murderous wreckers who run ships aground, kill the sailors and steal the cargo.

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### Nikoleta says

Η ταβ?ρνα της Τζαμ?ικας μου ?ρεσε πολ? περισσ?τερο απ? το Ρεβ?κκα. Αν και τα κοιν? των δ?ο μυθιστορημ?των ε?ναι πολλ? περισσ?τερα απ? τις διαφορ?ς τους. Η Μωρ? αν?κει στο ρομαντικ? ε?δος ? πιο συγκεκριμ?να στο sensational. Αν και ευτυχ?ς για εμ?να της λε?πει η μελοδραματικ?τητα των συγκεκριμ?νων ειδ?ν, αυτ?ς ο εκβιασμ?ς συναισθημ?των στους αναγ?στες και οι υπερβολικ?ς φιγο?ρες των ηρ?ων. Αντιθ?τως η Μωρ?ε ε?ναι πιο... χμ... σεμν??. Ετσι λοιπ?ν και στην Τζαμ?ικα οι ?ρωες της ε?ναι ρεαλιστικ?τατοι, πολ?πλευροι και αρκετ? αν?θικοι, πολλ?ς φορ?ς. Αυτ? η ανηθικ?τητα ?μως δεν ε?ναι η προσωποπο?ηση του κακο?, δεν υπ?ρχει ?σπρο και μα?ρο, οι ?ρωες της ε?ναι απλ?ς ?νθρωποι.

Η αφ?γηση επ?σης κυλ?ει ρεαλιστικ?τατα, εν? η ποιητικ?τητα δεν κυλ?ει απ? τις πρ?ξεις αλλ? απ? την περιρρ?ουσα ατμ?σφαιρα. Η περιγραφ? του σκηνικο? ε?ναι το στολ?δι του βιβλ?ου. Αυτ? ε?ναι το Α και το Ω. Αυτ? η ζοφερ? γκρ?ζα ατμ?σφαιρα την οπο?α μας χαρ?ζει με περ?σσια ικανοπο?ηση ε?ναι ο χ?ρος της για να δρ?σει. Αυτ?ν χρησιμοποιε? για να μας μεταφ?ρει τα αισθ?ματα των ηρ?ων της, για να μας προετοιμ?σει για μ?α επερχ?μενη καταστροφ?, και να μεταδ?σει την αγων?α. Μ?α αγων?α ?χι κραυγαλ?α αλλ? που υπονοε?ται και η οπο?α χτ?ζεται σταδιακ? μ?χρι την στιγμ? της κορ?φωσης.

Εξαιρετικ? συγγραφ?ας που ξ?ρει να κ?νει κ?θε σκην? δικ? της. Της αν?κουν ολοκληρωτικ? το περιβ?λλον και οι ?ρωες της και χειρ?ζεται τα π?ντα με μαεστρ?α. Αν εκτ?μησα κ?τι περισσ?τερο στην ταβ?ρνα της Τζαμ?ικα απ? ?τι στην Ρεβ?κκα ε?ναι η ηρω?δα. Μπ?ρεσα να την κατανο?σω και να την συμπαθ?σω περισσ?τερο, καθ?ς ε?ναι δυναμικ? και προσγειωμ?νη και σαφ?στατα λιγ?τερο αλαφρ?σκιωτη.

Τ?λος π?ντων πολ? καλ? βιβλ?ο, συστ?νεται στους π?ντες, σε αυτο?ς που αγαπο?ν το μυστ?ριο, σε αυτο?ς που αγαπο?ν τα σκοτειν? ζοφερ? τοπ?α, σε αυτο?ς που αγαπο?ν τα βιβλ?α εποχ?ς... ?πως καταλ?βατε σηκ?νει πολλο?ς αναγν?στες!

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### **Sarah (Presto agitato) says**

Nobody does Gothic like Daphne du Maurier. A decrepit inn without guests, wild moors, sinister fogs, smugglers, shipwrecks, a dashing horse thief, an albino vicar, and a murder mystery - all of the ingredients are there when orphaned Mary Yellan arrives at Jamaica Inn to live with her aunt who is married to a threatening man with secrets to hide.

The plot may seem over-the-top, but du Maurier excels in this genre, carefully laying the groundwork for a creepy, foreboding atmosphere. Instead of giving us a stereotypical plucky, tough-as-the-guys heroine who would be hard to believe in this early 19th century setting, du Maurier creates a more nuanced character, one who “knew the humility of being born a woman, when the breaking down of strength and spirit was taken as natural and unquestioned,” and yet faces her challenges with an understated, steely resolve. Du Maurier was sensitive to the restrictions women faced when she wrote this novel in 1936, and she subtly weaves those concerns into this book.

While not quite at the level of *Rebecca* and *My Cousin Rachel*, *Jamaica Inn* is an enjoyable novel that will be appreciated by fans of du Maurier and Gothic fiction.

*Alfred Hitchcock's 1939 film was based on du Maurier's book.*

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### **Emma says**

I enjoyed this well enough as a work of historical fiction based on smuggling off the coast of Cornwall. I read *My Cousin Rachel* recently and really enjoyed it but by comparison this wasn't as good.

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### **Quirkyreader says**

This story is even better the third time around. Every time I read it I notice something new.

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### **Candi says**

Wonderfully dark and atmospheric and utterly suspenseful, Daphne du Maurier's **Jamaica Inn** is a thrilling adventure of a novel! I wish I had picked up this book on a chilly, gray and dreary fall day so I could have curled up on the sofa next to the fire with a blanket and a cup of tea. That would have created the perfect environment for reading this one! Nevertheless, it was still a satisfying reading experience.

On her deathbed, Mary Yellan's mother exacts a promise from her daughter – that she will seek out her Aunt Patience and reside with her in order to avoid the uncertainties and pitfalls of a single young woman living alone in her hometown of Helford. Here, Mary's mother describes her sister Patience as “*a great one for games and laughing, with a heart as large as life*” with “*ribbons in her bonnet and a silk petticoat.*” So, the spirited yet obedient Mary leaves the comfort of her farm and sets out to find Aunt Patience in Bodmin. As always, du Maurier does a superb job of evoking the sensations of the surroundings and we see the contrast between the tranquility of Helford with the hostility of the moors for which she is bound. “*It was a gentle rain that fell at Helford, a rain that pattered in the many trees and lost itself in the lush grass, formed into brooks and rivulets that emptied into the broad river, sank into the grateful soil which gave back flowers in payment.*” On journeying into Bodmin and beyond, Mary and the reader are submitted to harsher conditions with a palpable feeling of threat in the air. “*This was a lashing, pitiless rain that stung the windows of the coach, and it soaked into a hard and barren soil. No trees here, save one or two that stretched bare branches to the four winds, bent and twisted from centuries of storm, and so black were they by time and tempest that, even if spring did breathe on such a place, no buds would dare to come to leaf for fear the late frost should kill them.*” We get an immediate sense of foreshadowing as Mary relates “*No human being could live in this wasted country and remain like other people; the very children would be born twisted, like the blackened shrubs of broom, bent by the force of a wind that never ceased, blow as it would from east and west, from north and south. Their minds would be twisted, too, their thoughts evil, dwelling as they must amidst marshland and granite, harsh heather and crumbling stone.*”

Once arriving in Bodmin, Mary learns that her aunt now lives out at the formidable Jamaica Inn where her uncle, Joss Merlyn, is the sinister and drunken proprietor of the now disreputable inn that welcomes no travelers but the vilest characters that scurry in from the darkness of the moors. Mary finds Aunt Patience a changed and nearly unrecognizable person. “*Her face had fallen away, and the skin was stretched tight across her cheekbones. Her eyes were large and staring, as though they asked perpetually a question, and she had a little nervous trick of working her mouth... Was this poor tattered creature the bewitching Aunt Patience of her dreams, dressed now like a slattern, and twenty years her age?*” The suspense mounts as Mary discovers secrets and despicable acts that envelop the owner and the inn itself.

Like her aunt, will Mary now languish as her surroundings drain the life out of her? Perhaps made of stronger stuff, Mary perseveres and manages to even wander the moors unattended trying to find answers to the mysteries that plague her sanity. On these solitary ventures where the treacherous marshes place her at increasing risk, Mary encounters two more singular individuals that seem to be quite adapted to the danger of the moors. Jem Merlyn, brother to her infamous uncle, is a bit of an enigma with his charlatan ways, coarse appearance and sharp tongue yet irresistible, ruggedly handsome, and lively bearing. Despite her better judgment, Mary falls for this man. “*Jem Merlyn was a man, and she was a woman, and whether it was his hands or his skin or his smile she did not know, but something inside her responded to him, and the very thought of him was an irritant and a stimulant at the same time.*” Just the right amount of romance ensues. Mary also meets Francis Davey, the Vicar of Altarnun out on the moors where he rescues her as she finds herself lost and confused when trying to return to the inn. The vicar’s gentle manner and unusual appearance are a bit contradictory yet he often arrives at the right moment to save Mary from her predicaments time and again. On one such occasion, we read “*Mary looked up at the pale eyes in the colourless face, the halo of cropped white hair, and she thought again how strange a freak of nature was this man, who might be twenty-one, who might be sixty, and who with his soft, persuasive voice would compel her to admit every secret her heart possessed, had he the mind to ask her. She could trust him; that at least was certain. Still she hesitated, turning the words over in her mind.*”

One of my favorite things about du Maurier’s writing, besides her ability to create a tremendous sense of atmosphere, is her incredible talent for bringing to life even those inanimate objects within her novels. The

houses in Jamaica Inn appear to live and breathe of their own accord and I loved reading about them. The vicar's home is described here: "*There was something strangely peaceful about the house, something very rare and difficult to define... The room in which she was sitting had the quiet impersonality of a drawing-room visited by night. The furniture, the table in the centre, the pictures on the walls, were without that look of solid familiarity belonging to the day. They were like sleeping things, stumbled upon at midnight by surprise.*" The inn itself reflects a different sort of feeling: "*The house was treacherous tonight, her very footsteps sounding hollow on the flags, and there were echoes that came unbidden from the walls. Even the kitchen, the one room in the house to possess some measure of warmth and normality, gaped back at her as she left it, yellow and sinister in the candle-light.*"

As Mary tries to uncover the dark secrets of the inn and the covert operations of her uncle and his company, the reader is taken on a blood-tingling trek between the bleak moors, the gaiety of the Launceston fair, the oppressiveness of Jamaica Inn, the strange tranquility of the vicar's home, and the wretched Cornwall coast. Mary must learn who to trust - the Vicar of Altarnun, Jem Merlyn, or Squire Bassat and his wife? Will she be able to save herself and Aunt Patience from the horrors of the moors and the madness of the inn? Grab a copy of this book, find a cozy corner, and hunker down for a very captivating read!

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### **Misfit says**

(4.5) A spooky, gothic tale perfect for a stormy October night. "Roads? Who spoke of roads? We go by the moor and the hills, and tread granite and heather as the Druids did before us." Why I have waited so many years to read more of Du Maurier's books I'll never know, but there are definitely more of hers in my immediate reading future!

It's early 19C in Southern Cornwall and Mary Yellen's dying mother asks her to sell the family farm and join her Aunt Patience and her husband at Jamaica Inn in Northern Cornwall. Mary arrives and finds that no respectable person will venture near the inn, nor will the carriages stop there for respite. Her once lively and personable aunt is now a terrified shell of a woman married to drunkard inn owner Joss Merlyn. When Joss prepares to entertain "guests" Mary and her aunt are instructed to stay in their rooms and keep their eyes and ears covered -- although our spunky heroine does peek out the window and sees mysterious comings and goings and Mary suspects smuggling.

Mary also becomes friends with her uncle's younger brother Joss, a ne'er do well horse thief (among other things) and the mysterious albino minister Francis Davey. A mischance on the way home from the village on Christmas Eve puts Mary in the middle of her Uncle and his nefarious companions in the midst of a more gruesome crime than smuggling, thus setting in motion a terrifying set of circumstances building up to a nail biting finish on the Bodmin moors.

While this one got off to a bit of a slow start for me, by the last 50 or so pages I was on the edge of my seat as Du Maurier gradually built up the tension and mystery for a rocking good finish, and a big surprise twist at the end. I really enjoyed the way the author used the spookiness of the moors and the surrounding terrain of Cornwall to set her scenes and it greatly enhanced the feel of the book in general. 4.5/5 stars.

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## Duane says

Published in 1936, two years before *Rebecca*, *Jamaica Inn* is a dark tale of murder and thievery, set close to the Bodmin Moor in Cornwall, England. It has a hint of romance, although I wouldn't call it romantic. It would have to be called a mystery if you had to give it a tag. The style is typical of the other du Maurier novels I have read, and excellent writing with great characters. It was a little slow to develop for me but once it did the pace ran quickly to the climax.

3.5 stars

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## Kelly says

I hovered between three and four stars but ultimately it gets four- for Mary and for the winds and the rains of the Cornish coast, all of them beautifully described and distinct in my mind after finishing this. The land, as in the best of much of Romantic literature, is the true source of this story's seductive powers.

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## Natalie Richards says

I love the way du Maurier tells a story. This is the third book I've read by her and while, for me, it doesn't have the punch of *Rebecca* or *My Cousin Rachel*, I still very much enjoyed it. Full of evil deeds, thievery, malice and the dark moors; it makes for an intriguing read.

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## Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Upping my rating to 5 stars on reread. I have to hand it to Daphne du Maurier: she takes the fusty old gothic novel conventions and tropes, and amps them up in this 1936 novel. The setting is classic gothic?it's the 1820s in a lonely, cold and windswept area of Cornwall, near the treacherous Bodmin Moor, in a decaying inn that all honest people avoid.

*The real Jamaica Inn, built in 1750, which inspired this novel*

An isolated, orphaned young woman, 23 year old Mary Yellan, comes to stay with the pretty and outgoing aunt and handsome uncle that she remembers hearing about in letters that her mother received years ago, but finds that he is a hulking, abusive man and her aunt is now beaten and downtrodden. Something terrible is going on at *Jamaica Inn*, where her brutal uncle is the innkeeper, and Mary can't resist trying to figure it out. Even though she's warned off by, well, pretty much everyone. The only person Mary is willing to trust is the softspoken, albino vicar of a nearby village, who helps Mary a couple of times when she's lost or in trouble, but he lives a few miles away from the inn.

Du Maurier injects elements of true horror?not the supernatural kind, but what can be in people's hearts. Her Aunt Patience (aptly named) is an abused woman who stays with and takes care of her bully of a husband.

Du Maurier also includes a very dubious romantic interest for Mary, her uncle's younger brother Jem, a habitual horse thief in whose lawless way of life and his rather careless treatment of Mary I could see some seeds of what his older brother became. It's not a book that left me entirely comfortable in the end ... but I think that's what the author wanted.

Well played, Daphne!

P.S. I strongly recommend that you avoid spoilers, including the Wikipedia article, which gives away the goings on right up front. I had great fun speculating on what exactly was going on at the inn. I was close, but it was worse than I thought. The final twist I guessed, but it was still creepy.

Some of the elements in this story reminded me powerfully of a 1997 movie that in a few ways is like a 20th century version of *Jamaica Inn*:[\(view spoiler\)](#)

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### **Werner says**

Jamaica Inn is a real building which, as Du Maurier notes in her introductory note here, stood in her own time (and still does) on Cornwall's Bodmin Moor. The old inn caught the imagination of the young author, and she proceeded to spin a tale, envisioning it "as it might have been over a hundred and twenty years ago." (Since she wrote those words in 1935, that puts the setting of the novel somewhat before 1815; the date is never given in the text itself.) And what a tale it is, complete with smugglers and wreckers, violence and danger, romance, murder and insanity, all flavored with a richly Gothic seasoning. Add in a well-realized evocation of one of my favorite historical periods, a palpable sense of place (Du Maurier was actually born in London, but her family had a Cornish summer home; she spent a lot of time in Cornwall, and eventually made it her home), vividly-drawn characters and a masterful prose style, and you have all the ingredients of a fictional banquet that's bound to make me happy! This was my first experience of Du Maurier's work, but it definitely won't be the last. :-)

The plot here is compressed into a tight time-frame; it opens in November (with some references made, in Mary's memories, to earlier events), and concludes in early January. (It might be argued by some that this furnishes too little time for a couple to fall in love, and to decide on a life partner; but I would say that those things CAN happen in that time, when the attraction is real and strong.) Du Maurier's writing style has something of the flavor of a 19th-century novel (coming from me, that's a compliment); it doesn't have the elaborate, convoluted syntax, but it does have a substantial quality to it, and makes use of a wide vocabulary. (This was one of very few books in recent decades that sent me to the dictionaries in the house to look up a word!) She creates an atmosphere of oppression and dread in the old inn and its desolate, brooding surrounding countryside with a very deft use of language (and atmosphere is extremely crucial in this type of novel). She introduces key elements of traditional Gothic plotting (the old, menacing, isolated dwelling; the hidden secret; a possible love interest who's compromised by a very plausible reason to distrust him) in a way that seems natural and not formulaic. Her level of description is just right; it's obvious that she knows the varied topography of Cornwall firsthand, and she makes it real to the reader. All of the significant characters here are fully three-dimensional, with positive and negative traits intermingled (obviously in different proportions!), and believable reasons for their actions. The plot makes the book a gripping page-turner, and the climax is as exciting a piece of fictional writing as I've ever read.

Given all of these positives, what dropped the book's rating from the full five stars? Well, the plot device of the dropped nail from a horseshoe, which plays such a critical role in unraveling the mystery, struck me as somewhat contrived; I'm not sure a recently-driven nail would come loose so conveniently, or that someone with no reason to think it was there would find it so handily. (I'm also not sure that even someone knowledgeable about horses would know the work of local blacksmiths well enough to recognize a nail, even granting that these nails would have been hand-forged and that blacksmiths wouldn't be numerous.) More importantly, the text is salted with sexist comments, in the words of the male characters and often in Mary's own thoughts. True, this can be viewed as a reflection of the way she's been taught, rather than of Du Maurier's own attitude; and for all her ideas about the frailty of women, Mary Yellan is obviously no coward and not weak. She's not Supergirl; she can experience a good deal of fear when it's warranted, and more than once be prostrated by shock and horror. But she's also taken responsibility to care for her dying mother; she chooses to stay at Jamaica Inn to help and protect her Aunt Patience when she'd much prefer to escape; and she displays resourcefulness and courage on more than one occasion. (And while she's no Sarah Tolerance (Point of Honour), she does immobilize a would-be rapist long enough to get away, and she can ask for a pistol and walk into a dangerous situation rather than let a male companion do it.) The overall effect of these comments, though, can be grating. That leads into a point that would constitute a spoiler.

(view spoiler) I also have another quibble about the ending. (view spoiler) Finally, I think the "freak" language used in several places in referring to the vicar's albinism was overdone and irritating. (Maybe I'm sensitive on this point because a friend of mine in seminary was an albino.) (view spoiler).

These points, though (some of which are rather subjective), didn't keep me from really liking the book. In the main, I think it's a great read that I'd recommend to anyone with tastes for this type of fiction! (Note: If you're acquainted with the story only through the Hitchcock movie version, you need to know that he did NOT follow the novel very closely. Though it has some significant differences, the 1983 miniseries starring Jane Seymour is a much closer adaptation.)

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### **Catrina (LittleBookOwl) says**

Overall, I liked it, however I wasn't totally enthralled. I'm not sure what exactly was missing for me, but I wasn't able to really connect with the characters and the story. Still enjoyable, but wishing I didn't feel so detached while reading it.

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### **Bionic Jean says**

When I first read Daphne du Maurier's popular novel **Jamaica Inn**, I had no idea what "wreckers" meant. Some romantic idea connected with pirates, I thought. I knew of the real Jamaica Inn, a pub in the middle of Bodmin Moor. But the grim truth is that Daphne du Maurier was not writing an account about either pirates or ordinary smugglers, but a highly-coloured bloodthirsty tale about bands of men who existed around 1815, according to the novel 20 or 30 years after Cornish pirates had been eradicated. (view spoiler) I read about this with a horrified fascination, and find now that even with foreknowledge, this atmospheric novel still brings home the true horror of that evil trade. And the reader becomes taken up with her evocative descriptions of the weather and Cornish landscape, becoming increasingly emotionally involved with the characters.

Published in 1936, **Jamaica Inn** was Daphne du Maurier's fourth novel. Like many of her books, it was later made into a film, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Many of these films inspired by her novels such as *"Rebecca"*, *"The Birds"*, *"My Cousin Rachel"*, and *"Frenchman's Creek"* have become cinema classics. However, the directors rarely looked beyond the popular appeal and the romantic glamour of her work. **Jamaica Inn** too, was an exaggeratedly romantic adaptation, which did not please Daphne du Maurier. Her biographer, Margaret Forster says,

*"Instead of being violent and ugly, they [the wreckers] had been made into Peter Pan pirates, and the effect was quite the opposite of her intention."*

Daphne du Maurier announces in her introduction that her intention is to write a thrilling imaginative tale, and that,

*"Although existing place-names figure in the pages, the characters and events described are entirely imaginary."*

She even locates the inn precisely. Bodmin Moor, Launceston, Gweek, Helston, Padstow, Altarnun, Twelve Men's Moor, Trewartha Marsh and Dozmary Pool are all real places. The novel itself can be thought of as an imaginative historical adventure story, an eerie gothic horror or romance or even (as one publisher has classified it) a murder mystery, although none of these satisfactorily convey the book's timbre and feeling.

The viewpoint character throughout is 20 year-old Mary Yellan, who was brought up on a farm in Helston. Mary's mother became sick, and Mary took care of her until she died. Mary's mother had made her promise to sell the farm after her death, insisting that she should go to live with her Aunt Patience in Bodmin. Mary loved the farm, the area, and all her friends, so was reluctant to leave the south coast of Cornwall where, as a character later in the book describes it,

*"the pleasant lanes wind by the side of the river, and where your villages touch one another string upon string, and there are cottages upon the road"*

for the north coast, *"lonely and untravelled as [the] moors themselves, and never a man's face shall you look upon."*

However, Mary keeps her promise, and discovers that her Aunt Patience no longer lives with her husband in Padstow, but in the centre of the moors in *"Jamaica Inn"*, which turns out to be a gloomy, neglected and threatening building. As Mary travels towards her new home, the reader is immediately thrust into a vivid description of the savage landscape, looked at through the eyes of Mary, and compared with the gentleness of Helston which she is used to. The harsh stormy weather is unforgiving; the moors dark, alien and desolate.

*"There would never be a gentle season here, thought Mary; either grim winter as it was today, or else the dry and parching heat of midsummer, with never a valley to give shade or shelter, but grass that turned yellow-brown before May had passed."*

Mary has memories of her Aunt Patience as a vivacious and fun-loving young woman, and is shocked to find her now to be a shadow of her former self, weary, raddled and jumpy whenever she is in the company of her husband Joss Merlyn, a brutish, hulking bully of a man, the keeper of Jamaica Inn. Clearly there is a lot going on behind the scenes. Both the viewpoint characters and the reader are in a constant state of high anxiety, as we try to gain the knowledge to which, Daphne du Maurier clearly hints, Aunt Patience and Joss are privy,

*"You must never question me, nor him, nor anyone, for if you came to guess but half of what I know, your hair would go grey, Mary, as mine has done, and you would tremble in your speech and weep by night, and all that lovely careless youth of yours would die, Mary, as mine has died."*

So warns her aunt Patience. And as the tension mounts, Mary's uncle tells her,

*"I'm not drunk enough to tell you why I live in this God-forgotten spot, and why I'm the landlord of Jamaica Inn."*

We thus have two extremely contrasting characters, plus Mary herself, the fulcrum. There is an all-pervading sense of foreboding and gloom; the overpowering feeling of the novel at this point is unnervingly claustrophobic. Mary's thoughts and emotions are shared with the reader throughout the novel, although sometimes there are comments within the narration that sound more like an omniscient viewpoint. This is an unusual style for a modern novel, which typically uses a third person narration, switching from character to character, to give the sense of a fully rounded view of events. In **Jamaica Inn**, however, the viewpoint character never varies, but we do have hints of an authorial voice. Not all the points of view appear to originate with Mary, who feels trapped, mostly by her duty and fears for her aunt, and also by what she repeatedly expresses as her sense of frailty as a woman.

The moors themselves have a life of their own in this novel; there is a strong primal, almost atavistic sense,

*"The moors were even wilder than she had at first supposed. Like an immense desert they rolled from east to west, with tracks here and there across the surface and great hills breaking the skyline. Where was their final boundary she could not tell, except that once, after climbing the highest tor behind Jamaica, she caught the silver shimmer of the sea. It was a silent desolate country though, vast and untouched by human hand; on the high tors the slabs of stone leant against one another in strange shapes and forms, massive sentinels who had stood there since the hand of God first fashioned them."*

And at another time,

*"The air was cold and strangely still, and the moor itself lay placid and silver in the moonlight. The dark tors held their sleeping faces to the sky, the granite features softened and smoothed by the light that bathed them. There was a peaceful mood, and the old gods slept undisturbed."*

Both the buildings such as Jamaica Inn and the landscape are imbued with a presence, and descriptions of the weather also abound. There is much use of the pathetic fallacy, as in much of Daphne Du Maurier's writing, so that the natural environment is bound up with and echoes the events in the novel.

*"The rain was pitiless and the wind came in gusts. There was nothing left now of the Christmas spirit."*

*"a wild star straggled furtively behind a low-sweeping cloud and hung for an instant...there was a scream in the wind that had not been before."*

Everything is imaginatively contrived to seem to have a will of its own. Inanimate objects are personified, to exaggerate the sense of threat,

*"There was no other sound except the husky wheezing of the clock in the hall and the sudden whirring note preparatory to the strike. It rang the hour - three o'clock - and then ticked on, choking and gasping like a dying man who cannot catch his breath."*

Sometimes a sentence has many layers of meaning. Even without using the pathetic fallacy, Daphne du Maurier makes the reader see an apparent connection between a character and a natural phenomenon,

*"Why does your aunt look like a living ghost - can you tell me that? Ask her, next time the wind blows from the north-west."*

Character portrayal, ominous mood and atmosphere, even a teasing hint of plot development - all are included in this deceptively simple question. It is put to Mary by Joss's brother Jem, who resembles his brother in many ways. Mary does not know whether she can trust him; she is both attracted and repelled by this daring, swashbuckler of a (view spoiler)

Mary is alternately drawn to the "bad boy" image of Jem, yet also in fear of what may be his true nature. Daphne du Maurier manipulates the reader to also sway to and fro, never hinting at which side Jem will end up. There follows one of the most terrifying parts of the novel, after the idyllic day they spend together. (view spoiler)

Jamaica Inn itself - that windswept desolate building - seems to spring to life, revelling in such vile villainy and dastardly deeds,

*"Jamaica Inn was ablaze with light; the doors were open, and the windows were unbarred. The house gaped out of the night like a live thing."*

(view spoiler)

Here is another superb instance, from a little later,

*"She looked up at Jamaica Inn, sinister and grey in the approaching dusk, the windows barred; she thought of the horrors the house had witnessed and the secrets now embedded in its walls, side by side with the other old memories of feasting and firelight and laughter before her uncle cast his shadow upon it; and she turned away from it, as one instinctively from a house of the dead and went out upon the road."*

And near the end, the power of "Jamaica Inn" is paramount,

*"She knew she could never climb those stairs again, nor tread that empty landing. Whatever lay beyond her and above must rest there undisturbed. Death had come upon the house tonight, and its brooding spirit still hovered in the air. She felt now that this was what Jamaica Inn had always waited for and feared. The damp walls, the creaking boards, the whispers in the air, and the footsteps that had no name; these were the warnings of a house that had felt itself long threatened."*

This part presages the great house - or "character" - Daphne du Maurier was to create with "Manderley" in *Rebecca*. It goes some way to convey the extremely intimate and personal connection with a real house, "Ferryside", one of the great obsessive loves of her life.

From now on the novel increases in pace. From its almost overwhelming feelings of imprisonment, we watch Mary struggling to right the wrongs she sees, and take risks to inform on those she knows to have committed unspeakable crimes. The Cornish landscape is dramatically conveyed; its presence in this novel being of equal value to any of the characters. The number of characters is quite small, which serves to increase the

feelings of intimacy. There is Squire Bassat and his wife, those few already mentioned, and the wreckers (most of whom could be substituted for each other, as their characters come across as less than human.)

There is a betrayal, which the reader may, or may not, guess correctly. There is a bloodbath, which has seemed inevitable. Is there a "happy ending"? Well, that all depends... but it certainly seemed to be a popular ending, at the time the novel was written.

As the end approaches, Daphne du Maurier interestingly draws attention to the enmeshing and reflecting of the events of the story, with the natural elements,

*"Mary walked alone on Twelve Men's Moor, and she wondered why it was that Kilmar, to the left of her, had lost its menace, and was now no more than a black scarred hill under the sky. It might be that anxiety had blinded her to beauty, and she had made confusion in her mind with man and nature; the austerity of the moors had been strangely interwoven with the fear and hatred of her uncle and Jamaica Inn. The moors were bleak still, and the hills were friendless, but their old malevolence had vanished and she could walk upon them with indifference."*

Daphne du Maurier's love of Cornwall never extends to presenting Cornwall exclusively from an historical point of view. Thanks to her powers of imagination, she makes some historical events have great drama and emotional depth, strongly appealing to a modern reader's sensibility. Not everybody is drawn to historical novels as a genre. But Daphne du Maurier skilfully uses literary devices to manipulate the reader, creating our interest in a particular time and place in history. Her narrative technique engages us, and encourages each reader to identify with the viewpoint character. Focusing on the specific time and culture within which the main character is trapped, the author therefore limits Mary's actions and even to some extent her perceptions.

There is a great deal in the novel about the boundaries between men and women, a question very close to Daphne du Maurier's own personal agonies; those of her true identity. In a letter to a close friend, the author referred to herself as, *"neither girl nor boy but disembodied spirit... to dance in the evening when there was no one to see"*.

The Gothic feeling of the novel serves to heighten this portrayal of Mary as a powerless female. There are numerous links with the Gothic genre, not only used to raise the issue of gender. The horror the modern reads feels at the depiction of such brutal inhuman actions is given an extra frisson by incorporating the overblown imagery of gothic themes. What is the point of making Francis Davey, the Vicar of Altarnum, an albino, for instance, other than to heighten the grotesquerie and thereby emphasise his alienness to Mary.

As Daphne du Maurier tried to reconcile the various parts of her life, as an army wife, a mother and what she called a *"career woman"*, Cornwall became ever more significant, principally for the special freedom it represented. She was to stay in Cornwall all her life, because it was here that she felt the freedom to write. Daphne du Maurier's passion for Cornwall comes through in every sentence in this particular book. In many of her stories she explores various personal issues through her writing. This story is not autobiographical as such, but her own perceptions of reality and sense of place are strong throughout. At a symbolic level, the text is rich and complex. Underneath the imagery, the atmosphere, the thrill of the story, the descriptive flair and the superb writing style, Daphne du Maurier's subtext is as fascinating as the surface story.

So may I make a plea for the fiction of Daphne du Maurier. The covers of her books are often sentimental. Her books are generally shelved in bookshops among popular fiction - sometimes even among the more trashy romances. Yet she always vigorously stressed that she was not a romantic writer. Her view of her classic, *"Rebecca"*, for instance, was that it is a study in jealousy and power. It questions the balance of

power, both in marriage and society. Far from her writing being, "a glossy brand of entertaining nonsense", in the words of a critic in *"The Spectator"* in 1962, we can now perceive that her works are well worth a closer analysis.

In a way, her very accessibility has stymied her reputation as a serious writer. Daphne du Maurier's novels are mostly read on a superficial level and consequently, the critics often fail to detect any psychological depths to her writing. This one, as with so many of her novels, can be read on many levels. Read it for its entertainment value by all means. Ultimately though, not only is it a rattling good story, but one by a writer of great skill.

*"Below the tor the heavy fog clung to the the ground, obstinate as ever, with never a breath of air to roll away the clouds. Here on the summit the wind fretted and wept, whispering of fear, sobbing old memories of blood shed and despair, and there was a wild, lost note that echoed in the granite...on the very peak of Roughtor, as though the gods themselves stood there with their great heads lifted to the sky... their faces were inhuman, older than time, carved and rough like the granite; and they spoke in a tongue she could not understand and their hands and feet were curved like the claws of a bird."*

*"No human being could live in this wasted country, thought Mary, and remain like other people; the very children would be born twisted, like the blackened shrubs of broom, bent by the force of a wind that never ceased, blow as it would from east and west, from north and south. Their minds would be twisted too, their thoughts evil, dwelling as they must amidst marshland and granite, harsh heather and crumbling stone."*

Here are links to my reviews of some other novels by Daphne du Maurier:

"Rebecca"

"My Cousin Rachel"

"The House on the Strand"

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### **Jason Koivu says**

This rancid mess is supposed to be a classic?! The attempt at 19th century prose falls flat... "like a dead thing." Good god. It has all the writerly skill of a romance novel, and a boring one at that.

With midnight-smuggling and murder lurking behind a thinly-veiled mystery, I expected "THRILLS and CHILLS!" from this story.

For its time, perhaps it was thrilling...NO!...No, I will not defend it. The "what's going on behind the scenes?!" tension is teased out to beyond caring and the characterizations are hackneyed. Aunt *Patience*, the long-suffering wife? Come on already...

Du Maurier came from an almost aristocratically artistic lineage. The pretentious shit she says in interviews even makes her *sound* snobby. With everyone in her artsy family looking on, she must have felt a great deal of pressure to produce. No wonder her work of any notoriety is, in all likelihood, plagiarized.

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### **Antoinette says**

I loved reacquainting myself with a gothic novel. The author certainly knows how to create an atmosphere. The opening scene with the wild carriage ride to Jamaica Inn is reminiscent of the scene in Dracula. Your final destination- an isolated, dark, brooding, unkempt inn that seems closed off from everyone in its sheer isolation. The countryside with the moors, the bogs, the tors all come alive with the author's vivid descriptions. The scene has been set for the arrival of Mary, recently orphaned, who promised her mother on her deathbed that she would go live with her aunt in Cornwall at the Jamaica Inn. There she discovers an aunt who lives in fear and an uncle who is downright evil. She discovers the nefarious goings on and her plan is to somehow rescue her aunt and get away from Jamaica Inn.

It wouldn't be a gothic novel without some romance and without death. Both are present in this book. The underlying fear of both Mary and her aunt, the not quite knowing what was going on, kept me rapidly reading the pages. Definitely a book that drew me in and kept me interested throughout. I absolutely loved the book!

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### **Mandie says**

I don't understand my reaction to this book.

I loved Rebecca, it was beautifully and thoughtfully written, but Jamaica Inn leaves me cold and it shouldn't. I really didn't want it to. It has all of the ingredients of a dark and exciting adventure and yet...it is populated by caricatures, larger than life and impossible to believe in. The albino priest, the drunken landlord and his colourless wife...the smugglers, the cliches of the boggy more. No no no.

Admittedly it was a less mature novel than Rebecca, written earlier in the writer's career but it lacked subtlety and for me it didn't work

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### **Tatiana says**

I have to say, this book by Daphne du Maurier is a little underwhelming.

The writing is, as expected, gorgeous. Just like in Rebecca and My Cousin Rachel, it is very atmospheric. There is, no doubt, an air of Emily and Charlotte Bronte's style about it. Considering that I am a huge fan of both Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, that's a big plus. Du Maurier is also very skillful at building suspense. A feeling of dread and foreboding is maintained throughout the novel making it an intense reading experience.

But the writing is not the weakest point of Jamaica Inn. The story itself is. For me the mystery of Jamaica Inn and the crimes it hides is too simplistic. Nothing much happens in the story besides Mary Yellan trying to figure out what awful business her dreadful uncle is a part of and whose brain is behind the whole crime scheme. She figures it all out very quickly indeed. And we along with her. There are simply not enough characters in this book to not figure out who the biggest bad guy is. As for the perpetrator's motive, I don't think I quite *got* it.

And romance. While there are some great conversations, the love story is a bit rushed and underdeveloped IMO. The heroine is smart and strong-willed, but her attraction to the hero is too quick and her decision at

the end of the book is strange. Maybe this is what a genre of gothic romance is all about though? An atmospheric story with a romance of the complexity of an average Harlequin novel? I don't know, I am not very familiar with the genre.

Anyway, in spite of my slight disappointment, I am still interested in exploring Daphne du Maurier's works in future, but I hope they are more akin to *Rebecca* rather than *Jamaica Inn*. Are they?

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### **Erin ? \*Proud Book Hoarder\* says**

Now this author could write:

**'And then I'll feel the thirst come on me and I'll soak. Soak for hours. It's power, and glory, and women, and the Kingdom of God, all rolled into one. I feel a king then, Mary. I feel I've got the strings of the world between my two fingers. It's heaven and hell.'**

Daphne du Maurier has *style*. The woman has a way with words that is as enchanting as her story concepts themselves. She had a bravery in writing realistic characters who are flawed, shining gems. I was first wowed with the classic *Rebecca*, and then she wowed me again with *The Birds* and *Other Stories*.

*Jamaica Inn* was penned earlier in her career, so it shows she was just learning how to climb the creative ropes the right way. It's not her best work but it's definitely readable because, hello!, it's Daphne du Maurier.

Mary was unique in that she didn't mind so much with having to consort with lesser-liked types, those who are criminals or viewed poorly by the local village. She's headstrong and daring, but also unique in that she's not the classic goth heroine who is overcome with compassion, fainting spells, hysteria, and insanely overdone innocence. She may not always be the wisest with her actions, but she's spirited in motive and refreshing with her courage and outlook.

The story is goth blended in with disorganized crime. While Gothics of the day usually held back most mystery on the evil deeds going on until later for a big reveal, this one shows them pretty early, having the character deal with them the best she can for the sake of a vulnerable aunt. There is a twist at the end on a villain, of course, but nothing too tightly woven. The book is lackluster because of this. We go through her life at the inn, face the horrors and discover the crimes, but there's not enough tension there to make it overly exciting.

**"No, Mary had no illusions about romance. Falling in love was a pretty name for it, that was all."**

The relationship was another weird thing. It made little sense to me that she was so attracted to the brother, but then again it shows that she circled around to live the same life as the aunt she so harshly judges. He's a classic anti-hero though, so that's cool enough by concept. I didn't understand all the chemistry between them but I think it falls down to a few things - one, that the men's family tree lured in women of her line, like her aunt who had fallen for the uncle when they were younger. Second, that they both had some bond with how they were similar - she liked the adventurous and mildly daring, didn't mind a little lawbreaking, was rather wild and free in a way that would draw him in. That's probably why the uncle liked her a little too.

The ending was hardly romantic, it was a little bit of an abrupt afterthought, but if he didn't come back at all

it would have bugged me.

Overall, the book needed a little more story rather than some of the padding to keep it fresh. It's worth reading for more of du Maurier's fantastic writing ability, her unusual characters who stand out like sore thumbs in a sea of normalcy, and for a darker themed gothic novel that dared to take chances with unusual violence.

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### **Carol says**

#### **"DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES."**

First published in 1935, this haunting gothic tale of adventure begins when a brave, young Mary Yellan adheres to her mother's dying wish that she live with her fun-loving Aunt Patience, but upon arrival at the sinister looking and desolate **JAMAICA INN**, Mary finds her Aunt has turned into a gaunt nervous wreck of a person with a spirit destroyed by abuse and fear of her violent drunkard of a husband, Uncle Joss.

As the story evolves and darkness falls....bad things....evil things happen on the moors of **Jamaica Inn**, but you'll also find a bit of romance, a somewhat predictable twist and another *very atmospheric* winner of a read by Daphne du Maurier.

*(Be sure to check out the cool photos of the 18th century Jamaica Inn that still stands today.)*

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