



Daphne

Justine Picardie

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It is 1957. The author Daphne du Maurier, beautiful, famous, despairing as her marriage falls apart, finds herself haunted by Rebecca, the character in her most famous novel, written 20 years earlier. Seeking distraction, she begins to research a biography of Branwell Bronte.

Daphne Details

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From Reader Review Daphne for online ebook

Kathleen Flynn says

A three-stranded narrative: Daphne du Maurier, in the late 1950s desperately trying to write a biography of Branwell Bronte. She's corresponding with the dodgy, disgraced Bronte manuscript collector Symington, who even more than du Maurier is falling apart physically and mentally, as purloined papers molder in his damp house and he tries to at once impress du Maurier and keep her at a distance so she doesn't learn what a mess he really is. In the present day, a naive orphan with a love of the Brones and du Maurier marries a recently divorced man much older than herself and starts to essentially live out the plot of "Rebecca," at least for a while.

It's very interesting to read this on the heels of du Maurier's Branwell book.

I found it not entirely satisfying, yet diverting, and a book that got better as it went along. A narrative challenge was that everyone, particularly du Maurier and Symington, started the book in such a desperately dramatic place that there wasn't too much room for rising action. They spent a lot of their sections losing their minds, dramatic in theory, but it wasn't totally clear to me what the stakes were if they DID descend into complete insanity. And as it turned out, they did not.

Yet the du Maurier/Symington plot seemed stronger than the modern-day one -- the heroine came off as a bit too passive for me. But I give the book points for making her dramatic arc a quiet one, rather than being tempted to throw in improbable plot developments for the sake of a big climax.

Maggie Donaldson says

I wouldn't have chosen this to read if it hadn't have been for the bookclub I belong to - and I'm glad I did! On paper, it doesn't sound too promising - a weaving of a story about Daphne du Maurier's research into her biography of Branwell Bronte, interwoven with the life of a young woman fifty years later researching Du Maurier for a PHD. But it was a skillful study of relationships, denial, betrayal, plagiarism and much more, and very atmospheric. I have never read du Maurier but this book has fired an interest in her - I might even return to the gothic excesses of the Brontes too!

Claire the frenchbooklover says

3,5 pour être exacte

Chari says

Un libro con tres personajes protagonistas, dos reales y uno ficticio, que nos narra tres historias comenzando en 1957 en Menabilly, Cornwall, de la mano de la escritora Daphne du Maurier cuando durante una crisis de su marido, decide escribir la biografía de Branwell Brontë, Un mundo infernal. Y para ello, en busca de

información para documentarse, se pondrá en contacto con John Alexander Symington, (segundo personaje protagonista real) editor, escritor y coleccionista de manuscritos que trabajó para bibliotecas de renombre como Leeds University, y que veinte años antes se vio obligado a dejar su puesto como bibliotecario y curator del Brontë Parsonage Museum, cosa que nuestra primera protagonista desconoce.

Symington unas décadas atrás se asociara con T. A. Wise, famoso falsificador, y que en el momento que inicia en 1957 y mantiene durante dos años y medio, correspondencia con Daphne, se encuentra en estado de precariedad económica teniendo en su poder manuscritos Brontë que realmente no le correspondería.

Nuestra tercera protagonista, esta vez ficticia, es una joven casada algo obsesionada con Du Maurier, a tal punto que llega a ver similitudes en su propia vida respecto a la ex mujer de su marido, Paul, con la novela Rebeca, y que preparando una tesis iniciará la investigación de la correspondencia en el pasado entre la escritora Daphne y Symington.

Justine Picardie agrega incluso como personaje real secundario a Peter, el primo de Daphne, que no es otro que el Peter Pan del escritor J. M. Barrie, (sin parentesco con ellos pero al que denominaban tío Jim) y es que los primos de Daphne eran los famosos niños perdidos los Llewelyn Davies.

Por lo que la lectura, entre mi fascinación/obsesión por la familia Brontë y lo mucho que me gusta la escritora Daphne du Maurier, con tal contenido, a pesar de encontrarle al cierre del libro cosas que me fallaban, lo he disfrutado mucho y me ha encantado leerlo.

Aunque es un libro que solo recomendaría a los muy interesados en alguno de sus personajes.

Le daría cuatro estrellas por lo bien que me lo he pasado, pero como no es de los que releeré en el futuro, tres y media.

Dean Cummings says

Daphne du Maurier was quoted as saying:

“Look on each day that comes as a challenge, as a test of courage. The pain will come in waves, some days worse than others, for no apparent reason. Accept the pain. Little by little, you will find new strength, new vision, born of the very pain and loneliness which seem, at first, impossible to master.”

I read du Maurier’s masterpiece “Rebecca” just this Christmas holiday past. Over the years I’d heard how good it was and so over the course of the break decided to actually get to reading it. I enjoyed this story much more than I ever guessed I would. I loved it in fact. And when I’m moved that powerfully by something I read, I like to research the author and even the context of the story if this is possible. It was while I was doing this research that I came across the abovementioned quote.

Seven months later, as I was reading the first chapter of Justine Picardie’s “Daphne” I recalled this quote in a general sense, so I looked it up to be sure. As I read it again, I discovered that the sense of resolve and determination that the “real life” du Maurier was talking about seemed to fit rather neatly with the stance that Picardie’s “semi-autobiographical” version of Daphne du Maurier that we meet in chapter one.

It’s July of 1957, Daphne du Maurier is at her country home at Menabilly, Cornwall. Almost immediately I sensed that Picardie had chosen one of the worst periods of du Maurier’s life when I read this:

She was “tempted to stay in bed, pulling the covers over her head, taking another sleeping pill, and another; letting the white roses on the faded wallpaper blur into a mist.”

This kind of melancholy seemed out of step with what I thought I understood of du Maurier's personality. Not that I'd read any biographies on the great woman, or had any other firsthand knowledge of her life, instead my impression of an energetic and spirit du Maurier came from my appreciation of just how prolific she was as a writer, and based on "Rebecca" just how good she was. My thinking was that there was no way she could live in this kind of depressed fog for any extended period of time while turning out such great works.

Regardless of whether or not I was right about the real du Maurier, it turned out that my hunch was correct about Picardie's version of Daphne du Maurier, she was indeed having one of the worst kind of weeks anyone could have.

It was only one day before, du Maurier left her husband Tommy in a London nursing home. Tommy was the nickname given to Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Browning, Treasurer to the Duke of Edinburgh. "Your husband has suffered a very serious breakdown" the young doctor informs Daphne in the matter-of-fact way that inexperienced doctors tend to do. She only has to look at Tommy to know that the doctor's right, he's a shadow of his former self, weeping, his hands shaking, as he insists that he, "cannot ready himself...can't go on. I can't go on, I can't do this, I'd be better off dead..."

Of course this is a staggering blow to Daphne, but unfortunately there's more bad luck to come. She arrives at her country home, exhausted and bewildered, only to be greeted by the shrill, insistent ringing of the phone. It's a woman on the other end of the line. She introduces herself and Daphne realizes that she's met her before at the ballet, and that this woman was somehow connected with her husband, but she couldn't recall what the nature of their connection actually was. What Daphne does recall is her first impression of the lady, irresistibly beautiful and bewitching, so much so that Daphne secretly dubbed her the "Snow Queen."

"We need to talk" the woman on the other end of the line insists. She then goes on to clarify the exact nature of her relationship with Daphne's husband by telling her that's she's had an affair with him for over a year. What's worse, the other woman is very serious about her relationship with Tommy, "I love him, you must understand this" she says, then adds, "I've left my husband for Tommy, this is not a passing fling."

Daphne's reeling, she's silent, unable to compose a coherent response. The other woman uses this opportunity to fill the blank, telling Daphne that it is her opinion that the real source of Tommy's breakdown was the crushing stress he was under by trying to keep his relationship with her a secret from Daphne. She flatly asserts that this is the cause of Tommy's increased drinking and the eventual culprit in his breakdown.

More than enough bad news for any person to handle over the course of a few days.

It was as I read the next part that the abovementioned du Maurier quote proved to be especially significant. It was a decision that Picardie's du Maurier suddenly arrived at, one that went against the rage and frustration she was feeling. One that was sure to surprise the woman who'd been sleeping with her husband.

"What matters now is Tommy" she forces herself to say. Then having started, the words came a bit more freely, if still unbelievably. Daphne hears herself say this to the woman, "We both know that he's terribly ill, and somehow we must rise to the occasion, the two of us together, we must rise above our embarrassment and discomfort for his sake."

This catches the "Snow Queen" completely off guard. "You've been quite sensible" she manages to utter in reply to Daphne's bold and completely unexpected suggestion.

That piqued my curiosity. I was intrigued by what seemed to be an authentic parallel between the Daphne du Maurier of historical record, and the “fictional” version created by Justine Picardie. Also, I wanted to know how this prospect of “together rising to the occasion” and the unlikely “partnership” between betrayed wife and her husband’s mistress would turn out as the story progressed.

It was a combination that compelled me to read on.

As I did so, I was delighted to discover Picardie’s talent for metaphor. I noticed it first when I read the scene where Daphne, taking a walk, sees her husband’s abandoned and decaying sail boat named “Ygdrasil” and immediately connects the image before her with the deterioration of her marriage. First, the dreamy, romantic early days of their engagement:

The boat “he sailed on their wedding day to the little church just along the estuary at Lanteglos, slipping through the rippling, silvery water, and afterwards they’d spent their honeymoon aboard it, hidden away in Frenchman’s Creek, the waves lapping at them like a secret caress, only the birds as witnesses to their kisses, and the crescent of the new moon.”

Then, only a few words later, the current condition of the boat, and by extension, the condition of her and Tommy’s marriage as of late:

“But now the boat lay abandoned on dry land, rotting into a ghost ship, choked with Ivy, tendrils of rhododendrons reaching out to it, threatening to submerge it for good; the trees encroaching on it, as always at Menabilly, their roots like dead man’s fingers, ready to advance and recapture their lost ground.” That was keenly poignant, and definitely reinforced the feeling of gloom and despair hanging over Daphne at this part of the story.

The Daphne du Maurier of Picardie’s creation found herself adrift. To use the abovementioned analogy of the sailing boat, it was as if she were in that same boat, sailing in stormy, raging waters, and that she was doing so while dangerously unanchored. It was during the confusion and despair of her husband’s breakdown and her processing of the impact of his infidelity that she sought a safe haven. A place where the waters could be stilled again. That’s when she went back to her study. She knew that it was her writing and that alone that brought her peace and tranquility.

She scans the papers of a few different projects that were sitting on her desk, her eyes finally settling on her research notes on a man named Branwell who was brother to Emily and Charlotte Bronte. It was a project she’d started some time ago, then abandoned in favor of more pressing writing endeavors. But as she looks to her scattered research notes, she immediately recalls how intrigued she is at the prospect of writing a Branwell Bronte biography. Part of the intrigue is that this Bronte brother had been shunned by the literary community of his time, due in part to some scandal that was as yet unknown by du Maurier. She sensed that there was a story there, but wanted confirmation.

She decides to write a letter to Mr. Symington, a man she knew to be a Branwell Bronte scholar and one who had, along with his colleague Mr. Wise, were responsible for editing, then combining a number of Bronte manuscripts into a single collection. In her letter du Maurier asks Mr. Symington if he believes the idea of a “Bramwell Project” is worthy of the effort it was sure to require, and if so, where she might obtain access to Branwell’s manuscripts since they were not widely published.

A short time later du Maurier receives a reply from Mr. Symington in which he writes that it was an unexpected pleasure for him to receive her letter, and that her idea of a Branwell Bronte project was indeed a

worthy one. He also goes on to say that he agrees with her that Branwell has been unjustly maligned by the literary community. He encourages her to proceed with the project, and to prove he's in earnest, he includes two, very rare Branwell Bronte writings, one was "And The Weary Are At Rest" and the other, "The Leyland Manuscripts", both of which were published, but only a mere 50 copies of each were put into print.

I really liked the dilemma Picardie put Symington in. On the one hand he's in need of funds, and knows he must sell at least some of his collection of beloved manuscripts in order to keep his household up. On the other hand, he still has his own dreams of publishing a biography about the mysterious Branwell Bronte. Picardie takes us through his conflicting emotions about this predicament, slowly and painfully, which fit perfectly for this character at this stage of the story.

The second timeline occurring sometime near present day, involves a young lady who is writing her PhD thesis on the subject of Branwell Bronte's influence on the writing of his sisters Emily and Charlotte. She is a lifelong fan of Daphne du Maurier, having read all of the famous author's novels many times. According to the story, it's du Maurier's Branwell biography, titled "The Infernal World of Branwell Bronte" (the one du Maurier is contemplating in the 1957 timeline), that gives this lady the idea for her thesis.

When we meet her she is recently married to an older man named Paul who is an English professor. Paul's charismatic wife Rachel recently left him and ran away to America to work at the American University. As I read this situation, I immediately saw the resemblance to du Maurier's "Rebecca" in which the older man, Max de Winter recently "lost" his first wife, the one he's put on a pedestal, and impulsively marries a much younger woman. Also, in both cases the memory of the first wife looms large over the household.

In this modern day timeline, Picardie tells us that this young woman was swept up in a brief, but whirlwind romance with professor Paul, but soon after the wedding, as was the case in du Maurier's "Rebecca", the memory of Paul's ex-wife Rachel haunts the home and the marriage relationship of the newlyweds. Paul appears to still be enamored with his former wife, referring to her intelligence and charisma. As the weeks go on, he becomes more and more distant from his young wife, the similarity to Manderly in du Maurier's "Rebecca" become clearer and clearer.

The young woman decides that the best place to begin her research on Branwell would be the letters exchanged between du Maurier and Symington back in 1957. The two timelines are tied when we read the contents of the letters in the du Maurier timeline and pursuit of these, by this young student, in the modern day. This was so much fun to read because I, the reader knowing the content of the letters, read on as the young lady slowly "stumbled" toward the answers she was looking for. For me, this was one of the real strengths of this story.

The other aspect I enjoyed was the scene atmosphere Picardie created, especially in the Daphne du Maurier timeline. The first time this really stood out for me was when du Maurier received the first "Branwell Letter" from Symington, the letter that was sent along with two volumes of Branwell writing. These were a few of the gems Picardie created in this scene:

"As for Branwell himself: well, Daphne wanted to be entirely alone with him, so she took his books with her to the writing hut, telling Tod not to disturb her, she would not be needing lunch, and settled down at her desk there to read his volume of letters. The door to the hut was closed behind her, but the window was open, letting in the soft scent of honeysuckle and the temptations of a blue sky. Yet as Daphne worked her way through the volume of letters, it seemed to her as if they summoned up a cloud that was obscuring the sunlight; not constantly, but little mackerel clouds, gathering together and then scurrying apart; and with this came a troubling undercurrent of anxiety, mixed in with her excitement."

She continues to read the letters, hour after hour without interruption in her writing room:

“Still, she could not stop reading, she felt a kind of compulsion to continue, despite a faint nausea that rose in her throat and an odd feeling of weakness, as the day wore on. There was something exhausting about having Branwell so close at hand, his words in her hands, as she turned the pages.”

As the hours pass into evening, du Maurier not only learns more about Branwell, but is consumed by his “presence” at the same time. It was as if the work itself possessed the power to conjure the presence of the long dead writer. This was a fantastic element of this story.

“Daphne” was my first Justine Picardie book, so it was a delight to discover that she was so good at creating just the right mood in her scenes. Some of my favorite authors, Kate Morton and Eve Chase to name just two, are very skilled at this. I’m certain, based on what I’ve discovered, that I will continue to seek out Justine Picardie’s other titles.

Karen says

Since Daphne duMaurier is one of my favorite writers, I was very excited to get my hands on this novel about her. The plot tells three connected stories: Daphne's as she researches the life of the alcoholic, doomed Branwell Bronte; A.J. Symington, a Branwell-esque librarian who fell into disgrace after stealing several manuscripts from the Bronte Parsonage and Musuem; and a modern-day scholar whose marriage to an older man is threatened by the lingering presence of his ex-wife, Rachel, as the scholar researches the correspondence between Daphne and Symington, hoping to unearth a literary scandal and mystery.

I read this at a leisurley pace, drawn into Picardie's prose. She has written a beautiful representation of Daphne duMaurier and I enjoyed these sections of the book the most. The reader sees Daphne battling a family legacy of depression, the threat to her marriage by an affair at the same time her husband suffers a mental and physical breakdown, the destruction of various family members, and also Daphne's own brief breakdown as she is overcome by paranoid delusions. I did not know, or had forgotten, that the duMaurier's were related to the boys who were adopted by J.M. Barrie and became the fictionalized Lost Boys of Peter Pan. The effect of that fictionalization on their adult lives was also beautifully constructed in Picardie's novel.

In some ways I feel like very little happened in the book, that there wasn't really any mystery, at least not for the reader since the reader knows from almost the start that Symington has indeed stolen manuscripts. (The modern day scholar doesn't know what the reader knows so it is a mystery to her.) The fate of a priceless volume of Emily Bronte's handwritten poetry is the crux of the mystery, its ultimate fate finally revealed in the last chapter. I found that I cared much more about the characters and their various obsessions/disintegrations of mind than the literary mystery. Since the book is mostly about them, I was satisfied, but other readers might be disappointed if they're looking for true mystery. I also found the modern day scholar's story a mite disappointing. Echoes of *Rebecca* plague the scholar's life, and I expected more from that arm of the story. That plot line's conclusion seemed to peter out, and in many ways I found her presence in the story distracting. I also wanted more from the ex-wife Rachel's character. However the sections about Daphne were excellent, and the tragic/pathetic downfall of Symington was well worth the read. All in all, I enjoyed this read and would recommend it to all fans of Daphne duMaurier.

Sarah says

Similar setup to A.S. Byatt's *Possession*: modern day scholars obsessed with dead authors, literary mystery of the past to unravel, lots of correspondence, forgotten manuscripts, life imitates fiction. There's an additional layer to this book--there are the present-day characters, then Daphne du Maurier and J.A. Symington in the middle ground, and finally Branwell Brontë in the most distant past.

I enjoyed much of the back-and-forth between du Maurier and Symington. What sunk the book for me was the modern day protagonist, who was pretty childish and pathetic. Like the narrator in du Maurier's *Rebecca*, she never gives her name and is obsessed with her husband's previous wife. There were also a few too many coincidences in the present-day part of the story, which the author attempts to explain away by saying "Hey, there were crazy coincidences in *Jane Eyre*, too!" But I wasn't convinced.

In spite of my rather low rating, though, I do think this book is an achievement.

Nancy says

I picked this new book up, because my favorite novel of all time is the famous "Rebecca," known to some Brit Litters as the bastard half-sister of the Bronte girls' "Jane Eyre" and "Wuthering Heights." Actually completing this book tells me I'm either one of two things: A Brit Lit proficient, (considering I even bothered to finish this surprisingly intense book to begin with), or a horrible Brit Lit student who doesn't know 2% of what she actually thought she knew about her favorite novels. My money's on the latter.

"Daphne" is based on the true story of Daphne Du Maurier, the title character and author of "Rebecca." Author Picardie intertwines the story of Daphne, in her post-Rebecca success, and Alex Symington, a floundering, depressed librarian "helping" (but actually stifling) Daphne's next obsession and literary project: a biography on the lost and underappreciated Bronte brother, Branwell.

The two stories are woven together using their original letters and Picardie's impressive literary and historical UK research, which is fascinating. But the book is actually glued together by Picardie's story of a contemporary young woman, much like the second Mrs. DeWinter in "Rebecca," who is, in turn, obsessing about Daphne and her works.

For a contemporary novel, I really appreciated how many layers of meaning, overlapping of themes and tidbits of info I never knew about any of these authors I learned in school and are still on my shelf.

For example, no one ever taught me the Du Maurier family was infinitely close to Jim Barrie, author of "Peter Pan and Wendy," who was inspired by Daphne's cousins, the Llewelyn-Davies children (Peter, Michael, Jack...). Ultimately, a good friend (and cousin) of Daphne, the original Peter throws himself in front of a train as an adult. If you're not good with reading about depressed, emotionally tortured people (writers), don't read this book!

That said, while this will not be a success in the U.S., I would not be surprised if it's successful in the U.K. I had to use Wikipedia several times to remind myself who the heck some of these characters were in all the

Bronte/Barrie/DuMaurier books. Stuff those Brits probably have known since they were all 4 years old. :)

Loie says

OK, i tried. I tried for over 100 pages but could not get into this book at all. I love victorian novels: Rebecca, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights and more. I thought I would really enjoy this book when it was given to me this summer. I tend to read at night before going to bed and so i thought i was reading it at the wrong time; too tired to follow the plot lines. So I tried it at different times but to no avail. I guess i just didn't get the literary mystery and couldn't get into the scandal. I found the need to mention so many extraneous characters made this more of a biographical attempt than a novel. Since I didn't finish it I won't be recommending it.

Judy says

After hearing a talk by Justine Picardie, I wanted to like this book - and I did. I found it a very enjoyable read, which weaves together different time periods and is full of literary references without being dry or difficult to take in. It jumps between the life of a modern-day PhD student haunted by Daphne du Maurier, that of Daphne herself as she works on her book about Branwell Bronte, and an eccentric Bronte expert hoarding stolen Branwell manuscripts.

A lot of the book is based on fact, and at times I longed to know whether a particular incident really happened or was invented. The whole novel has left me wanting to read more by and about the Brontes and du Maurier, who are interests of mine anyway.

Hannah says

A beautifully written book that weaves the thoughts and actions of three distinct characters into one cohesive tale of the search for meaning, acceptance and understanding.

The book follows the life of the writer Daphne duMaurier and the historian/librarian Alex Symington from 1957-1960, as well as the life of an unnamed female student doing research for her doctorate in the present day. Each chapter focuses on one of these characters, and is told through their "voice" or via letters.

In each case, the mysterious life and writings of Bramwell Bronte is woven throughout each of these lives, as in their own way these three characters search for clues to his possible contribution to the great Bronte sisters works of "Wuthering Heights" and "Jane Eyre". In addition, the haunting works of Daphne duMaurier such as "Rebecca" and "My Cousin Rachel", are also an ever present feature, especially in the life of our unnamed thesis student, who greatly resembles the unnamed Mrs. deWinter of "Rebecca" fame in attitude.

According to the author, this book is based on real life events in the life of duMaurier, and the author had the assistance of her family, friends and associates in fleshing out her character. I know very little about duMaurier's life, so I can't judge the accuracy of this claim, but if so, then Daphne was a brilliant but tortured creative soul, as so many great talents are. Through Picardie's tale, I can certainly catch a glimpse of why duMaurier wrote the stories she did, and I have a much greater appreciation for her works.

Picardie has a wonderful writing style, and some passages are so beautiful that I found myself rereading them again and again. I thought she did a good job maintaining the "voice" of the three characters, and I liked the seamless flow of the book from one voice to the next.

In the end, I admit that I gave the book 3 stars instead of higher on a purely subjective basis: it was ultimately a depressing story, and one that I don't think I could read again--at least not in my current stage of life. But it's well worth the read, and I'd recommend it for anyone who enjoys a literary mystery, or who likes the writings of duMaurier or the Bronte sisters.

Sara says

Having always been a great fan of Du Maurier's books and knowing a little about her life, I found this book a fascinating read. I loved it as much for what I did not know as for the chance to revisit what I already did. The three stories (four if you want to give a nod to Branwell), which weave between the present day and the 1959-60 era, are well told.

My main reaction to this novel, though, was to yearn for a reread of both *Rebecca* and the Bronte novels.

Farin says

Daphne was a bit of a surprise and a bit of a letdown for me. Like most people, I picked it up because I'm a fan of *Rebecca* and was excited to read a historical fiction piece on its author. It's entirely my fault that I didn't reading the abstract before I checked it out of my library, because if I had I would have known that the story was less about *Rebecca* and more about Daphne's twilight years as she struggled through a turbulent marriage and an equally turbulent biography of Branwell Bronte. At first, the whole process was very interesting to me, and I enjoyed reading the back and forth between Daphne and Symington as she searched for some obscure manuscript that would vindicate Branwell, but I started to lose interest as things continued to drag on and the characters' neuroses began to dominate the plot. The three part narrative also got old after a while; I literally groaned when I turned the page to find that it was Symington's turn to take up the thread, and there were times when I wanted to smack our modern heroine. I didn't need these other narrators! I liked Daphne just fine!

However, Picardie scores two major points in the writing of this novel. The first is that she has clearly done her research well, and each chapter is rich in detail, most of which is factually correct. Those parts of the book were a particular pleasure to read. The second is that, despite how annoyed I became with some of the narrators' antics, it was all clearly a commentary on the process of researching and writing a book and how, much like in *Black Swan*, it can take over your life and make you crazy.

I agree that fans of Daphne du Maurier and the Brontes should definitely give this book a shot. As for me, I'm going straight back to my library to check out a Daphne biography.

Chris says

Who doesn't love a juicy literary mystery? What happened to that poem? Who slept with whom? And really,

why does she write about incest? Is it a ghost? And what's with him? It's no surprise that many books have been written about any literary mystery.

This book is somewhat like *Possession*, but not as good. Picardie uses three characters - [author:Daphne du Maurier|2001717. Symington, and a grad student to explore the Brontes and who the Bronte brother was, you know that bloke who died.

Told partly in letter and partly in 3rd/1st person narrative, the story is somewhat predictable, but the language is compelling. What is extremely interesting is how Picardie weaves themes, motifs, and ideas from both Du Maurier and the Brontes into the book. The reader is inspired to read more of both Du Maurier and the Brontes, and in all this isn't a bad thing. An enjoyable, if not overly deep, read.

Barb says

Literary references were constant throughout Justine Picardie's 'Daphne'. This book really felt like it was leading me to more books.

Some of the books the author mentions include; 'Rebecca', 'The Birds', 'My Cousin Rachel' all by Daphne du Maurier, 'Trilby' by George du Maurier, 'Wuthering Heights' by Emily Bronte, 'The Infernal Branwell Bronte' by Daphne du Maurier, 'The Woman in White' by Wilkie Collins, 'Peter Pan' by JM Barrie, 'Jane Eyre' by Charlotte Bronte and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall' by Anne Bronte.

Picardie's novel narrates three stories which all weave together. We find Daphne du Maurier in 1957 as she struggles with the mental breakdown of her husband. Through Daphne's research for a biography about Branwell Bronte she connects us with J.A. Symington who is a Bronte scholar and collector. The contemporary narrator is a newlywed working on her PhD and researching the connections between du Maurier, Symington and their research on the Brontes. Staggering the narration gives the reader an increased sense of disorder and chaos much like the narrator's lives. Each one struggles with things in their life that are out of control.

Mental Illness factors heavily into the historical portion of the novel and I often wondered about diagnoses for the du Maurier family. Did Daphne suffer with Bipolar Disorder? What would things have been like for her and her family if there had been greater knowledge about mental illness and addiction? J.A. Symington seems to have lived with some sort of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or perhaps Compulsive Hoarding Disorder. There is a thread of obsession that connects all three narrators.

I enjoyed this novel especially the historical portions. I didn't care for the contemporary thread quite as much as I enjoyed reading about Daphne du Maurier and Alex Symington. But I thought the author was very, very clever in her word choices, there are people wearing trilby hats and our contemporary narrator never gives us her name, but her husband's first wife is named Rachel. There were many little clever tweaks and references that made this interesting book that much more enjoyable.

I learned a lot about Daphne du Maurier and ultimately this book left me wanting to read more about her and her family. Daphne du Maurier's father was very close friends with JM Barrie, the creator of 'Peter Pan'. In fact her parents met while acting in one of Barrie's plays. Daphne's first cousins, George, Jack, Peter, Michael and Nico Llewelyn-Davies were the inspiration behind 'Peter Pan'. The Llewelyn-Davies children were orphaned when their mother died in 1910 and Barrie later adopted them. Her Grandfather George was a

famous author and wrote 'Trilby' which a hat was named for.

The books that I found and added to my list to read after finishing this one are 'Captivated: J.M. Barrie, The Du Mauriers & The Dark Side of Never Never Land' by Piers Dudgeon. And a memoir by one of Daphne's daughters 'Daphne du Maurier' by Flavia Leng. As well as 'J.M. Barrie and the Lost Boys: The real story behind Peter Pan' by Andrew Birkin which has lots of photographs by JM Barrie, and 'Enchanted Cornwall: Her Pictorial Memoir' by Daphne du Maurier, Piers Dudgeon which has beautiful photographs.

I would recommend this to fans of Daphne du Maurier. I think you will enjoy it more if you have read these du Maurier novels; 'Rebecca', 'My Cousin Rachel', 'The King's General' as well as Charlotte Bronte's 'Jane Eyre' and Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights'.
