

# Feminism in lives of the saints

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Feminism in Lives of the Saints Men and women are expected to be different. In the novel *Lives of the Saints* by Nino Ricci, gender roles in Italy during the 1960s affect how the characters behave. Characters such as Cristina and Vittorio are affected by living in the patriarchal society of Valle del Sole. Feminist critical theory is observed in Cristina's strength, her independence and the society she lives in. Feminist terms such as semiotics can be applied to Cristina's strength and it is seen during the conversations of Cristina in the car after she had been bitten by the snake. "Where did it bite ... I didn't think of it" (Ricci 12). Cristina once again did not panic " My mother let out a sigh... to other people's nonsense" (Ricci 15). Cristina is strong as her words are calm unlike what women would feel after they are bitten by a snake. Cristina goes against Phallogocentrism throughout the novel especially since she is not confined to a regular mother and she can do whatever she wants to unlike most women in the village. Cristina also shows Androgyny. " The cloth sank into ... indifference to pain" (Ricci 13) and " The story about my own ... ad fallen asleep" (Ricci 13). It is clear that the villagers believe that Cristina can bear pain like a man. Cristina's strength differentiates her from the rest of the women in the story. Cristina is an independent woman as she does not rely on others because when Alfredo offered Cristina the money her husband gave her, she rejected it. " You think it's the ... need his money" (Ricci 97). After her husband left for America, she raised Vittorio by herself. Moreover, she solves her family's problem by her own.

When Vittorio had a fight and is hurt by Vincenzo, instead of asking for help from her dad or anyone else, Cristina confronted Vincenzo's house and

clarify things up with Maria and Vincenzo. She does not want other's help at all. When she is offered a luxurious room in the ship by Antonio Darcoangelo, she denied the room. " It's kind of you ... that kind of luxury" (Ricci 199). Cristina believes that she can survive by herself and prefers to do so without any help. Cristina's independence goes against what gender roles had put upon women. Patriarchy can be seen throughout the novel.

Men are much respected in the village. Vittorio recalls about the memory when Mario hurled a plate towards her mother " I saw my father ... against her cheek" (Ricci 32). Cristina's husband abused her and yet she did not dare to fight back because men are expected to behave that way. High positions in the village are held by man. Vittorio describes his grandfather as " My grandfather ... since the time of the fascists" (Ricci 2). A male have held the mayor position for a very long time. In addition, men have to work and do all the job whereas women will wait for their husband. " The men left ... going parents followed" (Ricci 166). Most men of the house are expected to work and find money abroad like Vittorio's father. Valle del Sole is a society dominated by men. To sum it up, feminism can be repeatedly noticed throughout the novel. Firstly, Cristina goes against the typical women who are afraid of pain. Secondly, Cristina is an independant woman. Last but not least, Valle del Sole itself is a patriarchal society. Gender roles set upon by society causes men and women to be different in one way or another. Works Cited Ricci, Nino. Lives of the Saints. Toronto: Cormorant Books Inc, 2010. Print.