

Diving Deep into the Mystical Flight of "Conference of the Birds" by Sharon Olds

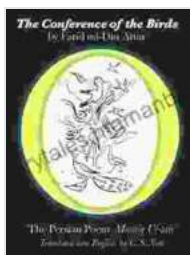


Sharon Olds' "Conference of the Birds" is a mesmerizing poetic exploration of transformation, transcendence, and the profound longing for a deeper connection with the divine. Inspired by the Sufi poem of the same name by

the Persian mystic Farid ud-Din Attar, Olds' collection invites readers on a lyrical journey through the metaphorical flight of birds, delving into themes of spiritual awakening, feminine empowerment, and the complexities of human desire.

The Flight of the Birds

The central conceit of the poem is the gathering of birds from all corners of the earth, seeking the legendary Simorgh, the mythical King of Birds. This allegorical journey represents the soul's quest for spiritual enlightenment and communion with the divine. Through vivid imagery and evocative language, Olds portrays the birds' arduous ascent, their encounters with various obstacles and temptations, and their unwavering determination to reach their destination.



Conference of the Birds by Sharon Olds

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 2003 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 165 pages
Lending	: Enabled

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"They fly by night, by day, / by moon, by star, / by sun, by cloud, / by hope, by love, / by wind, by will, / by breath, by fire, / by heat, by cold, / by wet, by dry, / by dark, by light, / by up, by down, / by in, by out, / by round, by

straight, / by near, by far, / by here, by there, / by me, by you, / by all, by one."

The Metaphor of the Simorgh

The Simorgh, the elusive goal of the birds' pursuit, embodies the divine presence, the ultimate source of enlightenment and transformation. Olds presents the Simorgh not as a distant or unreachable deity but rather as an inherent part of the birds themselves and of all creation. This metaphorical representation invites readers to contemplate the interconnectedness of all beings and the potential for profound spiritual experience within the ordinary.

"I am the Simorgh, / I am your god, / I am your friend, / I am your lover, / I am your enemy."

Women's Voices and Empowerment

Throughout the poem, Olds gives voice to a chorus of female birds, each embodying a distinct aspect of feminine experience. These birds grapple with issues of sexuality, motherhood, societal expectations, and the search for personal identity. Their narratives challenge traditional gender roles and celebrate the strength, resilience, and wisdom of women.

"I am the bird who lays the egg, / the bird who hatches the egg, / the bird who feeds the egg, / the bird who flies the egg."

The Language of Desire

"Conference of the Birds" is also a powerful exploration of human desire and the longing for transcendence. Olds' poetry is unafraid to delve into the raw and visceral aspects of human sexuality, using evocative language that

both celebrates and scrutinizes the nature of desire. The birds' journey becomes a metaphor for the tension between spiritual aspiration and the pull of earthly pleasures.

"I want to be eaten / by the Simorgh, / I want to be loved / by the Simorgh, / I want to be transformed / by the Simorgh."

Themes of Mortality and Transformation

Woven into the fabric of the poem are themes of mortality and the cyclical nature of existence. The birds' journey is not only a quest for spiritual enlightenment but also a pilgrimage towards death and rebirth. Through vivid descriptions of the birds' encounters with predators, storms, and other dangers, Olds confronts the fragility of life while also offering a transformative vision of renewal.

"I am the bird who dies / and is born again, / I am the bird who sings / in the darkness, / I am the bird who flies / towards the light."

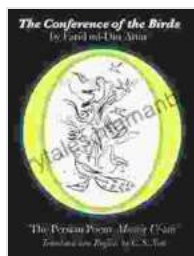
Critical Acclaim and Recognition

Published in 1983, "Conference of the Birds" has received widespread critical acclaim and is considered a landmark work in contemporary American poetry. Olds' evocative language, fearless exploration of complex themes, and innovative use of form have earned her a reputation as one of the most celebrated poets of her generation. The poem has received numerous awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

Legacy and Impact

"Conference of the Birds" has left a profound impact on the literary landscape, inspiring countless other poets and writers. Its exploration of universal themes, its celebration of women's voices, and its transformative vision have resonated with readers of all backgrounds. The poem continues to be widely studied and discussed in academic and literary circles, ensuring its enduring legacy as a seminal work of American poetry.

Sharon Olds' "Conference of the Birds" is a mesmerizing poetic journey that invites readers to soar with the birds towards the realm of the divine. Through vivid imagery, evocative language, and profound themes, the poem explores the nature of spiritual awakening, feminine empowerment, and the longing for transcendence. Its interconnected narratives, exploration of desire, and confrontation of mortality offer a transformative vision that resonates deeply with the human experience. As a literary masterpiece and a testament to Olds' poetic brilliance, "Conference of the Birds" continues to inspire and challenge readers, leaving an enduring legacy in the world of poetry and literature.



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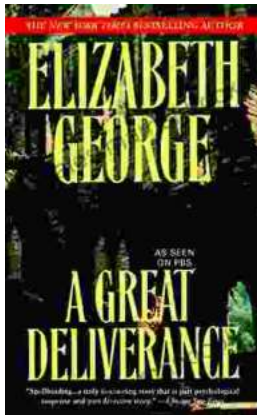
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