
Borderland Consciousness in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent

Mirna Bijedic*¹

¹University of Novi Sad – Serbia

Abstract

Borderland consciousness as a dynamic and fluid state of one's being is frequently present in the life of many ethnic minorities in the 20th century U.S. society. The experience of immigration as well as life between the foreign and domestic grounds, have influenced the formation of duality in cognitive existence of many Latin Americans in the U.S. This paper explores Latin American women's borderland consciousness through the analysis of female characters in Julia Alvarez's novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. Special attention is given to their continuous quests for the totality of Self, or a homogenous identity which would hold and integrate both their cultural hybridity and the sense of Otherness imposed by the U.S. and Latin American societies in terms of culture and gender. Nevertheless, the paper shows that due to the specific cross-culturalism and binary mental existence, the female characters in the novel can never complete their quests for a singular identity, but are forced into a continuous balancing between the oppositions embodied in the two different societies. By doing so, they become jugglers between different countries, cultures and customs. Eventually, the female characters in the novel manage to find a source of power in the maneuvering nature of their existences and become what the Third world feminists call 'New mestizas' or women who learn to acknowledge the essence of their being right in the borderline consciousness, from which they draw strength and build their unique borderline hybrid identities.

*Speaker