

This Fierce Blood

Malia Márquez

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Malia Márquez's intense multigenerational novel *This Fierce Blood* incorporates magical realism into its story of three women struggling with family and social expectations.

In Vermont, Wilhemina marries Norwegian Johannes, rather than her longtime best friend, Gideon. After having three children, she begins to have vivid dreams about a cougar and her cubs, in which it is as if she and the animals are connected through memory. Then she sees the animals, who have long been thought extinct.

Wilhemina's inexplicable connection to nature and the animal world continues in her son's wife, Josepa, who loses her first husband and cares for her Colorado ranch and her children on her own. Her skills as a healer make her suspect to the local priest; she fights off charges of witchcraft. If she can't restore the town's faith in her, her home and family are at risk.

Later, Josepa's granddaughter, Magda, an ecologist, struggles to understand her teenage daughter. An unexpected inheritance from Vermont has the potential to repair or destroy their relationship.

Magical realism threads through the family saga, with visions and tricksters appearing as matter-of-factly as farm animals and chores. Sharp cultural details illustrate each time period, from dress to social mores. These efficient sketches capture the dualities of church life, Indigenous stories, and scientific explanations coexisting.

All revolves around the women, who are complex and conflicted. They want to do what is right for their children, their homes, and themselves, but often, these goals are at odds with each other in the eyes of society—in 1891, 1918, and in the present. Still, the women arrive at a reconciliation that is true to their often unconscious multiplicities.

Attentive to the pressures facing women across historical eras, the lush novel *This Fierce Blood* shows the power of strong women staying true to themselves.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (September / October 2021)

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