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Becoming Julia De Burgos: The Making Of A Puerto Rican Icon



Synopsis

While it is rare for a poet to become a cultural icon, Julia de Burgos has evoked feelings of bonding and identification in Puerto Ricans and Latinos in the United States for over half a century. In the first book-length study written in English, Vanessa Páez-Rosario examines poet and political activist Julia de Burgos's development as a writer, her experience of migration, and her legacy in New York City, the poet's home after 1940. Páez-Rosario situates Julia de Burgos as part of a transitional generation that helps to bridge the historical divide between Puerto Rican nationalist writers of the 1930s and the Nuyorican writers of the 1970s. *Becoming Julia de Burgos* departs from the prevailing emphasis on the poet and intellectual as a nationalist writer to focus on her contributions to New York Latino/a literary and visual culture. It moves beyond the standard tragedy-centered narratives of de Burgos's life to place her within a nuanced historical understanding of Puerto Rico's peoples and culture to consider more carefully the complex history of the island and the diaspora. Páez-Rosario unravels the cultural and political dynamics at work when contemporary Latina/o writers and artists in New York revise, reinvent, and riff off of Julia de Burgos as they imagine new possibilities for themselves and their communities.

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Customer Reviews

This is the first book from an academic press that I've ever tried to review, and one of the first (if not first) biographical type of books I've worked with from a reviewer's perspective. I picked it up because I love poetry, I enjoy the Spanish language, and the description made me curious to

learn about de Burgos. The beginning of this book was perfect â “ setting up and explaining to the (potentially) unfamiliar reader some of the Puerto Rican struggles with history, place, identity, and destiny. It then moved into a brief but substantial overview of literary (and political) responses to the struggles of the island nation. As a US citizen, Iâ™ve been exposed to very little of this history or viewpoint, and I found it educational and tragic. Especially saddening was the fact that I knew so little about the Puerto Rican paradigm. The book then moves into the strictly biographical portion of the text. All told, this was probably about half of the total length of the text. Initially I found this troubling, because I expected (wanted) a hefty biography about an individual â “ but this book does something a little different, which also is an important undertaking. Even as we learn about the specifics of the life of de Burgos, we are also looking at the more general situation of immigrants in the US, using the eyes and experiences of de Burgos as our lens. Especially important in this book is the specific situation and personal experience of de Burgos, but also the wider experience of Latino/as and African Americans in New York City. There are following sections of the book looking at her work, particularly her poetry (for which she is most famous), and her writings as a journalist (which seems to get very sparse critical attention, though speaks very powerfully).

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