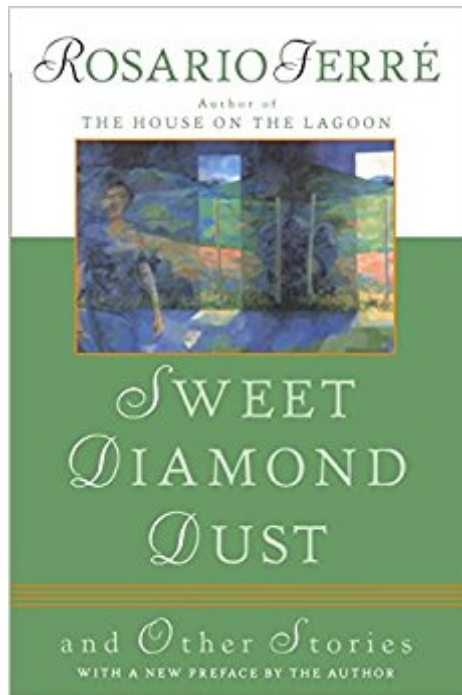




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# Sweet Diamond Dust: And Other Stories



## Synopsis

“Hypnotic” should not be missed. •Lucy Stark, *Voices from the Gaps*Originally published in Spanish under the title *Maldito Amor* ("Cursed Love"), *Sweet Diamond Dust* introduced American readers to a voice that is by turns lyrical and wickedly satiric. A finalist for the National Book Award with her 1995 novel, *The House on the Lagoon*, Ferre here uses family history as a metaphor for the class struggles and political evolution of Latin America and Puerto Rico in particular. The result is writing of the highest order—provocative, profound, yet delightfully readable. The "sweet diamond dust" of the title story is, of course, sugar. In this tale the De La Valle family's secrets, ambitions, and passions, interwoven with the fate of the local sugar mill, are recounted by various relatives, friends, and servants. As the characters struggle under the burden of privilege, the story, permeated with haunting echoes of Puerto Rico's own turbulent history, becomes a splendid allegory for a nation's past. The three accompanying stories each follow the lives of the descendants of the De La Valle family, making the book a drama in four parts, raising troubling issues of race, religion, freedom, and sex, with Ferre's trademark irony and startling imagery—a literary experience no reader would want to miss.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Lyrically voices the generation-bridging tale of the De La Valle family and their Puerto Rican sugar mill through the eyes and souls of several family members, longtime servants and dear friends” With a majestic plot, nestled in the hills of those Guamani Mountains, along with the

De La Valle family and their sugar mill, Ferré exposes the secrets of a family and the glories of a country under pressure from American business threats. All at once, *Sweet Diamond Dust* explores the life of a family and of a business, through the generations and into our modern world. •Lucy Stark, *Voices from the Gaps* •[Ferre] is a perfect embodiment of the Janus-like identity Puerto Rico emanates today, a mythical creature with two heads set back to back, impossibly loyal to two fatherlands, as the memorialist Bernardo Vega once put it. •Ilan Stavans, *World Literature Today*

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Spanish

Ever since 'When I was Puerto Rican', 'Dreaming in Cuban' and 'How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents', it's become a fad for Latin immigrant writers to jump on the Latin Boom tidal wave with their nostalgic (and often misleading) reminiscences about their home land. Yeah, they all want to sound like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and, according to some reviews in the U.S. ...they actually do (?) In the case of this book, I will limit myself to comment on the preface. Her silly preface means to question the whole imaginary and referential codice of the 19th century Puerto Rican Romantic tradition and Modernism respecting the upper classes. Nothing wrong with that, certainly. However, this gesture was only successful in that it reflects the jaded register of her so-called 'irony' and eases the reader into a catalog of her narrow and outdated insights into her so-called 'Puerto Rican issues'. As an island dweller, I laughed my head off at some of her assertions: 1. Yes, this woman comes from a rich prominent family but that doesn't mean she (or her family) were experts on hacienda owners island-wide so that she can speculate and generalize the economics and living standards of everyone else 'in those days' to make a statement that implies only her family had money, the rest of us were dirt poor. 2. And sure, lots of Puerto Ricans migrate to the U.S. (back and forth and lots of them migrate to other places, like Europe, South America, and Eastern Europe) but many of us tough it out at home and YES, happiness and fulfillment ARE possible without worrying too much about what happens in the U.S.. Just a few minor examples of why, even though her stories are beautifully written and fairly entertaining, her views on history aren't the least deserving full credibility. Her assumptions are incoherent, inaccurate and show her own personal hangups and inferiority complexes with the U.S. I'm a big fan of Ferre's so these statements were a little disappointing. Oh well, hope that in the future she limits herself to narrative and lays off the history lesson!

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