



Song of the Water Saints

Nelly Rosario

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"The circle of myth, history, longing, and grief in "Song of the Water Saints" will envelop the reader as it does the lives of Nelly Rosario's beautifully realized characters."

--Maureen Howard, author of "A Lover's Almanac"

Poetic, transporting, and heartbreaking, this debut novel traces the lives of three generations of courageous Dominican women.

First there is Graciela: a young girl rebelling against the strictures of her poor, rural life in the Dominican Republic in the early 1900s, she searches for her true destiny even as it lures her away from her husband and baby daughter. . . . Then there is Mercedes, passionately devoted to the Church, who rears herself after the death of her beloved stepfather, eventually marrying and moving with her husband to New York City, where she will bring up her granddaughter. . . . Coming of age in the freewheeling 1990s--and bringing the story full circle--Leila has without a doubt inherited the restless genes of great-grandmother Graciela. . . .

The intimate details of life in New York and the Dominican Republic, the broad strokes of history, the subtleties of familial connection amid changing notions of home and obligation--all are rendered with grace and gritty realism in this remarkably accomplished novel.

Song of the Water Saints Details

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Author : Nelly Rosario

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From Reader Review Song of the Water Saints for online ebook

Jenny says

I really wanted to like this book but I ended up having to force myself to finish it.

Nick says

Normally, I have a great appreciation for books that view the history of a nation, a region or a culture through the lens of the fate of a family--"100 Years of Solitude" is the best-known recent example; one of my favorites is perhaps the oldest of them all, the classic Chinese novel "The Dream of the Red Chamber." And I see where Nelly Rosario is going in "Song of the Water Saints"--the history of the Dominican Republic beginning with yanqui armies there and ending with the immigrant community in New York so well represented by the play "In the Heights." And there is much to love about such a novel that centers on the lives of women of successive generations, with riffs on imperialism, emigration, Catholicism, economic and sexual exploitation and destructive poverty, somewhat intertwined. But the novel rarely centers; most of these women (with one girl among them) are on stage for episodes long enough to make a romantic or unromantic choice of a man and then the next generation replaces them. The exception is Graciela, great-grandmother to the Leila, the girl with which the series ends. Graciela is given the most pages, confronts the steepest challenges and is in the end victimized by them. And she is clearly meant as a matriarch, the strong core of the narrative, but for all the life-force expended on her, Graciela's character never cohered for this reader; she is alternately tough and weak, placing herself in danger without much explanation. These things can all be done, but not in so few pages and with such spare development. Novels this ambitious need enough space to fulfill it.

Hannah says

The story of a family over three generations, gives you an idea about what immigration means for a family, across time, and for the identities that family members form.

b says

Took me a while to figure out what this was about, because I thought it had to do with the relationship between Haiti and DR, but it didn't. Good story about three generations of Dominican women -- I could see my grandmother, my aunts/mothers/father oddly enough, and cousins reflected in each woman presented. Had a slow start and felt like Leila's story was rushed compared to Mercedes' and definitely compared to Graciela's. Conflicted between 3 stars or 4, but I'll give it 4. Biggest problem: didn't like how the women's narratives were centered on the men present or absent from their lives. There is more. We are more. Also super interesting how she uses ""s when people talk in English but — when people talk in Spanish.

Saxon says

SO I read this because it was assigned in my "Novel on the Globe" course. We are basically reading a bunch of different novels from places that aren't first world or western.

This one takes place primarily in the Dominican Republic. Following three or four generations of women through their struggling between the poor and oppressive society/environment they grow up in and their attempts to realize their dreams and desires. Sound like some corny shit? Well, it's actually not. It's just really boring and predictable. I appreciate the attempt to exhibit life in the D.R. since the beginning of 20th century, its relation to the U.S. and the strange culture that has been created from years of Spanish-Catholic colonization. However, this book is essentially written by a 2nd or 3rd generation Dominican who lives in Williamsburg. Her attempts of showing the interesting contours of Dominican life with the language and idioms of popular American English was jolting. Not to mention that every bit of imagery and foreshadowing felt like it was out of "How to Write 101". Brief moments of brilliance came when dealing with the internal thoughts of women characters. Not entirely horrible, not memorable nor significant either. This author may do best with a novel taking place in a more contemporary setting.

next.

Rachel says

Leila's story is just rushed over. I don't see any similarities between her and her great-grandmother...

Diane S ? says

2.5 It is always challenging when reading a novel about a different culture, this being set in the Dominican Republic, that one has not enough knowledge to judge the book or the writing style. In this case I liked the writing, Rosario has a choppy style of writing, often small paragraphs, yet was able to make me feel as if I was part of that culture. I often felt like a voyeur. Like I was there only to observe. Also from these descriptions we get a view of the political situation on this country, though the main story concerns the women.

Beginning of the twentieth century, and Graciela wants nothing to do with the usual roles of wives and mothers, she wants to experience things. She does not want to settle. I really liked her, she was a very colorful character. She does have a daughter, and eventually the daughter and her daughter end up in the United States. Seems that all the women have inherited Graciela's lust for life.

I would have rated this higher, but at times I felt the sex, which was extremely gritty was not necessary, unless it was to provide a shock value, which was to imply that the life these women led was shocking. I honestly don't know. Also while the story was interesting, it did not provide a cohesive story, and the pacing was very uneven with the first part taking the longest and the rest seemed to go quicker.

Yet, I cannot say I will never read this author again, I think she has an amazing talent and it may just be me and the culture, the style of writing. I think she has a talent that bears watching.

Darshan Elena says

This book started slow for me, but it picked up speed and heart as the characters and situations unfolded. I loved the author's approach to sharing Dominican history via fictional narrative, and I felt a special connection to the novel as I was reading it while in the DR. While I know that there are limits to how we can come to know the world through fiction, I long for novels that compel me into the pages, into the lives, into the world. I never came to care for Rosario's characters; their motivations seemed to elude me.

Cait says

3.5

Rad bookstore (La Casa Azul!!!!!!), okay book! I struggle with these like multigenerational sagas a lot.

Anna says

read for senior sem: ghostly figures

uhhhhhh big uhhh about this!!!

ultimately this book is about colonization and also reconnecting letting yourself be a part of your family and it's definitely moving and well written uhhh

Entre mis libros says

reseña en: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BnJLdggguF1/>

Yesha says

Lyric and lush. It was easy to fall in love with these characters and to trust them as they moved through generations.

Mariela Hernandez says

It took me awhile to finish this book. It was not so engaging in the beginning but picked up midway through the book. A lot of history and factual events included.

Sarah Phelan says

Set in the 20th century of DR, the story follows a line of women, starting with Graciela, to Mercedes, to granddaughter Leila. Lovely prose connects the three women through visions and dreams and history.

Audrey says

eh, it was okay. also read this for Caribbean Romances. I wasn't enamored by the prose, it was pretty expected setting aside these one or two really weird ghost/dream paragraphs that almost get lost in the rest of the novel.

really, i just felt like it was nothing too exciting, and the end was so goddamned cheesy.

the beginning was interesting i guess. it starts off with this postcard of a ... uhm, Caribbean Romance. Haha. but it doesn't really go too deep into what is interesting about photographing these romances.
