



The Hummingbird's Daughter

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The prizewinning writer Luis Alberto Urrea's long-awaited novel is an epic mystical drama of a young woman's sudden sainthood in late 19th-century Mexico. It is 1889, and civil war is brewing in Mexico. A 16-year-old girl, Teresita, illegitimate but beloved daughter of the wealthy and powerful rancher Don Tomas Urrea, wakes from the strangest dream--a dream that she has died. Only it was not a dream. This passionate and rebellious young woman has arisen from death with a power to heal--but it will take all her faith to endure the trials that await her and her family now that she has become the Saint of Cabora.

The Hummingbird's Daughter is a vast, hugely satisfying novel of love and loss, joy and pain. Two decades in the writing, this is the masterpiece that Luis Alberto Urrea has been building up to.

The Hummingbird's Daughter Details

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Author : Luis Alberto Urrea

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From Reader Review The Hummingbird's Daughter for online ebook

Zach says

The thing that struck me most about The Hummingbird's Daughter was its "campfire" quality. I imagined it being told by a particularly gifted grandfather. Urrea is no grandfather yet, but his pure storytelling ability is second to none. He creates beautiful rhythms in simple language. Each of his chapters is structured as its own little tale. He dispenses comedy and heartbreak in equal measures. And he doesn't hold back, trusting his natural instincts to tell the story as the story itself begs to be told: honestly. That this novel is based on the life of his ancestor Teresita Urrea (who just happens to be a Mexican folk hero), only adds to the feeling of immediacy of the telling.

Adventure and tragedy and love are given equal weight. The pacing is interesting in that it remains very even but never dull. For a book of 500 pages, it never feels slow or overwrought. In fact, simplicity is one of the first features I noticed as I read it. Included is only what is needed. Since it's based on real events, the plot is not as tightly knitted as, say, a thriller, but there is an internal logic to the sequence of events, even ones that seem episodic.

The one other thing I feel compelled to mention is the good-naturedness of the writing. Maybe it's Urrea's willingness to crack a joke, to not take too seriously even the darker moments of his novel. Melodrama is completely absent.

One of the best books I've read in a while, and highly recommended.

Jill says

Certain authors excel at crafting gritty and realistic recreations of the world we live in; others are expert at transforming our world into a more magical and fantastical one. Luis Alberto Urrea, in an astounding feat of alchemy, does both. Within the novel's sprawling 499 pages, his depiction of Teresita Urrea – his real-life great-aunt, anointed the "Saint of Cabo" – becomes increasingly intoxicating and unputdownable.

In a sprawling yet controlled epic, we meet Teresita – the illegitimate daughter of a teen mother called "hummingbird" and the patron Tomas – right after she is deserted and left in the so-called care of a mean-hearted aunt. She is "adopted" by Huila, an old curaranda, who takes her under her wing and teaches her about desert herbs and plant medicine and the power of the unconscious. It is not long before she comes to the attention of Tomas, who accepts her as his daughter.

In a sensuous whirlwind of description, the land comes alive and our senses are besotted the noxious smells of pig sties the sharp smell of sweat, and the mouth-watering smells of Mexican foods, the bursting beauty of desert flowers and plants, the braying burros and squabbling crows. You feel as if you could step into the scene; that's how perfectly it's depicted.

When the novel levitates into magical realism, we've already signed on for the ride and put ourselves into Mr. Urrea's very capable hands. The power of his words is that we do not merely escape from the world by

entering this new one; rather, we gain a greater grasp of what it is to be human. As Teresita begins to heal with her hands and her father's ranch is overrun by pilgrims, we stand in amazement with the People – the Greek chorus that is indelibly embedded into the pages of this book.

All of the narrative plays against the backdrop of a changing Mexico: approaching revolution, removal of Indians from their ancestral lands, southwestern border disputes, the Diaz government's darkening suspicions and paranoia, the controlling hand of organized religion – all contrasted against one uneducated but wise girl's healing message of love and healing.

The Hummingbird's Daughter has it all – facts and legends that Mr. Urrea, a reporter, gathered from 20 years of research into his childhood, Western mythology, Catholic hagiography, Mexican folklore and more, interwoven with down-to-earth descriptions of poverty, warfare, torture, and grittiness. The result is pure effervescence, a testimony to the power of storytelling at its finest.

Paige says

It always seems that I have more to say about books I'm criticizing than books I loved. I suppose it's because I usually begin with high expectations, and when a book lives up to those expectation, there isn't much to say, but when it doesn't there has to be a reckoning. This book is one of those great books about which I do not have much to say.

This book struck the perfect balance of realistic and dreamy. Urrea brought the setting to life for me, so real it felt like I could touch it. He weaves magical realism elements into the story perfectly. In the back of books, I keep a running tally on a sticky note: pages numbers where there are quotes I want to write down and remember or points/messages/techniques that I really liked, and another list of page numbers where I found something that made me uncomfortable, something (potentially) objectionable, inconsistencies, or other criticisms. Going back through the "negatives," I was happy to see that once everything was taken into account, all "objections" evaporated. The only complaint I have, and it is minor compared to how much I enjoyed the book, is that the Tomochic thread didn't fit in as well as I'd like. It was confusing and I didn't really understand what was going on, especially having never before heard of Tomochic. It felt rushed, not fully developed, like he included it because it was an important event in Teresa Urrea history and not because his heart was in it.

All in all, this was a pretty luscious read and I am looking forward to reading the sequel.

Richard Derus says

Rating: an irritated single star.

Someone needs to explain to me why this book is great. I don't think it's even good. It's The Song of Bernadette for the 21st century, written in prose as flat and featureless as the deserts it describes.

So very, very, very not recommended.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

This is a very interesting story about a real woman who lived in Mexico in the late 19th century. She was the author's great-aunt, and he grew up hearing stories and legends about her. Beginning in 1985, the author began twenty years of research leading to this novel.

Teresita was considered the "Saint of Cabo," although she did not think of herself in that way. She was born the bastard daughter of Don Tomas Urrea. At birth, she had a strange triangular mark on her forehead. The curandera said this was a sign that she would be different and have special powers.

The story contains an interesting mix of Mexican history, legends, lore, and a little magical realism. I like the way the author never claims actual "miracles" attributed to Teresita. He points out that Mexican people historically love saints and miracles and created myths far beyond the truth of the actual events.

The only reason I didn't give this four stars is that I was a little disappointed in the lack of depth. After twenty years of research, he could have given us more of what he'd learned about the traditions and experiences of the people in Mexico at that period in history. (I happen to consider three stars a perfectly solid, respectable rating, worthy of reading.)

Lila says

This is a marvellous book that I would recommend to everyone who:

Is a fan of Magical Realism
Is interested in Mexican History
Is intrigued by Catholic sainthood and
Wants to learn about "curanderas" (healers or medicine women)

Although parts of it, like descriptions of the extreme poverty, are very difficult to read, there is so much beauty in the book to balance it out. This compelling novel is based on the real life person Teresa Urrea, who was the great aunt of the author Luis Alberto Urrea. Urrea spent 20 years writing this novel and researching the life of this remarkable woman who was and is revered as a Saint, but was at one point considered "The most dangerous girl in Mexico" by the authorities. She was never canonized by the church.
This is a very powerful book that I love!

Chrissie says

This review has been revised on completion.

Teresita, the Hummingbird's daughter, existed. She is an acknowledged saint. In this book you learn about her life in Mexico, until she was forced to leave at the age of 19. You learn about Mexico (food, lifestyle, religious beliefs and customs) and about the Mexican Civil War that took place in the last decade of the 1800s. You learn about her role in this war. Teresita was a distant cousin to the author. Although based on known fact, it is a novel. This book is a beautiful example of what can be achieved through historical fiction.

I have listened to the audio version of The Hummingbird's Daughter, and I loved it. It is narrated by the author, so I was a bit skeptical - I mean, he is not a trained narrator! On the other hand, being the author, means he knows what lines he wants to emphasize. He succeeded. It is SO good. The writing is full of imagery. Since I listened to an audio, I sucked on every sentence. I feel the imagery is stronger because of this. So if you choose to read the book, my advice should be read it slowly. A word of warning: the imagery is both grousome and beautiful. You might need a strong stomach for some of it. There is quite a bit of Spanish thrown in. I did not have any trouble with that, although I do not know Spanish. By the end of the novel I adored the way the author/narrator inbibed the Spanish dialect into the novel.

The imagery is what will remain most vivid in my memory of this novel. Three examples:

- Her hair reached to her bottom which was like a "plump peach".
- There is a child, born smiling, after the prolonged suffering of childbirth.
- There is the first time Teresita enters the patron's house and is confronted with the grandfather clock, with its pendulum and rhythmic beating. For her it is a tree with its heart thumping.
- And the flowers that you experience in all their colors and fragrances and shapes and sizes.

Perhaps it is because the imagery of horrible, heartwrenching depictions (for example sores with pus and vermin and stench) contrasts so abruptly with beauty, that I was blown away.

Beyond the wonderful imagery, the book teaches about past events and about a different culture. One need not be a devout, believing person to appreciate the events. Teresita is not unbelievable. She cannot cure everyone. She was educated in the science of herbs. Being a true sceptic, I never had trouble accepting "strange mystical events". There is always another explanation to fall back on.

Perhaps I so liked the book because the messages imparted were realistic and yet uplifting at the same time. Good and bad were intertwined. The value of family is wonderfully shown. And I grew to love Teresita's father. All his weaknesses only made him more human. I understood his preference for bees over humans. When he pats the pig on the head.... You will meet Huila and so many others, whom you will grow to love.

Luis Alberto Urrea has written a follow-up book entitled Queen of America: A Novel, The theme is significantly different. While the first is about the indigenous people of Mexico and their lives at the end of the 19th century, the latter is about the Spanish immigrant experience in the newly industrialized America of the 20th century. Both follow Teresita, the Saint of Cabora.

Nick Iuppa says

The Hummingbird's Daughter by Luis Urrea is the true story of a strong-willed, teenage Mexican girl in the 19th century. She was said to have miraculous healing powers, inspired the common people to value their native identity, and in the end helped bring about the Mexican Revolution. Can't get over it. A poetic page-turner.

switterbug (Betsey) says

This is a phenomenal, picaresque story. Teresa (Teresita) Urrea, the Hummingbird's daughter, possessed me,

made me want to dig my bare feet in the earth and rub rose petals and lavender all over my body. She is now my beloved hero of contemporary literature. Strong, courageous, formidable, guileless, beautifully vulnerable, compassionate, quick-witted, and luminescent, Teresa is a modern-day *saint* without the dismal, pious sobriety of one. She is more like a noble iconoclast. She hikes up her skirts and rides a horse better than any man, eats like a lumberjack, and engages in astral projection. She denounces organized religion and behaves more like a pantheist. She can heal with her hands, bandy words with politicians, and flirt with the infamous.

The author based this work of fiction on real events in the life of an eponymous blood relation, circa 1880 (when the story also takes place). He spent 20 years in the research and writing, which is evident in the stirring, complex, yet easily digestible, mouth-watering narration of this novel.

Teresa is the illegitimate daughter of wealthy (and married) south-of-the-border rancher Don Tomas and a fourteen year-old peasant Indian woman who fled Sinaloa for greener pastures. Raised initially by her mean-spirited aunt, her adventurous spirit eventually delivers her to the house of her father at a tender, young age. The protective, flinty Huila, a medicine woman who works for Don Tomas, apprehends Teresa's destiny and mentors her in the art and botanical science of healing. Huila is also aware that Teresa has a native and inherited shamanic talent way beyond midwifery and organic medicine.

Filled with a sprawling and vivid cast of characters--vaqueros, caballeros, Indians, pilgrims, politicians, the wealthy as well as the indigent, apostates as well as the devout, this is a colorful, astutely comical allegory that is ripe with thought, action, and spirit. It is a story of familial love and redemption and the vastness of the soul. It is a tale of adventure that you won't want to end. (Rumor has it that a sequel and a film is in the works.)

Luis Alberto Urrea is an exuberant storyteller oozing an alchemical mixture of warmth, humor, satire, and vigorous vitality. His style is a reminiscent witch's brew of the best of outlaw and magical realism--The Milagro Beanfield War; Lonesome Dove; a dose of Garcia-Marquez; a glittering sprinkle of Isabelle Allende. But it is its own mystical and magical epic story of community and faith, of an unforgettable daughter and the people who loved her.

Chris Donaldson says

I've just written a review and it's vanished into the ether, so this is a second try.

First of all, I didn't finish this book and this is extremely rare for me. Normally, I feel like I have to stick it out to the last page but this one was too much for me. I know now, having looked at what other people have said, that so many people love this book that I am in a tiny minority. But truly, I disliked it enough to leave it about one third of the way through.

It was recommended by a friend and I read it on a Kindle, knowing nothing about it at all. Had I known more, I might have liked it more. And I don't feel that's a good thing. I like to start a book rather like an adventure: what will I find here? To know that I'm reading the story of someone's relative who is regarded as a saint then somehow becomes a bit of a burden for me - do I **have** to like it because of how and why it was written?

Please don't think I always feel bound to react badly to a book because it's written about family members - I

recently read "Half Broke Horses" by Jeannette Walls and thoroughly enjoyed it.

But this book was different. First of all, I speak very little Spanish so often didn't understand comments and asides by the characters. And I wasn't engaged by any of them, in fact, I felt much of the time that the writing style was pushing me away rather than drawing me in.

Secondly, I was having trouble finding the plot. There were a great many characters (or so it seemed to me) and I couldn't tell which actions or discussions were taking things forward and which were almost irrelevant, as they seemed neither to advance plot nor illuminate character.

Being interested in neither characters nor plot, I gave up.

I wanted to like it. And I didn't.

Linda says

Luis Alberto Urrea can read to me any time he wants to. Oy! What a voice and how well he reads. This book becomes magical with his voice.

Although presented as a book of fiction, there is much truth told from 20-years of research and family tales of a distant relative who became known as the "Saint of Cabora." A story that mixes pre-revolutionary Mexico with folk tales and a touch of magic realism. A wonderful ride.

Jessica says

I still dream of this book. And a year later, I am still looking for this book, remade. Like an old girl fired or a wife now dead that will be the ideal all other women in a man's life are compared to. Damn...how can I describe this...My last two years of undergrad, I focused primarily on Female Medieval Mystical Writers. I love how these women brought their faith into their bodies, and write from there...bringing god into themselves as a lover, a layer of skin, a wealt. I love their absolute conviction that there are worlds going on around us that we cannot see but that are real. I love how sure they are about their personal connection to the spiritual...it is not something that happens around them or to them but in every cell of their bodies and with every synaptic leap in their minds. So this book calls to that passion in me. A sensual spirituality. The whole book is sensual. There is gorgeous food and wet slick jungle mud, floating floral smells and white washed desert. The landscape this book leads you through is the land I love. Granted I have never been to Mexico but I know the desert. It is also a story on a grand scale...a whole life and all the lives connected to it which I can not resist.

Carl R. says

Maybe I should recuse myself because I'm so partial to magical realism, but I think from any perspective whatsoever, The Hummingbird's Daughter is a joy of a book. Luis Urrea is dealing here not just with history, but the history and politics of his family and of his family's native land.

So, family saga/historical fiction, politics, religion ("Even worse than politics," says one Captain), revolution, and more. A rich mix that would defeat a lesser writer, but Urrea is unquestionably up to the

challenge.

We begin in the 1870's when a Mexican Patron impregnates a young peasant girl, who walks away from her infant daughter. Said daughter turns out to be a precocious child and falls under the tutelage of the rancho's curadora or healer/midwife. These people deal in spiritual matters every but as much as they do in herbs, and Huila, as the old woman is named, can spot a dreamer when she sees one. "Teresita" (as she names herself) soon becomes expert and understanding and guiding not only her dreams but those of others.

How this all affects the war between Porfirio Diaz and Mexico's indigenous people, how it affects the life of the author, how it affects thousands of sick and ignorant nineteenth century people looking for any sign of hope in their poverty and misery, how women fare in a world of war and macho men--that's the book. And I don't want to tell more because it needs to be experienced in the writing rather than just talked about. And the experience is transporting.

The obvious reminders here are Garcia-Marquez and Allende, but influenced as he is by such, Urrea is his own man, and *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer, deserved the prize. I don't know if it was competing in the same year as *The Tinkers* (See *Writer Working*, March 13 '11), which won one, but if so, boy, howdy, did the committee misfire.

The reason I picked this book up is that Urrea will be the leader of my group at the Tin House Writers' workshop in Portland this summer. I'd never read anything of his before. Now I have, and "pleased" doesn't begin to express how I much I'm looking forward.

Deborah says

This book sucked me right in mostly because I loved the fact that Teresita, the young girl who becomes revered as a local saint in pre-revolutionary Mexico, was actually a relative of the author, Urrea. The way he imagines Teresita's life, and the lives of those around her, reminds me of hypertext - you're reading along, absorbed in a great character whose thoughts and actions are totally unique and amusing and endearing and rage-inspiring, and suddenly there's this whole other person branching off into his/her own saga, in all the complexities and human desires possible. So this was a great concept, powerful writing, and engaging all at once. As a writer, I learned a lot about how to create characters. As a reader, I was swept along by the underlying plot about human suffering and our individual and collective search for a reason. -- the ending was not as satisfying as the rest of the book, but then, neither was the ending of the real Teresita's sainthood (not telling!). Also, and this is my own flaw, I wish I could read this in Spanish. Wow. -- I also heard Urrea read this at Virginia Festival of the Book (actually another great performance - Urrea had an entire chapter memorized, and basically acted it out with his amazing voice), and if he ever comes out with an audio recording in his own voice of this book, I'd buy it in a second.

Lisa Vegan says

I really slogged through this. I'm not sure why I had such a difficult time reading it. I'm glad that I did. I

ended up enjoying it but I wasn't wild about it. It's well written, I liked some of the characters including Huila and Teresa; many of the characters were interesting, although often infuriating. I read as a skeptic but that shouldn't have detracted from my enjoyment as it hasn't with other similar themed books. The book was disturbing, violent and depicted many atrocities that humans commit upon one another, but I've read plenty of books such as those and loved them despite the gore and tragedy.

This book did inspire me to research the peoples in these places and this time that are described in this novel. This book is a work of fiction but is based on a real woman from an actual place and time, and the history is interesting. I think I'd rather have read a non-fiction book about the subject.

So, I don't know whether it's because while reading my tolerance for human frailties was especially low or what it was, but the story just didn't grab me.

However, it's epic in scale and has some beautiful descriptions and I wouldn't want to dissuade anyone from reading it, especially because I'm glad that I read it for my book club; otherwise I would not have read it, or stuck with it had I started. I guess this doesn't sound like a rousing endorsement but I would recommend this book if you're interested in Mexico's history and peoples.

Cara Lopez Lee says

"The Hummingbird's Daughter" quickly made my list of 25 favorite books ever. Every one of the 20 years Luis Alberto Urrea spent on this story was worth it. There are few books I consider perfect, and this is one: Urrea deftly makes every word, comma, character nuance and plot twist seem straightforward and simple, yet there's so much going on here. He takes the barely sketched history of his aunt Teresita--the "Saint of Cabo" who helped inspire the Mexican revolution--and breathes life into a brave, compassionate, lively young heroine with a sense of humor. This book has everything: history, family conflict, coming-of-age, social issues, politics, sex, love, violence, religion, Native American healing and a delightful sprinkling of magical realism.

I was so impressed, I took a chance on recommending Urrea's "Into The Beautiful North" as the first read for the new book club I've joined, though I knew nothing about it. Mr. Urrea didn't let me down: yet another masterpiece about another young Mexican woman, a century later. Mr. Urrea has now joined the ranks of those authors whose books I'll read simply because their names are on the cover.

Joe says

This was an outstanding book in every measurable way: great writing, great story, highly imaginative, and not shy in tackling substantive issues of life and death in turn of the century Mexico. A professor once defined "sublime" as a combination of the beautiful and the horrible, and I think the Hummingbird's Daughter fits this definition to a t. The story is both beautiful in its telling and horrifying in its description of the cruelty people bring to one another in pursuit of religion, nationalism, and glory.

Caroline says

Urrea pulls together two decades of personal research into the compelling story of a great aunt who became a sainted icon of the indigenous rebellion against the Porfiriato in late 19th century Mexico. The Hummingbird's Daughter paints a vivid, earthy, fearless picture of the insular rural world of the hacienda of his people, as well as of the nameless masses of "the People," his term for the Indian underclass that populate the background of the story and eventually swell like the tide. Urrea deserves praise for the seamless transitions he makes between the achingly beautiful and the disgusting. He tumbles headlong into both in order to acknowledge that they are equally true, equally parts of life and death in the Mexico he describes. For a book about a woman's holy powers of healing and divine love, there is an awful lot of pig filth, difficult childbirths, gunshot wounds, and skin sores--and this balance is precisely what makes the 500 pages breeze past in a cloud of reality and possibility.

Occasionally the accumulated weight of the vast research he has amassed in preparing to tell his family's story will press against the scenery he paints, chink the sky with echoes of a newspaper article or an eyewitness account, wind the narrative into a puzzling gully, but the sum of the book breathes life into a rich world of beauty, faith, and injustice.

An excerpt from chapter one to set the scene:

Every Mexican was a diluted Indian, invaded by milk like the coffee in Cayetana's cup. Afraid, after the Conquest and the Inquisition, of their own brown wrappers, they colored their faces with powder, covered their skins in perfumes and European silks and American habits. Yet for all their beaver hats and their lace veils, the fine citizens of the great cities knew they had nothing that would ever match the ancient feathers of the quetzal. No cacique stood atop any temple clad in jaguar skins. Crinolines, waistcoats. Operas, High Mass, café au lait in demitasse cups in sidewalk patisseries. They attempted to choke the gods with New York pantaloons, Parisian petticoats. But still the banished spirits whispered from corners and basements. In Mexico City, the great and fallen Tenochtitlán, among streets and buildings constructed with the stones of the Pyramid of the Sun, gentlemen walked with their heads slightly tilted, cocked as if listening to this puzzling murmur of wraiths.

They still spoke a thousand languages--Spanish, too, to be sure, but also a thicket of songs and grammars. Mexico--the sound of wind in the ruins. Mexico--the waves rushing the shore. Mexico--the sand dunes, the snowfields, the steam of sleeping Popocatépetl. Mexico--across marijuana fields, tomato plants, avocado trees, the agave in the village of Tequila.

Mexico....

All around them, in the small woods, in the caves, in the precipitous canyons of copper country, in the swamps and at the crossroads, the harsh Old Ones gathered. Tlaloc, the rain god, lips parched because the Mexicans no longer tortured children to feed him sweet drafts of their tears. The Flayed One, Xipe Totec, shivering cold because priests no longer skinned sacrifices alive and danced in their flesh to bring forth the harvest. Tonántzin, goddess of Tepeyac, chased from her summit by the very Mother of God, the Virgen de Guadalupe. The awesome and ferocious warrior god, Hummingbird on the Left, Huitzilopochtli. Even the Mexicans' friend, Chac Mool, was lonely. Big eared and waiting to carry their hopes and dreams in his bowl as he transited to the land of the gods from the earth, he lay on his back watching forever

in vain for the feathered priests to return. Other Old Ones hid behind statues in the cathedrals that the Spaniards had built with the stones of their shattered temples. The smell of sacrificial blood and copal seeped out from between the stones to mix with incense and candles. Death is alive, they whispered. Death lives inside life, as bones dance within the body. Yesterday is within today. Yesterday never dies.

Mexico. Mexico.

Perry says

Bella Melodía Mexicana de Santa de Cabor

4.25 stars

Mexican author Urrea's mystical mural of a tale following a female saint, known as the "Mexican Joan of Arc" ("Everything the government does...is morally wrong"). Born the love-child of a young wealthy Mexican rancher and a poor Indian girl named "Hummingbird," who abandoned her shortly after birth, she was raped, beaten and apparently died at age 15 and came back to life.

Thereafter, she has near-messianic powers of healing as well as precognitive visions. Dubbed the "Saint of Cabor," the poor adore her. Both the Government and Church fear her power to bring all her peoples together and possibly cause a revolt against the oppression of the two entities.

Had I known more about Mexican history in the late 1800s when the book is set, in the years leading up to the revolution in 1910, I would have more appreciated the allegorical parts.

Warm, well-drawn characters populate a solid story line that I relished even though the novel never quite hit on all cylinders for me.

Connie says

A young Indian girl in Mexico who was known as "The Hummingbird" gave birth to Teresita in 1873. The mixed race baby was the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy rancher. After being abandoned by her mother, Teresita was watched over by the healer Huila who taught the girl about medicinal herbs and midwifery.

Teresita was brutally attacked as a teenager, and was thought to be dead. During her wake she returned from the dead. She possessed miraculous powers of healing, and thousands of pilgrims flocked to her home. Teresita was called the Saint of Cabo and "the Mexican Joan of Arc". This was an unsettled time in Mexican history under the dictator Porfirio Diaz. Teresita attracted unwelcome attention from the Mexican government and the Catholic Church who feared her influence on the poor.

The book was written in lyrical, earthy language and included lots of adventure and humor. It had a large cast of characters from all walks of life, and vivid descriptions of Mexico. Teresita was a real person in the author's ancestral family who stood up for the rights of the Indians in Mexico. She was a strong woman who possessed great compassion. Her calling involved the power of healing and a fervent faith in God, aided by a

dose of magical realism. The book was a winning combination of history, fiction, and Indian legends.
