



United States of Banana

Giannina Braschi

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Groundbreaking Puerto Rican novelist and poet Giannina Braschi continues her exploration of the Hispanic-American experience in this vibrant new allegorical novel, her first written originally in English. It takes place at the Statue of Liberty in post-9/11 New York City, where Hamlet, Zarathustra, and Giannina are on a quest to free the Puerto Rican prisoner Segismundo. Segismundo has been imprisoned for more than one hundred years in the dungeon of liberty, hidden away by his father, the king of the United States of Banana, for the simple crime of being born. But when the king remarries, he frees his son and, for the sake of reconciliation, makes Puerto Rico the fifty-first state and grants American passports to all Latin American citizens. This staggering show of benevolence rocks the global community, causing an unexpected power shift with far-reaching implications. In a world struggling to realign itself in favor of liberty, United States of Banana serves as a beautifully written declaration of personal independence.

United States of Banana Details

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Author : Giannina Braschi

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From Reader Review United States of Banana for online ebook

Mercedes Dia says

Great Read! It was even cooler to meet her in person & hear her read portions of it.

Tim Rideout says

“Zarathustra: Do you have words? Do your words belong to you?

Giannina: No, my answer is no. I have no property in the dictionary. Words are anonymous like the disenfranchised masses that haven't been weighed - or named - or framed. My words belong to those who don't belong.”

? Giannina Braschi, United States of Banana

An innovative and challenging view of post-9/11 America. Braschi plays with poetic, dramatic and prose forms to observe the impact of 9/11 from her perspective as an alienated and hence disinterested immigrant from Puerto Rico and to propose that the 'Ground Zero' represented by the 9/11 attacks represents an opportunity to build American society anew, avoiding replicating the abusive power structures of the American establishment both at home and abroad.

Braschi deploys many intertextual references (including Hamlet, Life is a Dream, The Wasteland) and the tropes of the Theatre of the Absurd to convey the complexity and scale of the challenge represented by the need to rebuild American, indeed global, society from the bottom up.

Unfortunately the potency of Braschi's critique and her proposed new approach is undermined by her failure to sustain the reader's interest in the second half of the work. The continued onslaught of absurd images and historical and literary characters, initially supports Braschi's message but ultimately begins to distract the reader.

Rebecca McNutt says

United States of Banana had some great lines and was an interesting allegory, but often seemed more confusing than anything else.

John Hubbard says

I wanted to like this. I like the sentiments. I like the playfulness. I didn't like the book, however. I had to plow through it on a couple of trans-Pacific flights.

There is some amazing imagery (statue of liberty's vagina and Hamlet, etc.), some very poignant lines and funny bits. I just could barely make it through this.

Vikas Datta says

Quite interesting...

Keren Verna says

Se me hace difícil poner estrellas a esta obra. Encontré el libro en amazon y leí la muestra que ofrece y me encantó.

Las primeras páginas son, para mí, las más interesantes del libro. Narra sobre el 11S y la experiencia de una inmigrante de Puerto Rico y su vida en EEUU. El tono es irónico, con una mirada que me gustó mucho y sobre todo, con un toque de excentricidad.

Luego, de repente, se torna otra cosa, una especie de ensayo que a mí no me aportó nada nuevo. Se me tornó muy elevado que hable de la "Libertad" la Estatua de la Libertad y de romper cadenas y otras cuestiones que sentí ya se habló hace mucho tiempo atrás. Además, se suma Hamlet y otros estereotipos que son demasiado clásicos y suma demasiada altura a los dichos un tanto trillados.

Una pena porque pintaba muy interesante. De todas maneras, buscaré algo más para leer ya que me quedé con ganas de que siguiera la primera parte de la novela que le quedó trunca.

Literary Translator says

Giannina Braschi's originality is not only refreshing, but intellectually thrilling. "Original" is the first word that comes to mind upon reading United States of Banana. Then comes "profound" and soon upon it "revolutionary". Stylistically and structurally, this book is a hybrid of essays, short stories, and drama with flares of political philosophy. It's a brilliant, humorous critique of contemporary American culture during the Bush-Obama era, a turning point for the empire. The work envisions the powers of the world shifting in favor of poets, philosophers, and lovers--and away from the era of brokers, bankers, politicians, and lawyers. The businessman is dead. Braschi posits that Americans fell into the pit of ground zero as citizens of the American empire and crawled out of that pit as Italian citizens. Humor and hope abound. Note that none of Braschi's books are for the breezy reader looking for entertainment, but rather for the intensely devout literary mind, one with a great sense of humor and a love of poetic language. Who is a match? Ideally, someone well versed in the classics who is adventurous in spirit. Someone who is not necessarily looking for plot, but rather for meaning and beauty. I love this book. If you appreciate radical thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Helene Cixous, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, Malcolm X, Slavoj Žižek and Jean Baudrillard, you'll love this book too.

Eiji Tsujimoto says

interesting blend of styles

Edward Rathke says

Absolutely brilliant. Hilarious, intelligent, linguistically beautiful, and politically relevant. If you've any interest in Latin American/US politics, poetry, philosophy, then this is a book for you.

Really impressed by this book, which begins as a series of monologues by the author, Hamlet, and Zarathustra, but becomes a conversation between them and various other historical and contemporary people about the fate of Puerto Rico, in relation to the US.

Maybe the most impressive part about this is that, though its steeped in philosophy and politics and allusions, it never stops being funny. I often think that works that carry serious ideas rarely realise the importance of humor, but Braschi doesn't.

My interview with Giannina Braschi at Monkeybicycle.
