

The birds contrast paper



Birds throughout history have been seen as symbols of grace, peace, hope, trust, and beauty. These symbols although seen in the eyes of many and were once found in all of us, are no longer found through the eyes who have ever experienced either tale of "The Birds". The celebrated short story "The Birds" by Daphne Du Maurier contrasts greatly with its film directed by Alfred Hitchcock. When analyzing each tale in depth one might conclude many things about what effect both the author and director wished to have on its audience. Some of the smallest changes from story to film caused some of the most dramatic thematic changes and allowed for two very different tales of horror and suspense to evolve. The setting of each version of "The Birds" is just one of the major ways the author and director portrayed differently in order to have a different effect on its audience and is one of the major thematic differences. The story begins with "On December the third the wind changed overnight and it was winter." (p. 51) This line gives a chilling beginning to the introduction of the setting of the story which takes place on a rural coast of England during a harsh winter of the 1950's during the Cold War. This rural setting gives the audience a sense of being alone and suspicion due to indiscriminately cold weather overnight. On the other hand, the film begins on a seemingly busy crisp fall afternoon in the urban city of San Francisco, California. Although this setting quickly changes to the small town of Bodega Bay, California, the opening scene of happy city life makes the viewers ignorant to what the film will twist into, which is what Hitchcock is famous for. The later setting of the film (Bodega Bay) allows for the audience to get a slight foreshadowing, with the smaller town and the seemingly cooler weather, this allows the viewer to transition into a more controlled environment which in turn allows the horror of the film to take

place. The variation in setting allows for a completely different tone for each work. The characters in each tale were completely different which outwardly allows the tales to go down two very different paths. The story introduces us to Nat Hocken and his family which consists of his wife and two children, Jill and Johnny. The tight knit family living in a small study cottage gives the reader comfort in when in the earlier beginning was bombarded with a setting which caused suspicion and loneliness. Nat is also shown as the core in the fight for survival, after the first attack in the children's room " ' Its alright, I'm here,' shouted Nat, and the children flung themselves screaming upon him." (p. 53) being the father of two he must fend for everyone, this also shows his love of giving everything for his family. The family's relationship in a chaotic time is the main focus of the story and does not in anyway take away from the horror of the attacks. In the movie we are introduced first to Melanie Daniels and Mitch Brennor. Melanie and Mitch seem to take to each other from the beginning giving us an insight on a soon to sprout relationship. Mitch's immediate family consists of his mother Lydia and his sister Cathy. Cathy takes an extreme liking and comfort in Melanie which lasts throughout the film. Lydia on the other hand upon meeting Melanie throws dirty looks and views Melanie as untrustworthy, giving many viewers a disliking towards Lydia for judging Melanie. Lydia however eventually changes her thoughts about Melanie and by the end of the film shows motherly care for her. Another character who makes an impact on the film is Annie of who is a likable character; she is a school teacher and gives Melanie advice about Mitch and his mother. The characters relationships throughout the film seem to cast a shadow over the attacks. The characters in the story find love, trust, and comfort in one another which allows Du

Maurier to take her tale down a winding path and horrifying her readers by showing them that even the tightest knit family can fall apart. The characters in the film, although find love in each other, seem to find less trust in one another which makes the audience feel they must fend for themselves and always be on their toes. The characters in each story allow for the contrast in the bird attacks as well. In the short story the first major symbol of an oncoming attack is the bird tapping at Nat's bedroom window and then pecking at Nat. Next, the birds attack what is the most important thing to Nat, his children. The attacks soon grow larger and larger, seeming to have formed an army of some sort. " The blanket became a weapon of defense" (p. 53) The birds seemed to have a strategy, forming certain groups containing different species, of which each group had a different objective. This gives new thoughts about birds which horrifies most people to believe that an army of birds could kill off a country or the all humanity, this also might be comforting to some due to it being almost improbable. In the film the first symbol of a coming attack is the seagull which swoops down and pecks Melanie's head while she was returning to the dock after delivering the love birds to Brenner's house. Soon the birds were swooping down chimneys at random and chaotically attacking the Bodega Bay area for what seemed no apparent objective. Hitchcock's horrific twist to the bird attacks makes one feel alone in the attack's and makes you feel as if it could happen to you. All in all the great differences in the way the birds attacked the different characters in each version seem to not only portray a foreshadowing to what is to come of the characters but also create an extremely horrifying storyline which pulls each audience deeper and deeper into the chilling tale. The chief and most common distinction is the ending of

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each plot, and the effect they have on us. The short story leaves the reader hopeless and helpless... waiting for the inevitable. Most of the hope was taken from the audience when they learned that local, national, nor international channels were broadcasting over the wireless. " There was no sound. No chimes, no music. They waited until a quarter past, switching to the Light. The result was the same. No news bulletin came through." (p. 77)

When the audience reaches the final page of the story they find that Nat Hocken the " hero" seems to have given up and in the ashes of his last cigarette all of the readers hopes are smothered. The ending of the film inflicts hope which obviously is the opposite of the stories infliction. Many overlooked aspects of the ending to the film hold important foreshadowing or " hints" of what is to come of the characters. One of the more overlooked but most important is the scene while Mitch has to search the radio for a story on the bird attacks and even scrolls over music. This entails that the bird attacks are more reserved allowing for hope of refuge in cities. Cathy's love birds are very symbolic of hope because although they are birds they are shown through out the film not notable effected by the attacks. This may symbolize that love above all things will prevail and that because of the now " family" finding hope, trust, and love will be saved. The sun shining through the clouds onto the road leading to the city spark optimism in the audience, while watching them drive toward the light. The endings are extremely dissimilar which almost makes the two incomparable. Differences large and small are shown constantly throughout the masterfully portrayed horror stories; still the same general concept is kept intact. Grace, peace, hope, trust, and beauty are no longer seen in birds through the eyes my family nor I. However, if you are looking for a portrayal of horror through something you

find fascinating in every day life, be my guest, and purchase the feature film or short story... see what you make of them.