Reflection

D. L. Lagone

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Touches of magic and fantasy highlight this richly detailed historical novel about a New England woman learning of her Mexican heritage.

Maria Black grows up believing she comes from old New England family stock. However, the death of her grandmother reveals family roots that stretch to Mexico in the early 1900s and launches her on a search for her true heritage. D. L. Lagone’s Reflection is an interesting and complex historical story with a touch of magic and fantasy.

Following clues left to her by her grandmother Rose and the Black family lawyer, Maria uncovers long-lost relatives and different sides of her personality that weren’t apparent before. On the way, she also manages to reconnect with her great-grandmother Louise Gutierrez through a magic mirror passed down through the family for generations.

It's clear that Lagone has a wealth of knowledge of both Mexico and Connecticut. She is able to impart very specific details about Louise’s life, including the festivals that take place in her Mexican village. The descriptions of apparel and upper-class life are rich and pay close attention to things like the color of a lady's dress or the taste of a piece of food. The cover's mournful black-and-white drawing of a young woman set against a burgundy background is eye-catching and so detailed it could be mistaken for a photograph.

Lagone takes a chance in having Louise as a character seen through the mirror. It is a fantastic notion, but it works because it allows Louise to play the role of the wise guide for Maria’s journey. The mirror metaphor is not lost here: while Maria does not see her own face in the glass, Louise's is a reflection of Maria's past.

That said, it is a challenge to read the book due to run-on sentences and misspelled words. It is difficult to tell the difference between dialogue and exposition because there are no quotation marks or periods, which slows the reading process. The dialogue is also quite unbelievable, with exchanges between Maria and her great-grandmother being short and dramatic.

Reflection is an ambitious first novel. There is a wealth of information about America and Mexico in the early 1900s, and the descriptions are deep in detail. The story takes a chance by adding a hint of magic to the otherwise normal present day. This book will appeal to lovers of literary and historical fiction.

MARLEE LEEBRICK-STRYKER (September 12, 2014)

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