

The Singing of Swans

A NOVEL

Story Angles

Beyond *The Da Vinci Code*

The questions Dan Brown's bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code* (and the Ron Howard/Tom Hanks film based on the book) raise about the Divine Feminine represent only the tip of the spiritual iceberg. Long before Mary Magdalene or Jesus Christ walked the Earth, long before God the Father was worshipped as the sole deity on the planet, the peoples of the world venerated a Sacred Mother for hundreds of thousands of years. The Divine Feminine and a woman-centered spirituality are central themes in *The Singing of Swans*. Some of its characters are priestesses of Persephone, herbalists, healers, *streghe* (Italian witches), and worshippers of the pre-Christian Divine Mother. Saracino's novel delves into how the ancient pre-Christian ways were systematically silenced as the new religion of Christianity rose to prominence...as well as the ways pre-Christian worship was integrated into the traditional Church. Saracino is an independent scholar of the Divine Feminine and has taught workshops on the sacred feminine in the Denver, CO area.

What the Bleep...and then some

The current and unprecedented popularity of the independent film *What the Bleep Do We Know?* reflects the public's growing awareness of and interest in non-linear reality. *The Singing of Swans* asks readers to question the concept of solid, linear time-space reality as it interweaves past, present and future into a spiral continuum.

Environmentally endangered lake and eco-feminism

Lake Pergusa, an environmentally endangered body of water near Enna in the center of Sicily, plays a key role in *The Singing of Swans*. The lake figured prominently in ancient mythology and feminine spirituality. In 1958 an auto race track was built around the lake's three-mile perimeter, impacting its viability as a wetland and a nesting spot for migrating birds from all over Europe. Restoring the lake serves as a metaphor in the novel.

Immigration & assimilation issues

Immigration (illegal or legal) makes headline news on a regular basis these days. Assimilation is expected of immigrants, but the loss of cultural identity that can result from joining the "melting pot" is often downplayed. Partway through *The Singing of Swans*, heroine Madalene Ross discovers her family's ethnic heritage; her grandfather had changed his name from Rossolino to assimilate into American culture. By reclaiming her Sicilian roots Madalene is better able to be both American and Sicilian, and feel more whole. Author Mary Saracino is a second-generation Italian American.

Mother-Daughter Relationships

The theme of mother-daughter relationships dovetails with the themes of the Divine Feminine (and the silencing of the Divine Feminine) in *The Singing of Swans*. When heroine Madalene was 10 years old she lost her mother to breast cancer, leaving a hole in her soul. Other mothers and daughters in the novel mirror the positive power of the mother-daughter relationship. How does honoring the Divine Mother (or the lack of that honoring) affect the quality of mother-daughter relationships?

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Summary

The Singing of Swans takes protagonist Madelene Ross on a multi-century journey back and forth through time to reclaim her soul and her very contemporary American life. Along the way she encounters healers who fly through rooftops, herbalists who paint flaming images of Black Madonnas, an ancient priestess who helps rescue a Goddess statue from the clutches of an evil 70 BCE governor of Sicily, and an environmentally compromised lake in need of restoration. Elements of magical realism dovetail with historical lore as this compelling tale of redemption unfolds.

Advance Praise

“*The Singing of Swans* is a remarkable narrative calling—even compelling—us to connect with our own ancestral roots, to seek our own inner wisdom, and to reclaim our own inner voices!”

—Margaret Starbird
*The Woman with the Alabaster Jar
& Mary Magdalene: Bride in Exile*

“*The Singing of Swans* is more than a novel. It combines an immense amount of learning, a great novelist’s ability to weave the present, the past, the far past, and the future into a spell-binding story...and to transmute all this into an offer of life to all of us trapped in contemporary deadening cultures.”

—Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum,
Dark mother: African origins and godmothers

“The Roman poet Ovid sang of the beautiful Sicilian lake where Persephone descended to the otherworld—a lake now dying from overdevelopment. No siren’s song could be more commanding than this novel centered on that magical lake. Generations of women of the *streghe* tradition—call them pagans, call them witches—join their voices in this tightly-wrought magical chorus.”

—Patricia Monaghan
The Goddess Path & The Red-Haired Girl from the Bog

Author Biography

Mary Saracino lives in Denver, Colorado. She is a novelist, memoir writer, poet, and independent scholar of the Sacred Feminine. Mary’s first novel, *No Matter What*, was a 1994 Minnesota Book Award Fiction finalist. Her second novel, *Finding Grace*, won the Colorado Authors’ League 1999 Top Hand Award in the Adult Fiction/Mainstream Literary category. Her memoir, *Voices of the Soft-bellied Warrior*, was published in 2001 by Spinsters Ink. Mary’s work has been published in a variety of literary and cultural journals, both online and print, as well as in the anthologies *She is Everywhere*, *The Milk of Almonds*, *Don’t Tell Mama*, and *Hey Paesan!*

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