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# Where The Bird Sings Best



## Synopsis

The magnum opus from Alejandro Jodorowskyâs director of *The Holy Mountain*, star of Jodorowskyâs *Dune*, spiritual guru behind *Psychomagic* and *The Way of Tarot*, innovator behind classic comics *The Incal* and *Metabarons*, and legend of Latin American literature. There has never been an artist like the polymathic Chilean director, author, and mystic Alejandro Jodorowsky. For eight decades, he has blazed new trails across a dazzling variety of creative fields. While his psychedelic, visionary films have been celebrated by the likes of John Lennon, Marina Abramovic, and Kanye West, his novelsâ praised throughout Latin America in the same breath as those of Gabriel GarcÃ­a MÃ¡rquezâ have remained largely unknown in the English-speaking world. Until now. *Where the Bird Sings Best* tells the fantastic story of the Jodorowskysâ emigration from Ukraine to Chile amidst the political and cultural upheavals of the 19th and 20th centuries. Like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Jodorowskyâs book transforms family history into heroic legend: incestuous beekeepers hide their crime with a living cloak of bees, a czar fakes his own death to live as a hermit amongst the animals, a devout grandfather confides only in the ghost of a wise rabbi, a transgender ballerina with a voracious sexual appetite holds a would-be saint in thrall. Kaleidoscopic, exhilarating, and erotic, *Where the Bird Sings Best* expands the classic immigration story to mythic proportions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Huge, weird, joyous, raunchy, full of family legends and disturbingly compelling and surreal incest, Tarot and Jewish mysticism, lovers embalmed in honey and lion tamers more lion than tamer, this

book is crazy and yet also completely engrossing and relatable. Even if you haven't seen Jodorowsky's films (but even better if you have), you're in for a treat. I won't describe the plot, because it's impossible to describe, but if maximalism and sexual freedom and really excellent and inventive writing are your bag, then I highly recommend *Where the Bird Sings Best*.

Purportedly a memoir, this novel is a rewriting of a troubled family history—a kind of supernatural origin story, the prequel to Jodorowsky's "The Dance of Reality" of last year. Just as that film endowed a cruel and inhuman father with a shred of humanity and a voiceless mother with an operatic set of pipes, this book lends fullness and complexity to ancestral figures who would otherwise be lost to the past. The book seethes with twisting stories on either side of the author's family tree, the thrust angling toward the eventual union of Jodorowsky's parents at the subtle prompting of his prenatal, disembodied spirit. Rather than plot, though, this story deals primarily with striking images (the author is, after all, a filmmaker and graphic novelist). All varieties of graphic and violent sex, "monkey men" and "turtle women," martyred strikers' blood writing out the notes to a revolutionary hymn, a Jewish ghetto in Europe flying to Jerusalem every night, performing fleas and lions, suicides in vats of honey—such pictures remain emblazoned in the reader's mind long after she finishes the book (something, I should note, I did very quickly!). Given its South American setting and multigenerational aspect, it's tempting to call this book magical realism, but on the other hand, given the author's psychedelic, out-there films, it's also tempting to call it straight-up surrealism. Jewish and Catholic iconography bump shoulders with the shamanistic mumbo jumbo to be expected from someone who has written scores of books on the Tarot, I Ching, and "psychomagic," and this text seems to present the practical manifestations of spiritual tenets Jodorowsky has laid out elsewhere. While perhaps unsettling for some, the book has a strong—if difficult to identify—moral center. Highly recommended, and I can't wait to see more literary from this fascinating figure in the near future.

Very entertaining and full of creative, magical imagery. Quite lewd considering the content of the book is overwhelmingly religious, existential and spiritual. Some really cool passages and paragraphs that offer a new perspective on the commonplace ideologies found in books like this. All together, very enjoyable, engaging and hard to put down. A nice easy read.

I agree with all the great things other people've written in their reviews. My addition, for people who already love and admire Jodorowsky's movies, is that reading this book is like plunging into one of

his movies (and that's what you do with his movies, "plunge into" them) that lasts for 20 hours. Certainly one of the most thrilling and satisfying "novels" I've ever read. As Patti Smith said once about William S. Burroughs, "We just can't worship him enough."

Alejandro Jodorowsky begins "Where the Bird Sings Best" with a quote from Jean Cocteau, "A bird sings best in its family tree." He uses this as the basis of a highly allegorical novel exploring themes of Jewish emigration and diaspora, the immigrant experience in late-19th century/early-20th century South America, the communist movement in the same, spirituality, and the meaning of life. Though he focuses on his ancestors, he uses them more to capture a spirit or convey a message than to accurately portray their lives' experiences. Late in the book, Jodorowsky writes, "I don't know if my memories of the time before my birth correspond to reality or if they are mere dreams. That doesn't matter. In any case, reality is the gradual transformation of dreams; there is no world but the world of dreams" (p. 243). This reflects the philosophy of his art. As a work of fiction, Jodorowsky's writing and themes resemble those of Jamaica Kincaid and Salman Rushdie, but with his own, unique spin on things. The publishers, Restless Books, label the novel "autobiography" because Jodorowsky uses his ancestors as characters and those expecting to learn more about the artist, author, filmmaker, and comic book creator will be disappointed since the book ends with his conception. On the other hand, those looking to enjoy his unique worldview and learn about how he perceives his own heritage will enjoy this work.

This is literally the best novel I have ever read. If you like Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, and surrealism, you really need to check out this novel. Jodorowsky's colorful tale about the journey of his ancestors from the Old World to the New. novel will stretch your imagination, and possibly alter your consciousness. The world needs more books like this.

I'm a big Jodorowsky fan. I found the plot in some ways mirrored the rich, creative world of *The Incal*, but also had a few of the same weaknesses. At times I felt it was hard to follow plot progressions and was also left without answers to certain questions. But with the way it came together, I couldn't help but give it five stars. A must read for fans of magical realism.

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