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Julia Alvarez: Writing A New Place On The Map



Synopsis

This book provides the first book-length examination of the writings of Julia Alvarez, the author of *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* and nearly a dozen other books of fiction and non-fiction and one of today's most widely read Latina writers. Kelli Lyon Johnson perceptively illuminates the themes, ideals, and passions that unite these diverse and rich works, all of which explore issues of understanding and representing identity within a global society. Forced by political oppression to leave the Dominican Republic when still young, Alvarez has lived most of her adult life in the United States. Johnson argues that through her narratives, poetry, and essays, Alvarez has sought to create "a cartography of identity in exile." Alvarez inscribes a geography of identity in her work that joins theory and narrative across multiple genres to create a new map of identity and culture. By asserting that she is "mapping a country that's not on the map," Alvarez places creativity and multiplicity at the center of this emerging cartography of identity. Rather than elaborating a "hybrid" identity that surreptitiously erases distinctions and difference, Alvarez embraces the *mestizaje* or mixture and accumulation of identities, experience, and diversity. To Alvarez, linguistic and cultural multiplicity represents the reality of what it means to be American, and she offers a compelling vision of both self and community in which the homeland Alvarez seeks is the narrative space of her own writings. As Johnson shows, Alvarez will continue to shape American literature by stretching the literary cartography of identity and of the Americas.

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Customer Reviews

A closer look at the work of one of today's most widely read Latina authors.

Kelli Lyon Johnson is assistant professor of English at Miami University, Hamilton, Ohio.

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