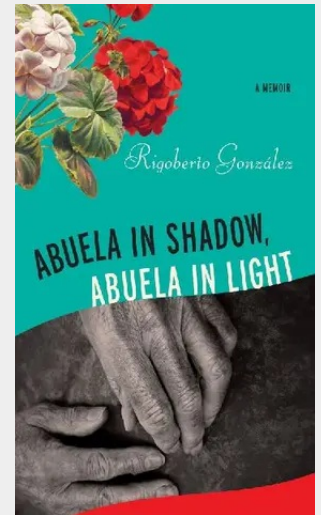


Abuela in Shadow, Abuela in Light

Standing over two graves, Rigoberto González studies the names "Ramon" and "María" under the family name "González." "She was María Carrillo, not María González," he thinks. His grandmother is missing. So begins González's memoir, a journey to recover a more complete picture of his grandmother, who raised him following his mother's death. González travels to his abuela's birthplace, Michoacán, Mexico, and along the way recovers his memories of a past he had tried to leave behind. A complex woman who was forced to take on maternal roles and suffered years of abuse, his grandmother simultaneously resisted traditional gender roles; she was kind yet unaffectionate, and she kept many secrets in a crowded household with little personal space. Sifting through family histories and anecdotes, González pieces together the puzzling life story of a woman who was present in her grandson's life yet absent during his emotional journey as a young man discovering his sexuality and planning his escape from a toxic and abusive environment. From fragments of memory and story, González ultimately creates a portrait of an unconventional yet memorable grandmother, a hard-working Indigenous Mexican woman who remained an enigma while she was alive. A grandmother, he shows, is more than what her descendants remember; she is also all that has been forgotten or never known. Through this candid exploration of his own family, González explores how we learn to remember and honor those we've lost.

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