



The Peregrine (New York Review Books Classics)

By J. A. Baker

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From fall to spring, J.A. Baker set out to track the daily comings and goings of a pair of peregrine falcons across the flat fen lands of eastern England. He followed the birds obsessively, observing them in the air and on the ground, in pursuit of their prey, making a kill, eating, and at rest, activities he describes with an extraordinary fusion of precision and poetry. And as he continued his mysterious private quest, his sense of human self slowly dissolved, to be replaced with the alien and implacable consciousness of a hawk.

It is this extraordinary metamorphosis, magical and terrifying, that these beautifully written pages record.

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The Peregrine (New York Review Books Classics) By J. A. Baker Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"...the book is a work of tireless outward observation, with an astonishingly inventive and precise prose style....Baker's feet may be on the ground, but his gaze is skyward, toward the birds he envies." — Lisa Darmas, *Bookforum*

"Remarkable...the lyrical prose hammers home the attraction of pitting predator against quarry." — *Daily Telegraph* (London)

"A powerful evocation of East Anglia's winter landscape, and an unforgettable portrait of a man's passionate engagement with the natural world."

— *London Review of Books*

"*The Peregrine* should be known as one of the finest works on nature ever written...His words—precise, lyrical and intensely felt—seem to have been selected as if their author were under huge pressure, both from the depth of his feelings for the bird and the weight of experience he wished to impart...The only sadness about *The Peregrine* is that its author is no longer with us to be honoured afresh for his achievement."

— *BBC Wildlife Magazine*

"A nature study such as Mr. Baker has presented—not by any means restricted to the peregrine falcon—deserves warm praise for the remarkable perseverance and patience which has gone into its making, and when the observer is a gifted writer, as in the present instance, the result is even more gratifying."

— Daniel A. Bannerman, *The New York Review of Books*

"*The Peregrine* is one of the most beautifully written, carefully observed and evocative wildlife accounts I have ever read. Mr. Baker's patience, his discriminating and unsentimental eye, and his passionate deliberations are utterly captivating."

— Barry Lopez

"This book goes altogether outside the bird book into something less naïve, into literature, into a kind of universal rapport..."

— Geoffrey Grigson, *Sunday Times* (London)

"...one need not know a hawk from a handsaw to take pleasure and profit from the book. It is an account by a curious, complicated man of a curious, complicated phenomenon, that will involve, instruct and excite a reader who can never hope and may never want to share the writer's experience."

— Bil Gilbert, *Washington Post Book World*

"Mr. Baker is primarily a descriptive writer, and a good one, but his obsession has given him a kind of crazy empathy that lifts his book above mere observation."

— *The New Yorker*

"*The Peregrine* by J.A. Baker...[is] A darkly poetic and episodic work about a man obsessively watching wild peregrine falcons in the British countryside. Written at a time when the extinction of the peregrine and

nuclear apocalypse both seemed imminent, this is a book about the poetry of death and loss as much as it is about hawks.” —Helen Macdonald, *The Week*

About the Author

J. A. Baker is also the author of *The Hill of Summer*. He was a native of Essex, England.

Robert Macfarlane’s *Mountains of the Mind* (2003), about wilderness and the Western imagination, won the Somerset Maugham Award and the Guardian First Book Award, among other prizes.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Donovan:

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Kenneth Flowers:

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