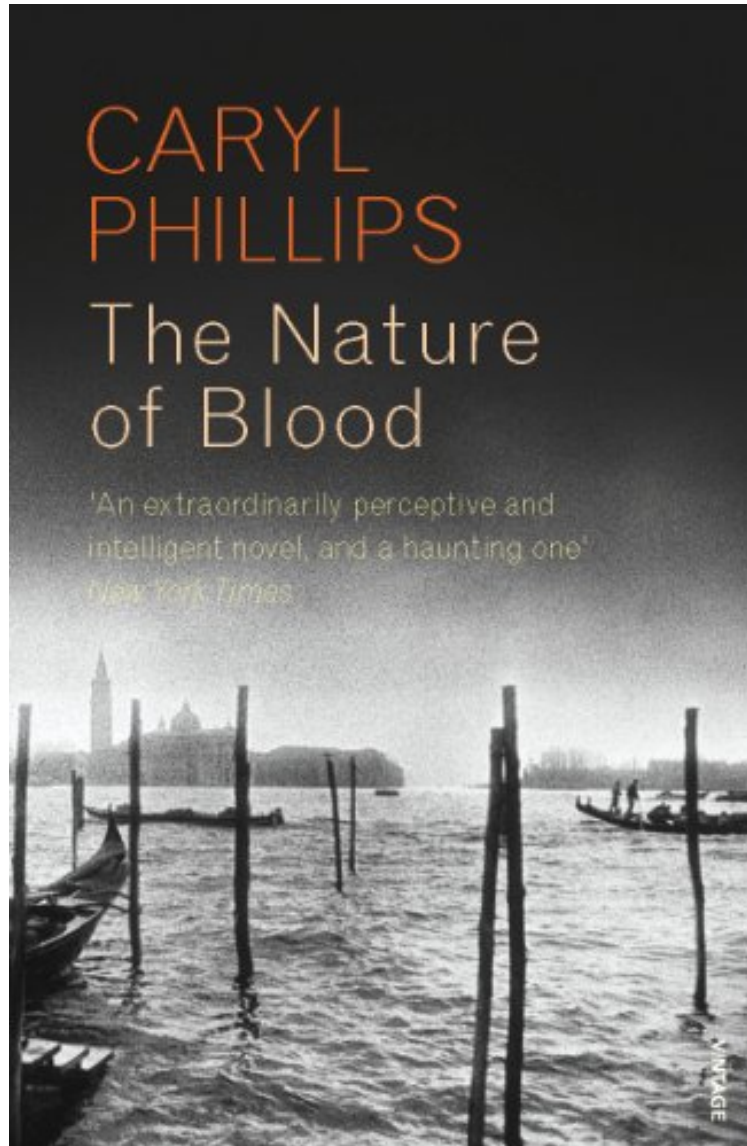


The Nature of Blood

Von Caryl Phillips

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Von Caryl Phillips : The Nature of Blood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Nature of Blood:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Stunning!Von Mary WhippleIn an age like the present, in which even a minor event can sometimes be elevated to a "life-changing experience," one hesitates to say that one short book permanently changed someone's perception of the world, but it did for this reader. I was absolutely stunned by Caryl Rivers's The Nature of Blood! The book deals

primarily with Eva, a 21-year-old concentration camp survivor and her life, thoughts, and memories. A second major story line involves Othello, hired by the Doge to lead the Venetian army against the Turks in the late 15th century, and his life and passionate love for Desdemona, the daughter of a Venetian aristocrat. The two seemingly disparate stories are connected thematically, rather than narratively, as the book alternates from character to character and across time lines. Two other characters (Eva's uncle and an Ethiopian Jew who immigrates to Israel) have their space here, along with a 15th century trial of Jewish money-lenders in Venice, which connects obliquely with the Othello story. The novel, which is not linear and does not follow a typical narrative pattern, is very impressionistic, more like a symphony than a traditional novel, with movements and complimentary themes playing in counterpoint to each other. The author experiments successfully with a variety of voices and points of view, switching back and forth through nearly 500 years of history and several pain-filled settings as he illustrates his themes. It is an intense and emotionally involving story of cultural, religious, and ethnic persecution, rivaling Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* in its impact. A truly remarkable achievement. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Breathtaking! Von Mary Whipple

In an age like the present, in which even a minor event can sometimes be elevated to a "life-changing experience," one hesitates to say that one short book permanently changed someone's perception of the world, but it did for this reader. I was absolutely stunned by Caryl Rivers's *The Nature of Blood*! The book deals primarily with Eva, a 21-year-old concentration camp survivor and her life, thoughts, and memories. A second major story line involves Othello, hired by the Doge to lead the Venetian army against the Turks in the late 15th century, and his life and passionate love for Desdemona, the daughter of a Venetian aristocrat. The two seemingly disparate stories are connected thematically, rather than narratively, as the book alternates from character to character and across time lines. Two other characters (Eva's uncle and an Ethiopian Jew who immigrates to Israel) have their space here, along with a 15th century trial of Jewish money-lenders in Venice, which connects obliquely with the Othello story. The novel, which is not linear and does not follow a typical narrative pattern, is very impressionistic, more like a symphony than a traditional novel, with movements and complimentary themes playing in counterpoint to each other. The author experiments successfully with a variety of voices and points of view, switching back and forth through nearly 500 years of history and several pain-filled settings as he illustrates his themes. It is an intense and emotionally involving story of cultural, religious, and ethnic persecution, rivaling Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* in its impact. A truly remarkable achievement. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. The True Character is Prejudice Von niki@mindless.com

Life does not exist in a vacuum. Chain of events do occur, relationships about the past and the present exist, and comparisons between various attitudes and time periods can be made. *The Nature of Blood*, by Caryl Phillips is a very powerful novel that does not just focus on one aspect of a given situation, but does indeed take a more realistic approach on the subject of prejudice by broadening the problem into several distinct but comparable stories. Each story adds a new dimension or nuance to describe this problem that has always existed, and because of this the book evolves into four connecting stories that are somewhat disjoint in the handling of each situation, but ultimately fit into a cohesive pattern. In the beginning of the novel, the reader may only believe that the book is about the sad character, Eva, who was victimized by the holocaust. Her compelling story is very reminiscent of *Schindler's List* in the horrific descriptions of life and death in the camps, but with the intimacy of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in the first-person perspective. Eva, as the only survivor of her immediate family, is transformed from an innocent, naive, and normal girl into a young woman whose words have a deep heaviness and the strange kind of sadness that one has when experiencing that emotion so long that it almost becomes indifference. As the author switches from Eva to the Jewish bankers of not quite 500 years prior, the reader looks for something that will connect the two stories. The characters themselves are unrelated, the setting quite different with one in Portobuffole and the other in Germany, and the scale of disaster much greater in Eva's Germany. However, there are many commonalities between the stories. Both involve a common people, the Jews, and both stories involve the mass hysteria of the majority people, the Christians in both stories. In Eva's story, the specific reasons for the death camps are never given, but the hysteria of the Germans and the hate that they propagated against the Jews was evident. The story of the Portobuffole Jews, however, evolves mostly around how such an event could build up and occur. Readers are taken step by step through each phase of this tragic story. The Venetian Jews were originally driven from Germany early in the 15th century as they stood accused of causing the plague with their "evil ways". Their condition in Portobuffole, however, is not much improved as they were required to identify themselves as Jewish by the yellow stitching on their clothes and the markers outside their front doors. In times of peace, they were relatively safe as they were in Germany. However, Portobuffole was recovering from famine and the war with the Turks and the citizens were uneasy. The Christians of Portobuffole did not understand the strange customs of the Jews. But, most of all, the largest complaint against the Jews were that they were too much relied upon for money lending. The result of this story is linked across time with the Eva's experience. These main ideas - a time of hardship and the foreignness of the Jewish to the Christians which leads to harsh persecution against them as scapegoats is also what happened in Eva's Germany. Prejudice leads to hysteria and hysteria to persecution in a time of hardship. It is then understood how such a small event, when taken out of context with the truth twisted about can cause horrible events to happen. From this small, rather isolated event, readers can then judge what happened in the widespread atrocity in Germany. Obviously the

stories of Eva and Servadio are linked closely together, but there are also major links between these two stories and Othello's. Readers can assume that Othello's story occurred shortly after Servadio's by no more than about 100 years. Othello discovers the Jewish Ghetto, located just north of St. Marks, ironically the location of the Portobuffole Jews execution. They live there for safety from the Christian Venetians, leaving readers to assume that the hatred and persecution of the Jews among the Venetians only began with the events in Portobuffole. Their safety after that event must have been deeply in question for them to be restricted to such an area for their own sakes. As Othello related, "Apparently, most of the Jews did not regard this arrangement of being locked behind gates from sunset to sunrise a hardship, for it afforded them protection against the many cold hearts that opposed their people". A similar statement is made by Eva when she says, "I walk close to the barbed-wire fence and peer at the world beyond the camp. I touch the fence. I know where I am. I am suddenly appalled to realize that I am comfortable being confined. To remove the wire seems unthinkable". The story that seems most out of place in the fabric of the novel is that of Malka. Although there is obviously a tie between her and Eva in the character of Stephan, many other things seem at first to be unrelated. The easiest connection is that of Malka and Othello. Both are foreigners in a new, more advanced land, and both converts of the majority religion of that foreign land. They are both from Africa, with Othello being a Moor and Malka an Ethiopian, and as such are discriminated against on the basis of their skin color. Like the subplots of Eva and Servadio, these two are tied together by years - Malka's occurring in the later 20th century, and Othello's in the late 1500's to early 1600's. These two plots embody the more general prejudices of a society without outright persecution. Obviously the tie between these two subplots are great, but there is also a subtle connection, beyond Stephan, of Malka and Eva, especially in the description of Malka's departure from her homeland: "...And then you herded us on to buses...And then on to the embassy compound, where we were stored like thinning cattle. Grazing on concrete". This image of people treated as cattle is very similar to Eva's description of the crowded boxcar stuffed with people who were not even afforded an opportunity at decency in such conditions and set about like animals. Of course, the situations were different. Malka's story revolved around a relief effort, whereas Eva's trip was for death. Readers can also discern a likeness between Malka and Eva as two people in a strange, foreign place. When Eva goes to England to start her life over with the promise of a marriage, she is looked at as an oddity. She is completely out of place. Her world was a primitive sort of place in the concentration camp. Her life and those of the people around her was desperate and purely survival-based. The same was true of Malka, albeit more peaceful. Each of the four subplots occur at different times, as mentioned earlier, and parallel one another. Although the stories have a different severity, they are very similar in attitude and function. The conclusion gained by these differing time periods are that prejudice and racism have not improved in hundreds of years and that the same problems still exist. The potential for the outrageous tragedy of the Holocaust and that of the Portobuffole Jews has not been eradicated as long as delicate situations like that of Othello and Malka exist. Humankind has not become enlightened, the main characters have only changed names and faces. Admittedly, in a hasty reading of *The Nature of Blood*, the four major plots seem too unrelated and makes the book seem choppy and disjoint. However, with more patience and effort, the reader will begin to see that what first appeared to be choppy, is in actuality a fluid piece of work. The author is not just telling a story, he is relating a concept that really has no anchor to a specific place, time, or character. Prejudice is the real main character and the subplots are simply a definition of each aspect within the whole of prejudice and hate.

Kurzbeschreibung
The Nature of Blood is an unforgettable novel about loss and persecution, about courage and betrayal, and about the terrible pain yet absolute necessity of human memory. A young Jewish woman growing up in Germany in the middle of the twentieth century and an African general hired by the Doge to command his armies in sixteenth century Venice are bound by personal crisis and momentous social conflict. What emerges is Europe's age-old obsession with race, with sameness and difference, with blood..deLike his earlier works, the novels *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River*, Caryl Phillips's *The Nature of Blood* is made up of several stories that take place over a large span of time. The result of this innovative technique is that themes, characters, and incidents resonate against one another, and history is seen not as a straight line but as a circle or a spiral. In one story, a Jewish man abandons his family to fight for the state of Israel. In another, the Moor Othello, another soldier who has left his family, comes to Venice. There, he visits the Jewish ghetto and finds himself astounded that "they should choose to live in this manner." Phillips's most daring feat in this provocative and thoughtful novel, however, may be to write in the first person about a Holocaust survivor just after World War II. .comLike his earlier works, the novels *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River*, Caryl Phillips's *The Nature of Blood* is made up of several stories that take place over a large span of time. The result of this innovative technique is that themes, characters, and incidents resonate against one another, and history is seen not as a straight line but as a circle or a spiral. In one story, a Jewish man abandons his family to fight for the state of Israel. In another, the Moor Othello, another soldier who has left his family, comes to Venice. There, he visits the Jewish ghetto and finds himself astounded that "they should choose to live in this manner." Phillips's most daring feat in this provocative and thoughtful novel, however, may be to write in the first person about a Holocaust survivor

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