

ABSTRACT

Gayatri Spivak and James Clifford have emphasized the prominent role played by women in the new diasporas. As we focus on women writers who left their home country in their childhood or teenage years, we are able to observe the ambivalences and negotiations that characterize a hyphenated existence. Both these migrant writers and the female characters they create are influenced by two or more cultures and develop hybrid identities, in consequence of the ruptures that result from the cultural and geographic displacement they experience. If on one hand the diasporic process may lead to marginalization, and anguish for not belonging, there are also positive aspects to be considered. Adopting a multidisciplinary perspective, I intend to examine the performativity of hybrid identities in selected works by Julia Álvarez, highlighting the fluidity and constant transformation of identities thus constructed.

KEY WORDS: identity, diaspora, hybridism, performativity.

JULIA ÁLVAREZ AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF HYBRID IDENTITIES

Leila Harris*

RESUMO

Gayatri Spivak e James Clifford têm chamado a atenção para a forte presença feminina nas diásporas contemporâneas. As escritoras que deixaram seus países de origem revelam ambivalências e mediações que fazem parte de uma existência hifenizada. Tanto as escritoras migrantes como as personagens por elas criadas são influenciadas por duas culturas e desenvolvem identidades híbridas a partir das rupturas desencadeadas pelos deslocamentos geográficos e culturais que vivenciam. O processo diaspórico pode resultar em marginalização e angústia pelo não-pertencimento, mas existem também aspectos positivos a serem considerados. Utilizando uma perspectiva multidisciplinar abordo a performatividade das identidades híbridas em obras selecionadas de Julia Alvarez, realçando a fluidez e a constante transformação de identidades assim construídas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: identidade, diáspora, hibridismo, performatividade.

* Professor at Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.
E-mail: laharris@uol.com.br

"To live in the Borderlands means to / put *chile* in the borscht, / eat whole-wheat *tortillas*, speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklin accent; / be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints".

(Gloria Anzaldúa, 1999)

"I remember / Que soy de allá / Que soy de aquí / Un pie en New York / Un pie en La Habana / And when I put a foot in Berlin / I am called / A Lesbiche Cubanerin / A woman of color (Aqui) / Culturally fragmented / Sexually intersected / But I don't esplit / I'm fluid and interconnected / Like tie-dye colors I bleed / A blue sky into a Halloween pumpkin orange / Que soy de allá / Que soy de aquí".

(Carmelita Tropicana, 1995)

"Our world is becoming a place with shifting borders, where nations form and reform. But what we're really creating are new languages. There are so many hyphenated people, combination people who hear musical cadences in one language that come from another..."

(Julia Álvarez, 1997)

THEORIZING HYBRIDISM

The role of women in contemporary diaspora has been the subject of much discussion. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, was the first critic to theorize about the differentiating role of women in the diasporic processes that have resulted from continuous, large-scale migrations to the U.S. and European nations after World War II. In fact, Spivak sees "the use, abuse, participation, and role of women" as the most significant difference between old and new diasporas. Stressing that the domination and exploitation of diasporic women may take different guises, the critic acknowledges that "the disenfranchised woman of the diaspora – old and new – cannot, then, engage in the critical agency of civil society... to fight the depredations of global economic citizenship". While Spivak cautions against the dangers of speaking for the *Other*, she does not dismiss that possibility and ponders about "gendered outsiders" who may acquire voice and agency (SPIVAK, 1996, p. 249-252). Trinh Minh-ha also examines the role of insiders and outsiders in order to describe the position from which a woman who mediates between two cultures speaks: "the moment the insider steps out from the inside, she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. ... Undercutting the inside/outside opposition,

her intervention is necessarily of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider” (MINH-HA, 1997, p. 415).

Anthropologist James Clifford points out that many theoretical accounts ignore the gendered character of diaspora but stresses the need to consider gender relations when discussing diasporic processes. Gender subordination may be loosened or reinforced according to the specific context. While in some situations the diasporic experience may have a liberating effect upon women, in many other instances they remain “caught between patriarchies”. Clifford also observes that attachment to a home culture and traditions may function both as a source of empowerment and oppression (CLIFFORD, 1994, p. 313-314). Jana Braziel and Anita Mannur argue that diasporic studies propitiate a re-assessment of “the rubrics of nation and nationalism”, of “the relation of citizens and nation-states”, and also offer “myriad, dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic, homogenizing forces of globalization”. The two critics emphasize, however, the importance of going beyond theorizing how diasporic identities are constructed in order to investigate how they are “practiced, lived, and experienced” (BRAZIEL and MANNUR, 2003, p. 7-9). The mediation of the diasporic process through diverse, specific narratives thus becomes one of the objectives of diasporic studies.

As we focus on women writers who left their home country in their childhood or teenage years, we are able to observe the questionings, ambivalences and negotiations that characterize a hyphenated existence. Both these migrant writers and the female characters they create are influenced by two or more cultures and develop hybrid identities in consequence of the ruptures that result from the cultural and geographic displacement they experience. If, on one hand, diasporic displacement may lead to marginalization, exclusion and anguish for not belonging, there is, on the other hand, the potential for agency, autonomy and synthesis. Sandra Almeida, in her research about contemporary migrant women writers, remarks that concern with cultural, political, and historical specificities is present in the narratives of these writers and that the female characters they create go through a variety of experiences, thus embodying multiple representations of women as diasporic subjects (ALMEIDA, 2006, p. 195).

Adopting a multidisciplinary perspective, based on the postulates of cultural studies and feminist criticism, I intend to examine the continuous process of re-invention of the diasporic subject in selected works by Julia Álvarez, a contemporary writer who was born in the Dominican Republic and lives in the United States¹. My objective is to focus on the fluidity of

¹ The works to be discussed here are the novels *How the García Girls Lost their Accents*, published in 1991 and *Yo!*, published in 1997, together with a collection of essays, *Something to Declare*, published in 1998.

hybrid identities developed through the tensions and negotiations that characterize diasporic displacement. The transformation processes – the constant becoming associated with this type of displacement – lead us to consider the performativity of identities thus constructed.

According to Stuart Hall, the decenterings suffered by the Cartesian subject in late modernity have led to changes in the concept of identity, now regarded as fragmented and unfinished rather than fixed and stable. Hall often uses the term “identification” to convey the idea of “on-going process” and refers to the concept of a “fully unified” identity as fantasy. He also examines this ‘fragmented subject’ in terms of its cultural identities (HALL, 1992, p. 277-291). In another essay, Hall affirms that there are at least two ways of viewing ‘cultural identity’. The first view, which encompasses “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes” and provides people with stable frames of reference and meaning, has been instrumental in the recovery of traditions obliterated by colonizing processes. The other “related but different” view, which takes into account ruptures brought about by historical-political processes, focuses on constant transformations: not on ‘what we really are’ but ‘what we have become’. It is in this specific context that Hall considers diasporic identities, “which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference” (HALL, 1990, p. 223-235).

This conception of identity as “a production which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (HALL, 1990, p. 222) may be associated with Homi Bhabha’s use of the concept of performativity in his reflections about nation as narration. Identifying the “split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative”, in other words between people as “pedagogical objects” and “performative subjects”, Bhabha underscores the tension that exists between the pedagogical narrative of a nation and the varied narratives of the nation that people produce in their daily lives (BHABHA, 1994, p. 297). Like Bhabha, Judith Butler sees the distinction between expression and performativeness as crucial.

Buttler affirms that gender attributes are performative, once they constitute – rather than reflect – the identities they effectively reveal. Defining gender as an “identity tenuously constituted in time – instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*”, she argues that since the reality of gender is created through these repetitions, essentialist notions about sex, masculinity and femininity “are also constituted as part of a strategy that conceals gender’s performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of

masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality” (BUTLER, 1990, p. 140-141). At the core of Butler’s work is deconstruction of the binary system concerning gender categories and of any illusions about a “true gender identity”. The notion of gender becomes associated with what we do in a specific context, not with what we are.

Discussing the borderline existence of the diasporic subject, Homi Bhabha argues that hybrid hyphenations emphasize those hard to measure elements present at the base of cultural identifications, highlighting the performative character of differentiated identities (BHABHA, 1994, p. 301). Thus, I propose that a hybrid identity is as performative as a gender identity. In order to ward off evil spirits, the protagonist of *¡Yo!* places saucers with water on certain windowsills of her Vermont house, thus putting in practice the religious beliefs that are part of the cultural luggage she has brought along from the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, neither her physical attributes nor her behavior meets the expectations of Dexter Hays – one of her boyfriends – concerning Latina women. Without dwelling on the matter of stereotypes, Hays figures out the hybrid nature of his girlfriend when he says: “Yo is as American as apple pie. Well, let’s say as American as a Taco Bell taco” (ÁLVAREZ, 1997, p. 194).

The theoretical views about personal, cultural and gender identity explored here eschew essentialist notions while foregrounding constant transformation and difference. By the same token, ignoring the context or positioning of these identities might lead to the trivialization of differences figuring in power relations and affecting the subject in diverse ways. Perhaps a few examples taken from novels by Alvarez will help clarify these issues. In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, Carlos García, even after many years of living in the U.S. as a Dominican exile, far away from the political persecution he had suffered in his country, is terrified every time he sees a black Volkswagen, since that was the vehicle commonly used by the secret police of former dictator Rafael Trujillo. Doctor García has exchanged his original national space for a more desirable one, but he has taken along traumatic memories in his “luggage” (GEORGE, 1996, p. 200). In the same novel, the importance of the context is highlighted in a humorous way. Young Yolanda, who attends a catholic school right after the family moves to the U.S., is affected by the hysteria of the Cold War, the frightening rumors regarding Fidel Castro and Russian missiles, and air-raid drills. Terms such as “nuclear bomb, radioactive fallout, and bomb shelter” are quickly incorporated into her newly acquired vocabulary. When the girl sees white particles in the air on a frosty December morning, she starts screaming, “Bomb! Bomb!” (GARCÍA, 1992, p. 167). It was her first encounter with snow.

Chandra Mohanty and Paula Moya are two of the critics who affirm that within the scenario of U.S. literary and cultural studies, terms such as race and gender are often seen as essentialist and that discussions about identity and experience are often regarded as naïve or reactionary. Conversely, both critics regard identity as “a source of knowledge and a basis for progressive mobilization” (MOHANTY, 2004, p. 6). Moya argues that social location influences – without necessarily determining – identity construction. She believes “identities are subject to multiple [factors] and to a continual process of verification which takes place over the courses of an individual’s life through her interaction with the society she lives in” (MOYA, 1997, p. 137-139). Without dismissing the concepts of gender, race and identity as discursive categories, perhaps we may resort in determined situations to the “strategic essentialism” posited by Spivak (HARASYM, 1990, p. 11) and make use of these categories as instruments of evaluation. The fixidity in the ideological construction of otherness, which, according to Bhabha finds in the stereotype its main strategy, uses the categories mentioned above to label and objectify individuals (BHABHA, 1994, p. 66). In order to foreground this stylized repetition of labels and break away from stereotypes, we need to utilize these categories. The constant transformations and multiple positionalities of the characters created by Julia Álvarez, for instance, become more evident when contrasted with the fixidity of stereotyped representations.

In *How the García Girls Lost their Accents*, while attending U.S. public schools, the sisters are subjected to racist insults that come from children whose immigrant parents had also been discriminated against in the past. When the Garcías enroll their daughters at a selective preparatory school so that they may interact with the “right kind” of people, the insults cease, but the discrimination continues. The tycoon heiresses (many of them daughters of immigrants themselves) do not mix with the foreign girls despite the rumored supposition that the García sisters are wealthy (after all, it is a very expensive school) and probably “related to some dictator or other” (GARCÍA, 1992, p. 108). In *¡Yo!*, Sarita Lopez, a Dominican residing in the U.S. and a successful orthopedist, knows that in the U.S. she and the García sisters are situated between cultures and are seen in a similar way, but in the Dominican Republic the class divide between them remains. In spite of her successful career, she is still discriminated against as the illegitimate daughter of a maid.

In *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue that in order to understand the position from which someone speaks, one needs to take into consideration the intersection of that person’s multiple identities, conditioned by historical and cultural specificities. They mention Michael Ondaatje (South Asian Canadian) and Gloria Anzaldúa (Chicana) as examples of writers whose works reveal the hybridity of their identities “in a

way that suggests how multiple and intersectional identities can be". Smith and Watson also stress "the fluidity of identities in movement through time and across political and geographical spaces" (Smith and Watson 2001: 36-37). Fluidity, multiplicity and intersectionality also characterize the hybrid identities we encounter in the writings of Julia Álvarez.

EXPERIENCING HYBRIDISM

According to Julia Álvarez, *How The García Girls Lost their Accents*, her first novel published in 1991, is about immigration, about "what is lost and what is gained in the translation" from one geographical-political space to another. She recalls the circumstances of her immigration: "In 1960, when my family escaped from the Dominican Republic to the United States, we left behind cousins, *tías*, *tíos*, friends and their families, in fact a whole country bearing the brunt of that last brutal year of a thirty-one-year dictatorship" (ÁLVAREZ, 2004, p. 13). Although we have no intention of establishing a parallel between writers and the characters they create, we share Maria Lucia Guelfi's position when she observes that "the so-called post-modern writers in synchrony with scholars from other areas, question the frontiers between 'worlds' created through art and those created through the use of other language forms, including that which we imagine to be the 'real' world" (GUELFÍ, 1999, p. 36). The circumstances involving the exile of the Álvarez family are very similar to those involving the García family in the novel mentioned above, yet the representation of characters – not the process of artistic (re)creation – is the focus of my discussion.

The strategy of using a narrative that moves back – instead of forward – in time and that covers a forty-year span, including many comings and goings between the Dominican Republic and the United States allows Álvarez to trace back in time and space the lives of the García sisters from the present to the period preceding their exile. Julie Barak argues that the inverted chronology causes uncertainty and instability in the reader – since the use of time markers to refer to events in the novel becomes problematic – thus mirroring "some of the García girls own ambiguities" (BARAK, 1998, p. 164). The uncertainties and ambivalences of each sister – each one reacts in a different way – are brought about by the displacement from one culture to another, by the oscillation between desire for assimilation and attachment to what was left behind.

The parents consider the daughters' assimilation to the American way of life a must, making sacrifices so that the girls may attend expensive schools, "smooth" their accent—a marker of difference – and socialize with "the right kind of people". Nevertheless, they too have contradictory feelings: they expect

the sought-after assimilation of their daughters to go only so far and they impose rules of behavior as strict as those followed by Island girls. It is true that as time goes by the parents also change, allowing the daughters – in contrast with the female cousins who stayed on the island – to attend college and pursue careers of their own choice. On the other hand, the father's indignation when he suspects that the youngest daughter has “gone behind the palm tree” before getting married shows that some patriarchal constraints are not easily shaken off. Laura García, the mother, starts working in her husband's office and taking some night classes. Her attempts to invent domestic gadgets are an expression of her desire to create herself anew. Laura's English, a “mishmash of mixed-up idioms” often seasoned with Spanish syntax, is a clear index of her hybridization. The daughters, caught between worlds, value systems, languages, and customs, try to negotiate between the two cultures and to develop multiple, changing subjectivities. The prophetic words of the old family servant come true: “They will invent what they need to survive” (ÁLVAREZ, 1992, p. 223).

The novel starts in the present. The focalizing character of the first chapter, Yolanda García, returns to the Dominican Republic five years after her most recent visit and twenty-nine years after her family's exile. This Yolanda, who speaks English without an accent and Spanish haltingly, is seen by her relatives as a *gringa*, completely Americanized. What none of them know is that she's contemplating staying on the island for good. While she waits for the moment to blow the candles on the cake baked in her honor and to make a wish, she reflects on the turbulent lives she and her sisters have lived since leaving the island for the first time — “so many husbands, homes, jobs, wrong turns among them” (ÁLVAREZ, 1992, p. 11). Her silent wish is that she will find a home on the island, the home she has never found in the U.S.²

The beginning/end of the novel is open. Yolanda travels through the interior of the island, in a continuous process of self-knowledge and translation that leads us to consider the performativity of her hyphenated identity. At the same time she cherishes her freedom and insists on travelling alone – something unimaginable for a Dominican woman – she feels somewhat envious of her married cousins, “women with households and authority in their voices” (ÁLVAREZ, 1992, p. 11). She has forgotten the meaning of *antojo*, but she hasn't forgotten the need to feed her “saint” by eating guavas

2 Rosemary George observes that home may refer both to the private space and to the original geographic space. It can also be an imaginary space more easily accessible in the mental landscape than geographically (GEORGE, 1996, p. 11).

from the trees³. The complexity of the assimilation process is implied in the novel's very title. The loss of an accent is a trope for assimilation. However, in this context, the word *accent* may refer to speech habits associated with a specific region or to a mark used in writing to indicate the stressed syllable of a spoken word. The fact that the accent is kept on the Spanish family name may be seen as a hint from the author, who knows from her own experience that total assimilation is a fantasy.

In *¡Yo!*, published in 1997, the narrative structure and the use of focalizing characters highlight even more the performativity of Yolanda's hybrid identity. The novel, which is divided into four sections, has a Prologue and each chapter in the first part is named after a literary genre (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, etc). The chapters in the second section refer to themes, including revelation, confrontation, and motivation while those in the third section are named after elements of the novel (characterization, point of view, tone and setting). In this novel, arbitrary categories, such as literary genres, themes, and elements are blurred. As a work of fiction, *¡Yo!* is more than its sections added together.

Seen by a variety of focalizing characters, Yo, the protagonist, is one and many, depending on the context in which she is represented. Each focalizing character reflects one facet of her identity as in a complex game/play of lights and refraction. Yo is both an abbreviation for Yolanda and a personal pronoun. Thus the "I" represented here in its multiplicity is not the result of the addition — but of the intersection — of diverse perspectives (SMITH and WATSON, 2001, p. 36).

In *Something to Declare*, a collection of essays published in 1998, Álvarez' theories about hybrid identities are mediated through personal experiences. The "something to declare" from the title can be associated with the Customs declaration form to be filled in when one enters a country. The declarations made by Álvarez reveal the cultural luggage that she has accumulated during her hyphenated existence. The essays, basically organized in chronological order, include childhood memories of the Dominican Republic and the U.S., following the family's exile. According to Amy Kaminsky, "the place of exile is defined by what is missing, not by what it contains" (KAMINSKY, 1993, p. 30). The exit visa granted to Álvarez's father to emigrate with his family to the U.S., under the guise/pretext of enhancing his medical expertise, frees him and his immediate family from political persecution, but it also brings about losses associated with their forced displacement and subsequent rootless condition. The oscillations between

³ In the novel, an old maid who was born in the countryside explains that "in my campo we say a person has an *antojo* when they are taken over by un *santo* who wants something".

desire for integration in the new culture and attachment to traditions (and to *la familia*), the comings and goings between the Dominican Republic and the United States are addressed in other essays. In “I Want to Be Miss América”, Álvarez recalls her adolescent years and narrates how she and her sisters, in an effort to be like the American girls, used to search for models in the magazines, among their schoolmates and on television programs, including beauty pageants. She remembers that, aside for a few exceptions, the contestants had fair skin – since this was before the ethnic look became fashionable — but she also remarks that for her family, which came from a culture in which women were educated to be wives and mothers, the yearly pageants showed, even if in a subtle way, that it was acceptable for young women to excel outside the domestic sphere. “La Gringuita” focuses on the consequences of assimilation. At seventeen, Álvarez spoke Spanish with the vocabulary of a child and with an American accent. During her vacation on the island, she met Dilita, a hyphenated teenager like her, who is comfortable with her condition and who suggests to young Álvarez that they can have the best of both worlds. As Manuel Gustavo tells her, she is a *gringuita*, not a *gringa*. She’s American while talking to Dilita but Dominican while dancing the *merengue*.

Both in the novels discussed and in the essay collection, language – spoken and written – is represented as the *locus* of performativity. In *How the García Girls Lost their Accents*, Yolanda, who had been a careless student in her native country, changed radically. “In New York, she needed to settle somewhere, and since the natives were unfriendly, and the country inhospitable, she took root in the language” (ÁLVAREZ 1992, p. 141). In the essay, “Doña Aida, with Your Permission”, Álvarez, replying to the appeals from a Dominican writer that she return to her country and native language, defines the place from which she speaks:

I am not a Dominican writer. I have no business writing in a language that I can speak but have not studied deeply to craft. I can't ride its wild horses. Just the subjunctive would throw me off. I know the tender mouth of English, just how to work the reins. I'm also not *una norte-americana*. I'm not a mainstream American writer with my roots in a small town in Illinois or Kentucky or even Nuevo Mexico. I don't hear the same rhythms in English as a native speaker of English. Sometimes I hear Spanish in English (and of course vice versa). That's why I describe myself as a Dominican American writer. That's not just a term. I'm mapping a country that's not on the map, and that's why I'm trying to put it down on paper. (ÁLVAREZ, 1998, p. 172-173)

Alvarez expresses hope that the duality of her experience will transform itself in a new consciousness, a new place on the map. She recognizes that the confusion resulting from belonging to two worlds and from being marginalized in both has its counterpart in the freedom she has conquered in her diasporic experience. Escaping “the confining definitions of traditional gender roles” and achieving economic security have loosened patriarchal constraints over her and have made it easier for her to become a writer. By the same token, she acknowledges her need to keep in touch with her native land:

To know who I am, I have to know where I come from. So I keep coming back to the island. And for *fuera*, I go back to this thought: it really is in my Caribbean roots, in my island genes to be a pan-American, a *gringa dominicana*, a synthesizing consciousness. (ÁLVAREZ, 1998, p. 174-175)

“THE HEART HAS ITS REASONS”

In “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, a fundamental essay for the development of my present work, Stuart Hall starts from the premise that “We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific”. What we say is always in ‘context’, *positioned*. Born in Jamaica and having spent all his adult life “in the shadow of the black diaspora”, Hall explains: “if [this] paper seems preoccupied with the diaspora experience and its narratives of displacement, it is worth remembering that all discourse is ‘placed’, and the heart has its reasons” (HALL, 1990, p. 222-223).

When I started reading “Third Husband” for the first time, the focalizing character immediately caught my attention. Doug, Yo’s third husband, understands that his wife’s return to the U.S. after a visit to the Dominican Republic is a delicate time. He knows she will slowly go back to her life in New Hampshire. It has happened before, but it’s a gradual process and he’ll have to be sensitive and patient. “He can’t tell her so, of course. Or all the little sticks will fall for him – an expression she taught him from the island. Or he’ll be accused of not wanting to listen to her pain – an expression she has picked up from the therapists in this country” (ÁLVAREZ, 1997, p. 258). Doug continues his narrative, describing Yo’s ritual of placing saucers with water – which no one else may touch – at certain windows to ward off evil spirits.

I started taking mental notes: hybridism in the second paragraph, syncretism in the third, and I traveled in time. ... Twenty some years of comings and goings between Brazil and the U.S. Living in one place, remembering/desiring another. Arriving in Brazil, I would realize that the country that existed in my imagination seldom coincided with the one I found myself in. I felt at home, though – most of the time. Returning to the U.S. – home too, right? – was another story subject to many variations.

Ambivalences and contradictions. There a foreigner – her English is good; she has an accent, though; she is different. Here, too Americanized – weird clothes (has she become a missionary?); she's so formal, stiff; she talks as if she were translating from another language. Here, whitey, milk-face. There, the beauty consultant at a department store, ears tuned only to the local drawl, says without looking at me, that my complexion is too dark for that particular brand of make-up. Doubly *gauche*.

There, when I didn't have manioc, I'd make *farofa* with cream of wheat. Here, when I'm asked the time, I tell it to the minute, my precision appalling to my listener. I'm always translating and being translated. I think of Álvarez: "It's a world formed of contradictions, clashes, cominglings – the *gringa* and the Dominican [Brazilian], and it is precisely that tension and richness that interests me. Being in and out of both worlds, looking at one side from the other side" (ÁLVAREZ, 1998, p. 173).

In order to further his argument that diaspora awareness may also be constituted positively, James Clifford refers to Edward Said's belief that the plurality of vision of those who see "the entire world as a foreign land" ... leads to "an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal". ... Thus, both "the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally".

I've done what Yolanda García considered doing. I have come back. I am home. I have kept my contrapuntal awareness, though.

REFERENCES

ALMEIDA, Sandra G. A nova diáspora e a literatura de autoria feminina contemporânea. In: CALVALCANTI, Ildney et al. (orgs.) *Da mulher às mulheres: dialogando sobre literatura, gênero e identidades*. Maceió: Edufal, 2006.

ÁLVAREZ, Julia. We Need to Understand. *Children & Libraries* 2, p. 13-16, Summer/Fall 2004.

_____. *In the Name of Salomé*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2000

_____. *Something to Declare*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1998

_____. *¡Yo!*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1997.

_____. *How the García Girls Lost their Accents*. New York: Plume Books, 1992.

- BARAK, Julie. Turning and Turning in the Widening Gyre: A Second Coming into Language in Julia Álvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*. *MELUS*, v. 23, n. 1, p. 159-176, Spring 1998.
- BHABHA, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- BRAZIEL, Jana E. and MANNUR, Anita (eds.). *Theorizing Diaspora*. Malden: Blackwell, 2003.
- BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- CLIFFORD, James. Diaspora. *Cultural Anthropology*, v. 9, n. 3, p. 302-338, 1994.
- GEORGE, Rosemary. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- GUELFÍ, Maria Lucia. Ficção e História: um jogo de espelhos, *Gragoatá*, v. 6, n. 1, p. 25-41, 1996.
- HALL, Stuart. *A Identidade Cultural na Pós-modernidade*. Tradução de Tomaz Tadeu da Silva and Guacira Lopes Louro. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 1999 (1992).
- _____. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: RUTHERFORD, J. (ed.). *Identity*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.
- HARASYM, Sarah. (ed.) *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- KAMINSKY, Amy K. *Reading the Body Politic: Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- MINH-HA, Trinh. Not You/Like You: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference. In: McCLINTOK, Anne et al. (eds.). *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. p. 415-419.
- MOHANTY, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- MOYA, Paula. Postmodernism, realism and the politics of identity: Cherríe Moraga and Chicana feminism. In: ALEXANDER, Jacqui M. & MOHANTY, Chandra. (eds.) *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures*. London: Routledge, 1997. p. 125-150.
- SMITH, Sidonie and WATSON, Julia. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- SPIVAK, Gayatri. Diasporas Old and New: women in the transnational world. *Textual Practice*, v. 10, n. 2, p. 245-269, 1996.