Estêvão Carvalho Batista

The Language of Names in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*

Faculdade de Letras

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

2014

Estêvão Carvalho Batista

The Language of Names in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*

Submitted to Programa de Pós-Graduação em
Estudos Literários in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Mestre em Estudos Literários.
Research Area: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.
Thesis Advisor: Gláucia Renate Gonçalves, Ph. D.

Belo Horizonte
Faculdade de Letras
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
2014

Ficha catalográfica elaborada pelos Bibliotecários da Biblioteca FALE/UFMG

A473h.Yb-l

Batista, Estevão Carvalho.
The Language of Names in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Gilrs Lost Their Accents* and *Yo!* [manuscrito] / Estevão Carvalho Batista. – 2014.
116 f., enc.: il., fots., color., p&b.

Orientadora: Gláucia Renate Gonçalves.

Área de concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Linha de pesquisa: Poéticas da Modernidade.

Dissertação (mestrado) – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Faculdade de Letras.

Anexos: f. 102-103.

Bibliografia: f. 104-116.

1. Alvarez, Julia. – How the García girls lost their accents – Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 2. Alvarez, Julia. – Yo! – Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 3. Nomes pessoais na literatura – Teses. 4. Imigrantes na literatura – Teses. I. Gonçalves, Gláucia Renate. II. Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. Faculdade de Letras. III. Título.

CDD.: 813.54

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

My greatest appreciation goes to my advisor and friend Gláucia Renate Gonçalves without whom I could not have made it here. She was one of the undergraduate professors I have to thank for my interest in literature. She has great bearing in this work since its inception, as she was the one to introduce me to immigrant literature and to Julia Alvarez's work. Through all these years, she was the one whose unending patience and incentive kept me going. Thanks for never letting me give up. I hope this work serves to celebrate a long partnership.

Thanks to my family and friends for their continuous encouragement and support.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Priscila Campello for sharing with me her extensive bibliography on Julia Alvarez.

I should also thank all those who named me at any point of my life and thank all the names and nicknames I have been given. Thanks to Estêvão, Estevão, Tete, Te, Teteu, Teu, Istevu, and abroad, Frank, Steve, Steve-O, Stevaum. Whether I liked them or not, they all contributed to who I am today.

A B S T R A C T

This work aims at providing an onomastic reading of Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*. This aspect seems worth pursuing since the author places names already at the core of the titles, which I consider an indication that they should not be taken for granted. Names may indicate some issues that seem to be of great concern to the authors and aspects to which they would like the readers to pay attention, either consciously or unconsciously. Names are also ground for the negotiation of instances of one's subjectivity, namely gender, race and nationality. Before approaching the two novels, I illustrate how much literary works in general benefit from such analysis, and then move to a discussion of some works by immigrant writers and how they approach their own names and their characters' in a similar fashion, especially the issue of belonging in their two cultures. Not coincidentally, that is very alike to what can be seen in Alvarez's selected works.

R E S U M O

O presente trabalho tem como objetivo fazer uma análise onomástica dos romances *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* e *¡Yo!*, de Julia Alvarez. Esse é um aspecto que deve ser levado em conta uma vez que a autora já coloca nomes como núcleo de seus títulos, o que pode ser considerado como uma indicação de que eles não devem ser menosprezados. Nomes indicam alguns aspectos que incomodam os autores ou para os quais eles gostariam de chamar atenção, seja conscientemente ou não. Nomes são espaço de negociação de instâncias da subjetividade como gênero, raça, classe e nacionalidade, isto é, aspectos importantes da subjetividade de cada um. Antes de abordar os dois romances, ilustro como obras literárias podem se beneficiar com este tipo de estudo. Em seguida, discuto como escritores migrantes abordam questões afins no que se refere a seus nomes e nomes de seus personagens, de forma bem semelhante, principalmente no que se refere às questão do pertencimento à suas duas culturas. Não por acaso, tais questões também podem ser vistas nas duas obras de Julia Alvarez.

TA B L E O F C O N T E N T S

I N T R O D U C T I O N 1

C H A P T E R O N E – The Name Game 11

1.1. Reading Literature through Names 17

1.2. US Immigrant Writing: Names that Cross Borders 27

1.3. Hoo-lee-ah! Who?! 43

C H A P T E R T W O - The Anthroponomy of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!* 59

2.1. The (Now) Nuclear Family 67

2.2. Violet 77

2.3. The Men in Yolanda's Life 88

2.4. The Help 91

F I N AL C O N S I D E R A T I O N S 96

A P P E N D I X A 102

A P P E N D I X B 103

B I B L I O G R A P H Y 104

I N T R O D U C T I O N

(…) O, be some other name!

What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet

--Juliet. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (II, ii, 1-2)

Shakespeare's balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* is certainly the most invoked passage in papers with onomastic concerns, that is, those that propose a reflection either about the origins and forms of names or their history and use. Juliet's words have been used in a great variety of contexts that comprises neurological, psychological and marketing studies that prove the Capulet girl wrong; an example of this is the study carried out by a team of scientists from the Montreal Neurological Institute and the Department of Psychology at McGill University. Jelena Djordjevic et al. investigated whether odor names interfere in how one perceives and reacts to them. On the name given to a substance, they assert: "Call it a fresh rose or a rotting flower, your SC [skin conductance][1] should jump up, but your sniff volume in response to it when called fresh rose should be larger than when called rotting flower" (393). They conclude that indeed "odor names constitute an important determinant of odors' affective properties" (393).

Moreover, Jeanine Shorinko et al. demonstrate that the sense of smell is not the only one

[1]"The skin conductance response is the phenomenon that the skin momentarily becomes a better conductor of electricity when either external or internal stimuli occur that are physiologically arousing. Arousal is a broad term referring to overall activation, and is widely considered to be one of the two main dimensions of an emotional response." (http://www.media.mit.edu/galvactivator/faq.html)

to be affected by names. Despite often being taken as universal exactly like our perception of smell, our perception of colors is influenced by the names they are given. For that reason, paint and cosmetic companies work hard on the elaboration of fancier names for generic colors. Brown becomes Mocha and consequently sells more (990).

Although he does not quote Shakespeare, Wole Soyinka also displays a similar concern about the same issue in his address at the FESPACO 2013 (Pan-African Film Festival of Ouagadougou). Regarding the names given to both the African film industry and its productions, he wonders whether "the branding influence[s] the product" (242) also in this context. He speculates whether a detrimental name would affect the "consciousness of future producers" or, on the contrary, a stimulating one would "provoke in the artiste a tendency towards adventurousness, experimentation and originality" (242). He believes we should all pay more attention to the names we give things as "word[s] can distort the palpable reality that [one's] own senses have already determined" (238). That is because "words are allied to images" (237). Child naming is no exception to that. Every culture has some interest in this process to a lesser or greater degree. As for Africa, great is the importance placed on child naming:

> Naming in Africa, especially in Yorubaland, is a special gift that the ancestors as progenitors of the nation bestowed on their elder. Names have meaning, and – as they would have us believe, names push their bearers to actualize their encoded meaning. (Oruko a maar o omo) literally – The name may mould the child. So you don't find any Yoruba parent giving to their babies names that embed evil meanings. (*The Nation*, qtd in Soyinka 238-39)

Even in Africa where Soyinka considers this process a creative act, in choosing a new name parents do not stray far from the existing patterns (239), or should we say existing images. His point is that naming is not less creative for not being fully original. From Soyinka one can see that naming is not only a creative act, but also a creational one. He elaborates Wordsworth's 'the child is the father of the man' to 'the name is the father of the child' because "such careful thought, sense of history, hopes and expectations ride on the name we decide to give a new human entity we have brought into the world" (238). Alleen and Don Nilsen seem to be in consonance with Soyinka's thought on the topic when they state that

> [i]n real life, people's names are lexically packed, meaning that *they* usually carry information about one's gender and in more subtle ways about one's racial ethnicity, the era in which a person was born, the attitudes and aspirations of the person's parents, and, if the person has a nickname, what kind of friends he or she has. In fiction, this is even more likely to be true because authors purposely design their characters' names to reveal such matters. (104)

That is what the authoring couple demonstrates in *Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature*. The book suggests that knowing about how much teenagers are concerned with their own names, contemporary writers may use naming strategies not only to make their characters' sound more attractive to their readership and reach their audiences in different ways. Among these strategies is the use of names to bring humour to the works, achieved by surprising and amusing the reader via alliteration, word play or allusion (as in Gary Paulsen's *How Angel Peterson Got His Name*); they can also be used to set tone and mode (like Robert Cormier' *The Chocolate War* and Francesca Lia Block's *Weetizie Bat*), to help set the time periods the narratives take place (Karen Cushman's *Catherine,Called Birdy*), to establish either realistic or imagined settings (Gary

Soto's *Afterlife* is an example of a realistic one and Ursula Le Guin's Wizard of the Earthsea books, the imaginary kind), to reveal ethnic values (among which are Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*), to build a dual audience (Daniel Handler's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, which appeals to teens and adults), or to function as memory hooks (J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series).

Most characters presented in the books above have their identities strongly tied to their names, or in Soyinka's terms, they are fathered by their names. These works are not always found in the young adult literature shelves; however, as Alleen and Don Nilsen explain, they call teenagers' attention because the way these authors manipulate names is something they can relate to their own experience. The interest adolescents have in manipulating their names grows as they become more observant of names as part of their identities in their "egocentricity of youth" (ix). A famous teenager to exhibit such tendency was Ernest Hemingway, whose 1916-1917 yearbook showed that he "had experimented with eight different pen names: Ernest Hemingway, Ernest Miller Hemingway, Ernest MacNamara Hemingway, Ernest Monhahan Hemingway, Hemingway. (with a period), Ernest Michealowitch Hemingway, B. S., and just E. H" (ix). At the same time, having themselves gone through such process and being aware of it, authors may use names as a literary technique (xv).

Although Alleen and Don Nilsen state that "both in real life and in literature, young people are more interested in manipulating and presenting their names than are adults" (ix), the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa kept on experimenting with different pen names throughout his adult life. He went further than the adolescent Hemingway and created for him over 70 heteronyms that were young and old males and females who wrote in different styles and languages, although three of them were more often used, Alberto Caieiros, Alvaro de Campos

and Ricardo Reis (Pessoa). Pessoa's experiment went even further; he created biographies to his pseudonyms and, to some extent, lived their lives. The names he adopted became his personas. Edouard Roditi suggests that "[e]ven Pessoa's name seems to imply this peculiar fate. Derived from the Latin word that means a character in a play or a mask, it now means, in spoken Portuguese, a mere person, in the very vaguest sense of this word" (Roditi). His immigration to different cultures and different languages may have contributed to the shattering of his self. Pessoa immigrated to South Africa at a young age to return to Lisbon already a teenager. In addition to his mother tongue Portuguese, he was fluent and wrote in English and French.

Pessoa's is a complex case study in which naming seems to be used to satisfy his own needs to become somebody else. It may not have started this way but the situation got to the point of him living the lives of some of the imaginary poets and fictional characters of his own creation (Roditi). Nevertheless, it shows that authors' names affect the conditions of production of their work, which is particularly true for immigrant writing, one of the categories that describes well Julia Alvarez's two selected works, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*.

In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, Alvarez tells a story much like her own. Exactly like her family, in 1960, the Garcías are forced to move from the Dominican Republic to the United States as the head of the family, Carlos García, is being persecuted by Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, due to some agitation he had made against the dictator. They are helped by US authorities, represented in the novel by the CIA agent Victor, to flee to New York where a fellowship at a hospital is granted to Carlos. One can read, in reverse chronological order, the pains and joys the girls from the title undergo as they grow and mature in a different country. The novel is divided into three parts that cover respectively their adulthood, characterized by

living between two cultures (1989-72); their adolescence, assimilation, and the day they had to leave their country (1970-60); and their childhood back in the Dominican Republic (1960-56). For Ellen Mayock, telling the story backwards "demonstrates the mature protagonist's return to her past, implying perhaps a need to recover a distant self or cultural location through memory, nostalgia, and the power of the pen" (223). Yolanda seems to believe that by revisiting her past, she is going to go back to a time when she was only one self; however, in her homeland she already had a set of nicknames and subjectivities to deal with, as I explore in chapter two.

As one starts reading the novel, it becomes clear that paying attention to names is important to a greater comprehension of this narrative. If it were not that way, in addition to the family surname in the title, the author would not have placed the names of the family members as a subheading of every chapter (and the publisher placed them on the upper right-hand corner of every odd-numbered page). They stand for either the members of the García family to narrate the chapter or the ones who are the focus of the episode being narrated. For Silvio Sirias, they are there to help the reader to be less confused by the way Alvarez chose to tell the story, which includes not only the reverse chronology but also the use of different points of view that vary from third-person omniscient, third-person limited, to first person (22). One can also consider how they contribute to a feeling of intimacy, in the case of the girls' names; as one keeps reading the chapters they become more affectionate and intimate because they indeed become more intimate to the reader who, towards the end of the book, has access to their childhood nicknames and childhood selves. Therefore, Yolanda becomes Yoyo, while Sandra and Sofía are Sandi and Fifi. Their parents are referred to as the affectionate Mami and Papi, and Carla is the only daughter not to have a nickname.

The many autobiographical elements in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* led to a

family quarrel when the novel debuted. "Julia's mother refused to speak with her for a few months" and she "earned the disdain of her sisters" (Sirias 5). That is exactly *¡Yo!*'s premise. The novel opens with the uproar caused by the publication of Yolanda's first book, with a strong autobiographical content, caused in the García family; it explores the possibilities of hearing from the ones who were fictionalized, learning about the ones who contributed directly or indirectly to her writing and even learning about part of her readership.

In the second novel, the name in evidence is Yolanda's nickname. The novel's title appears on the upper left-hand corner of every even-numbered page, a space filled only with the page number in the first novel. On the upper left-hand corner of odd-numbered pages, where in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* one could find the Garcías' names, in *¡Yo!,* one can see the roles the narrators or the one who is the focus of the chapters have in Yolanda's life. They are, in the order they appear, the sisters, the mother, the cousin, the maid's daughter, the teacher, the stranger, the caretakers, the best friend, the student, the suitor, the wedding guests, the night watchman, the third husband, the stalker, and the father. If Yo is the translation for ego, these are the egos touched by Yolanda and what one sees by reading the headers of the left and right pages together is, for instance, *¡Yo!* The mother; as if saying that, 'I, the mother' am going to speak now.

Names in Julia Alvarez's writing, especially proper ones, whether given at birth or other appellations, name titles, and nicknames, are certainly lexically packed and have much to reveal. They are an important unity of meaning and constitute a language that could be explored in her fiction at large, as I briefly show in chapter two. Names are even more significant in the two in her first novel *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and its sequel *¡Yo!* for two reasons. First, because of the writer's choice to strategically place names already at the core of both titles,

the surname García and the nickname for one of the main characters Yo; that is a sign of the importance they are going to have in the narrative. Second, the names used in these two novels work in different instances as links to the author's life and may help one to comprehend better Alvarez's trajectory and the immigrant experience in general because there is much in it connected to naming and name changes. Through names, those living between two languages and two cultures may undergo a shattering of their selves. That can be also seen in the works of the immigrant writers presented in chapter one, and in the case of Alvarez's protagonist Yolanda one can see a multiplicity of identities almost as great in number as Pessoa's.

Critics often interpret the two titles as a way the author had to highlight the importance of language in the two novels. For Maria López Ponz, it is clear from the moment one reads the title *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* that language is going to play a major role in the novel and that every word, linguistic error, interference between English and Spanish, as well as every silence, mean more than they might seem to mean at a first glance (50). For Julie Barak, the first title is quite ironic, because the García girls "may have lost their accents, literally, but they can never completely lose or erase the memories of their island's past or, of their first language and the world view that supports it" (176). Lucía Suárez adds that the title of the novel works as a warning from the "very beginning that even if an accent (presumably a Spanish accent in English) is lost, the name, García, which has an orthographical accent, cannot be erased. [Thus] even if the girls become American, they cannot escape the Spanish name that identifies them" (129).

The second title, *¡Yo!*, which is one of the many nicknames attributed to the novel's main character, Yolanda, has been considered "a complexly symbolic choice for a title, as in Spanish, [the first person pronoun] yo can only occupy a subject position" and because it can also be

translated as ego, it can be considered “a literal telling of the ‘I’ [or self]” (Suárez 136). Even more symbolic is the fact that, in the second novel, Yolanda never has a chance to speak for herself. Instead, her family and people she met along her path as a writer have a chance to say what they please about her. They are some of the many people to nickname Yolanda. Therefore, it is a clue that one should look at names and naming in this novel as part of the process of linguistic subjectivation individuals go through in the languages they speak. Such subjectivation has been highlighted by Judith Butler who, drawing on Althusser’s notion of interpellation, states: “[b]eing called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language” (*Excitable* 2). That is a condition of which the one named has little control: “the name wields a linguistic power of constitution in ways that are indifferent to the one who bears the name” (*Excitable* 31). That is what the section about immigrant writing in chapter one deals with, how much encoded and charged names can be. It considers names as carriers of cultural content.

Believing cultural knowledge would help them in crime contention, both the US and the UK criminal police organizations compiled guides to instruct their members on how to deal with criminals of foreign names. Their names could be helpful in the investigation since they bring along pieces of information like “gender, marital status, birthplace, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and position within a family or even within a society” (Interpol 2), crucial for one’s identity. Despite their condition as legal citizens or outlawed illegal immigrants, the immigrant characters shown in this work are most of times set as outcasts for their physical traits, language and foreign names. The way they deal with the names and nicknames they are given, and in some cases the names they adopt, reveals how they negotiate the afore mentioned instances of their subjectivities.

Yet, in the first chapter I show that contemporary works are not the only ones to profit from onomastic interpretations. Such emphasis renders a different reading, even of well-known classics which I use together with the selected twentieth-century works to show possibilities of what can be done with names in literature, most of which can be applied also to Alvarez's works which are the focus of the second chapter.

Throughout this Master's thesis I try to contribute to those works which, in a way, attempted to answer the question of what is in a name as well as contravene the statement that "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (37), especially in relation to the two selected works by Julia Alvarez's.

C H A P T E R O N E

The Name Game

Shirley!
Shirley, Shirley bo Birley Bonana fanna fo Firley
Fee fy mo Mirley, Shirley!

Come on everybody! I say now let's play a game
I betcha I can make a rhyme, out of anybody's name
The first letter of the name I treat it like it wasn't there
But a 'B' or an 'F' or an 'M' will appear
And then I say "Bo" add a 'B' then I say the name
Then "Bonana Fanna" and "Foe"
And then I say the name again with an 'F' very plain
then a "Fee Fi" and "Mo"
And then I say the name again with an 'M' this time
And there isn't any name that I can't rhyme

(Shirley Ellis, "The Name Game")

Naming strategies are not restricted to contemporary young adult literature, as shown in the introduction; other scholars, like Yvonne Bertills, have highlighted the importance of decoding names in the narrative for the reading exercise at large, since in addition to being chosen by similar criteria to personal names, names in literature are embedded with narrative context (2). Thus, they affect and are influenced by the narrative at the same time (2). One may try to imagine the narrative behind Shirley Ellis's song, supposedly inspired by a game she played when she was a child. It was possibly the chance the poor girl from Bronx had to get even

not only with the children who may have called her names in her childhood but also the adults who may have behaved similarly in her adulthood. Some people may see some sort of empowerment for this Black woman in the song which despite sounding silly and unambitious, became a hit, and allowed her to perform to white audiences and make fun of their names, as seen in "The Merv Griffin Show" in 1965. In literary works, because they are the ones to name, authors claim demiurgic qualities to also exert some power as

> [they] capitalize on the freedom they have in creating names because with every other part of language they are controlled by what society has already agreed upon as the meanings of chosen sounds and how they should be represented. With names, authors can use all that they know about language to create totally new sound combinations and to clip and blend old names to be spelled and used in new ways. Names are the one part of language that gives all of us the control that Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty claimed for himself: "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." (Nilsen x)

Like in Shirley Ellis's "The Name Game," authors and some characters may grant themselves a certain freedom in the use of names more than in other uses of language; indeed, the name of characters, in some works, may define their fate. However, it is vain of Humpty Dumpty, and a little naive on Alleen and Don Nilsen's part, to believe that one has total control over any use of language, even over names. Certain characters' names may give way to interpretations that range far from the original sense intended by the author, the same way the other uses of language do. This malleability of words worries José, the protagonist of José Saramago's novel *All the Names*:

> Contrary to what is generally believed, meaning and sense were never the same thing, meaning shows itself at once, direct, literal, explicit, enclosed in itself, univocal, if you like, while sense cannot stay still, it seethes with second, third and fourth senses, radiating out in different directions that divide and subdivide into branches and branchlets, until they disappear from view, the sense of every word is like a star hurling spring tides out into space, cosmic winds, magnetic perturbations, afflictions. (115)

Author and character share the name and Derridean view on the deferring of sense. Contrary to Humpty Dumpty, I take names as concepts according to Derrida who states that "every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within it refers to another and other concepts, by the systemic play of differences" (140). That said, a reading which considers names as a unit of sense does not seem farfetched.

José's sharing his name with the book's author could already be a question for further study, since an author' name featured in their own writing may be some sort of invitation for a different reading. In Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, for example, Judith Butler sees in the capital W drawn by the movement of a snake Jim kills as a "foreshortened Willa," who had already shortened her name to Will (151). The W works for Butler as a foreshadowing of the castration/decapitation scene performed by the character Jim and represents also the author's sexual castration (*Bodies* 151). In J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, the chest found by Susan Barton with the author's initials reinforces the metafictional aspect of the work. [2] The title is one of the many

[2] Although the initials found by Susan Barton are M.J. (*Foe* 93), those are the same initials of a character in the author's autobiographical fiction *Summertime*. In this novel, as in *¡Yo!*, the reader does not have access directly to the subject being talked about. M.J. is the only male character to talk about the fictitious J.M. Coetzee, John. Ana Clara Ferreira questions to what extent the character mirrors its author (63).

ways Coetzee's work is connected to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, as the writer's name was originally Foe but he changed it, "wanting to sound more gentlemanly" ("Daniel Defoe"). Not surprisingly, Defoe seems to have felt his character also needed to go through a name reconfiguration:

> I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznear; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe, and so my companions always called me. (1)

I say it is not surprising for Defoe's main character to talk about his name history not only because the author has altered his surname but also because *Robinson Crusoe* reflects the philosophical changes of his time. As Ian Watt explains, the focus on the individual is one of the characteristics of the novel as the new genre being established at the time; its names are part of the process of individualization (18). He states that differently from what can be seen in Defoe's, Richardson's and Fielding's works, "[c]haracters in previous forms of literature, of course, were usually given proper names; but the kind of names actually used showed that the author was not trying to establish his characters as completely individualized entities" (18). Hence, characters started having both a given name and a surname, which "suggest[ed] that they were to be regarded as particular individuals in the contemporary social environment" (19), and also conferred a realistic aspect on the works.

While the early novelists used real names to make their works more realistic, modern writers may use their own names to create a metafictional alternate reality, as seen in Paul Auster's *City of Glass* and Amélie Nothomb's *Robert des Noms Propres. City of Glass* opens with a client knocking at the door of the crime fiction writer Daniel Quinn[3], looking for a private investigator named Paul Auster. Quinn decides to pretend he is this man because he is curious about the case. He, who has the same initials of Don Quixote, starts questioning the conditions of the production and authorship of Cervantes's work. Like Quixote, he becomes insane and another Paul Auster, not the detective being looked for but a fictional author, finishes the story.

Nothomb's work makes reference to the French Dictionary (*Le Petit Robert*) and to a homonymous French singer, the author's inspiration for her novel. It tells the complex story of a girl who is named Plectrude by her suicidal mother. In choosing that uncommon name for her daughter she hoped that, differently from her, the child would have a unique name because that would grant her an extraordinary life. Her mother Lucette[4] is ironically obscure, not famous and one about whom the reader and her daughter have little or no information. The girl manages to be admitted to the Paris Opera Ballet School, but as she grows older, she develops a disease due to an eating disorder and becomes unable to dance. She becomes an unhappy adult who believes suicide is an option for ending what she considers to be a miserable life. Before doing so she meets Nothomb, who convinces her that her suicidal tendencies and potential murder inclination as well come from her mother. Convinced that killing is better than taking her own life, she kills the author, after being persuaded that she is her true mother-creator. The death of the author, in an almost Barthesian proposition, means characters and their stories are beyond author's control.

[3]The fact that the character has the same name of another American author contemporary to Auster makes the novel even more metaficcional. Nevertheless, the reference is not clear in the work and it is also not clear whether the author of *City of Glass* was aware of that. Daniel Quinn published his first novel, *Dreamer*, a year after Auster's.

[4]The meaning of Lucette is "light" (thinkbabynames.com).

Despite giving his own name to his character, Saramago's work is not metafictional and he does not interfere directly in José's fate. Whether the author disliked his namesake one cannot tell just by reading this book; the commonality of the name José in the Portuguese language contributes to the characterization of his protagonist who never introduces himself using his surnames. The latter have taken him nowhere and, due to the "insignificance of his person"(9), he is just José. His name is a correspondent to the English 'John Doe', a generic name commonly used to supply the absence of a known name. In Portuguese, often paired with 'João Ninguém' (João No one), normally used for somebody who is thought of as not having good prospects in life, the name José carries the idea of anonymity. In certain parts of Brazil, this is how young people call out to a stranger and when this stranger is older than the speaker, he is Sr José like Saramago's character. Either because he needs to make some sense of his own life or just out of curiosity, the main character in *All the Names* goes on the pursuit of a woman whom he has never before seen or heard of just because he accidentally came across her birth certificate at his workplace, the General Registry Office. His quest is a way of fleeing from his monotonous life, it is a way of escaping from the blandness suggested by his namesake.

The aforementioned examples show that there is definitely more to a name than Juliet could imagine. Names have great importance inside and outside the text, as Bertills states, "the names of characters do not immediately strike the reader as being particularly important; however, they have more significant functions than those that immediately meet the eye" (1). For this reason, "[n]ames play a very central and important role in any reading exercise and so would certainly the names given to characters be of importance to us," argues Kyallo Wadi Wamitila (35). He adds that

Decoding of the names therefore becomes an important critical engagement in as far as it

> helps the reader in his deciphering of the text in which the names are (…) Character names can be used as expressions of experience, ethos, teleology, values, ideology, culture and attitudes of varying shades. (35)

For this reason, in the following sections, I provide examples of possible readings of literary names, which seek for different attitudes in the naming process, as well as the values, ideologies, authors' experiences and cultural background they may help reveal.

1.1. Reading Literature through Names

Names are "entangled in the narrative context which they may epitomize," and their "form and content may express significant aspects of the name-bearer on both the connotative and denotative levels" (Bertills 4). With that in mind, we start to recall examples among those stories from our childhood, which were folk tales passed on orally for generations with unnamed characters who were very significantly named as they were collected by Hans Christian Anderson**,** Charles Perrault and the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.

There is the story of an extremely fair princess who is named after her skin color's resemblance to snow. There is also the tale about another girl who spends most of her day among cinders and is nicknamed accordingly. From fairy tales one also learns that names mean power. For the new queen, who would have been locked up forever unless she turned straw into gold, the power to save her firstborn from being taken away lies solely on guessing the difficult name of the imp-like Rumpelstiltskin. These stories were not as innocent and strictly meant for children as they are told today, and onomastics helps to unveil deeper meanings within them; in

the case of fairy tales, names are quite revealing especially for the fields of gender and feminist studies.

Because they were collected by male folklorists, fairy tales reinforce a patriarchal worldview. If we take Cinderella, for instance, she is said to have had a life of non-servitude before her father's death and presumably she must have had a name too, which is never mentioned. After marrying the prince, she suffers no name reconfiguration. This lack of a past name and the preservation of her servant nickname suggests what she, who epitomizes the perfect housewife in men's imaginary, was born to be and will always be submissive. Apparently not being overtly told with this purpose, the story tags along well with conduct books for ladies which, according to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "from the eighteenth century on, (…) had proliferated, enjoining young girls to submissiveness, modesty, selflessness; reminding all women that they should be angelic" (816). The common misconception of fairy tales as just naïve stories for children has for some time now been reviewed. According to Jack Zipes, "[they] —and one could add the oral folktales as well—always have been concerned with sex roles, social class, and power" (21). They have been seen as a way to address the "deformation of the civilizing process and the transmission of norms of behavior that involved the management of violence and self- restraint" (21). They taught girls to seek for "beauty and modesty" while boys should aim for "brains and ambition" (41).

Not even deserving a nickname, the only female character in Rumpelstiltskin has her fate always decided by male characters. She is locked up because of her father's debts to the crown; the tyrant king would release her only if she managed to make gold out of straw; and, the same king marries her because of a pact she made with the devilish creature who gives name to the tale. And, as mentioned before, the resolution of the story that should be more hers than the

magical creature's is decided based on the name of this last male character. This might be an indication of the kind of behavior expected from the ones to whom the story was told.

Classics from Victorian literature provide very telling examples as well. Probably, for the vain Victor Frankenstein, learning how the creature he refused to name is often mistakenly called by its maker's name, in the media and as an option for Halloween costume, would be a worst punishment than losing everything he had by the hands of this same creature. The lack of a name is central to the identity issues the monster undergoes. Curiously, Dr. Jekyll's monster and hidden self is called Mr. Hyde. That allows the doctor's friend, Mr. Utterson, a pun: "If he be Mr. Hyde (...) I shall be Mr. Seek" (Stevenson 16). Hyde represents "all that Victorian society would force its member to keep out of sight for the common good" (Guedes 50); he is "everything Jekyll tries to kill inside him, as the sound of his own name suggests. 'Je' kill, means 'I kill,' or 'kill' might also refer to what he wishes to do with himself, as in 'kill me'(50). Thus, creature's and creator's surnames are very suggestive.

The sonority of Jane Eyre's surname has been associated to her aerial/sprite qualities, which goes well with the kind of mobility attributed to this proto-feminist character towards the end of the story. Her story is very similar to Cinderella's and the Ugly Duckling's, a comparison made by Gilbert and Gubar, when Jane was little she is not seen as having any potential: "Cinderella never is; nor is the Ugly Duckling" (49), and at that point her name suggests that she "is invisible as air, the heir of nothing, secretly choking with ire" (49). But it also comes to foreshadow the change in her financial status; after all, she inherits a fortune from a relative she did not know. One could go on exploring names in Charlotte Bronte's work. Still a child, Jane meets Miss Temple and Helen Burns, who are both mother figures to her and represent, respectively, "the way of the lady and Helen that of the saint" (391). Miss Temple, as her name

suggests, brings easiness to Jane, while Helen burns in faith and dies burning in fever. Additionally, if toponyms are to be considered in this novel, the most remarkable place for the heroine is Thornfield. It is there that Jane, often seen as a Christ figure, finds a great amount of suffering, it is "where, biblically, she is to be crowned with thorns" (Gilbert and Gubar 50).

Along these lines, the also Victorian Humpty Dumpty lectures Alice on the importance of names. He insists that every name must mean something and explains that his meant his "good handsome shape" (Carroll 250). Because the girl failed at providing the meaning of hers, he states that "with a name like [Alice], [she] might be any shape, almost" (251). This last assertion allows many different interpretations; among them is the idea that if Alice had a different name, she would literally have had a different physical shape. The reader knows that Humpty Dumpty meant the lack of shape as a hurtful remark; it meant also an abominable state that should be avoided since Victorians, of whom this character is a great representative, liked everything to be clear cut and every conduct was classifiable in acceptable or not, and mean "just what [they] choose to mean – neither more or less" (47) - a critique also seen in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest.*

Pen names were very common in Victorian England; it was a strategy used very often to get published and to avoid an unfair evaluation of the literary work based on authorship. As Charlotte Bronte puts it, "critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise" (qtd, in Orel 135). That made her and her sisters adopt male names but keep their initials, hence Charlotte, Emily, and Anne became Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* also wanted to keep something of his original name when he invented his pseudonym to publish his first poem. At that time he presented four options to the editor of *The*

Train, Edmund Yates, Edgar Cuthwellis, Edgar U.C Westhall, Louis Carroll, and Lewis Carroll. Analogously to the Bronte sisters, the first two suggestions were formed by letters from the author's Christian names; but in Charles Lutwidge's case, all of them. The second pair was a variation of his two Christian names translated into Latin and anglicized (Colingwood 30). It is a hint that one should look for authors' names translated in their fiction as well.

Lutwidge's Humpty Dumpty's Platonic concern, that is, the correspondence between name and being, can be already found in prior periods as well as in one of the oldest and most influential books written, the Bible. Both the Old and New Testament have had great bearing in literature at large and in both names are significantly distributed. Michel Ballard singles out four uses of names in the Scriptures (167). One of the uses is to indicate what the birth of the offspring represents to their father. As seen in Genesis, Joseph called his sons Manasseh, "[f]or God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house," and Ephraim, "[f]or God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (New International Version, Gen. 41.51-52). Names also show the circumstance in which name bearers and the one who gave them their names met, to which Moses is a good example: "So he called him Moses saying, 'Because I drew him out of the water' (Exod. 2.10). Ballard observes that it is the same case of *Robinson Crusoe*'s Friday (168). Some names mean a message from God as it was for John the Baptist's father: "and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Luke 1.13). Yet, names establish a relation between the individual and his nature, characteristic or destiny to be fulfilled; it is what can be seen in Jesus, that in Hebrew means savior, as the angel said to Joseph "you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1.20). And it is the same for Abram who was renamed Abraham by God because "[He] has made [him] father of many nations" (Gen. 17.4-5), also to God's will, his wife went from

Sarai (quarrelsome)[5] to Sarah, princess.

Ballard's observations about the function of names in the Bible can be related to literature, as he already pointed out with Daniel Defoe's Friday. In relation to names that reveal features of the owners, he calls attention to texts from Ancient Greek literature. Plato's *Cratylus* already displays a great concern with names and their etymology; he interprets, for instance, the name of the Gods. Dionysus literally translates 'the one that gives the wine'. Plato's text is considered one of the first to look for the true meaning of the words (étumos = true) (Ballard 168).

It is from the Bible that the illiterate Macon Dead II chooses his daughters' names in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. Because he cannot read, the girls are called anything his finger has randomly landed on in the scriptures. That has been done already for the first two daughters, First Corinthians and Magdalena. When it is the third daughter's turn, his blind selection chooses Pilate. However, the midwife does not agree with his choice. Before reading out loud what Macon has copied on a piece of paper, she explains it is a boy's name. Even after she reads it and explains that is "like a Christ-killing Pilate" (19), he insists on the name. His insistence seems to mean more than his sticking to the naming tradition he created in his family; it has become an act of his grievance and one could say his personal vengeance for his wife who died in labor. The names, surnames and nicknames in this novel represent not only agency for some characters, as in the episode just mentioned, but as Dawn Wilburn-Saboe states, a sense of belonging: "Morrison utilizes names to indicate who is and who is not part of the [African-American] community" (46). It is the hatred for his own namesake and nickname that makes Macon Dead III, Milkman, go after his real name, a quest very similar to that of Malcom X, which is finding

[5] According to the website http://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/sarah

his African roots: "Surely, he thought, he and his sister had some ancestor, some lithe young man with onyx skin and legs as straight as cane stalks, who had a name that was real" (Morrison 17). This ancestor might have had "[a] name [that differently from theirs has been] given to him at birth with love and seriousness" (17). For some time, especially in the 60s and 70s, African-Americans ponder upon their heritage and their names.

In "Everyday Use," Alice Walker also writes about this search for African roots many African-Americans underwent in the late 60s. Unlike *Song of Solomon*, Walker's short story does not have characters with biblical names and shows a straightforward criticism towards some of the practices concerning such search, especially the one of adopting African names. Walker's Dee pays her mother and sister a visit after a long time. She is different from what they remember; she now wears traditional African clothes, goes by a new name and has a husband whose name her mother cannot understand properly, Hakim a Barber (Hakim al Baba). She has felt that her former name represented the people who oppressed Black Americans; hence, she wants to be called by an African name, Wangero. However, she ignores that her given name has history and it is in the family for at least three generations before hers. Helga Hoel suggests that "[Dee] is confused and has only superficial knowledge of Africa and all it stands for" (37) and that hers and her husband's names are "Walker's way of mocking people who shred their recent roots to take on foreign names without questions" (39). Unlike her character, the author decided to keep her maiden name, which dates back to the time of slavery, to honor her great-great-great grandmother and its history; she walked from Virginia to Georgia and owes her last name to that walk (*Beauty in Truth)*.

Another character who tries to find himself a more suitable name is Gogol in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake.* Throughout the novel, this Indian-American character negotiates his

subjectivity through his name; such process starts already at a very young age. Having an Indian name would already be an issue in the United States, but things are a little more complicated for Gogol, whose namesake is neither Indian nor American. For the sake of his family's tradition the child's name would be chosen by his great-grandmother, who lives in Calcutta. But the letter with the baby's name does not arrive in the US in time for his birth. His parents were not worried because in India a child can live years without an official name; however, at the hospital the parents were informed they could not leave the place without a birth certificate. Then, the boy's father chooses for him the last name of his favorite author, the Russian Nikolai Gogol.

When the boy becomes old enough for kindergarten, he does not want to go because he was told that there he would be called by a new name, instead of the one he was used to, Gogol. His parents want him to start using his good name, Nikhil. Another tradition among Bengali families concerning names is that "Bengali nomenclature grants, to every single person, two names" (Lahiri 25). For the private sphere they have a pet name, "the name by which one is called, by friends, family, and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments" (Lahiri 26) which is "a reminder, (…) that one is not all things to all people" (26). For the public sphere, there is the good name, "for identification in the outside world" (Lahiri 26). Good names "tend to represent dignified and enlightened qualities", opposed to pet names which "are frequently meaningless, deliberately silly, ironic, even onomatopoetic" (26). It is hard for the boy to understand the Bengali tradition; with "tears springing to his eyes" he wants to know why he has to have a new name because "[h]e is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him" (57).

Nikhil, the name his parents want him to use at school, sounds different coming from the mouth of others; for instance, "the way the principal pronounces his new name is different from

the way his parents say it, the second part of it longer, sounding like "heel" (57). The boy is not sure of what to say when she asks, in English, his name. That makes her doubt he is able to understand English; his father desperate to prove that his son is fully bilingual tells him to speak by calling him by his pet name in front of her. The child attentively listens to the two adults speaking:

> 'What was that?' Mrs. Lapidus says.
>
> 'I beg your pardon, madam?'
>
> 'That name you called him. Something with a *G.*'
>
> 'Oh that, that is what we call him at home only. But his good name should be – is'- he nods his head firmly- 'Nikhil.' (58)

After this episode, the school principal talks to the little boy and there is no doubt his name is going to be Gogol. It is interesting to see the close attention the child paid to the conversation and his moments of agency comes in a daily basis when he brings the drawings he has made at school for his mother to hang on the refrigerator door signed with Gogol G "in the lower right-hand corner, as if there were a need to distinguish him from any other Gogol in the school" (60). G stands for his surname, Ganguli; however, that might be interpreted as an echo of his first day at school. That something with G is what he wants to be called. At least it is what he thinks during the first years of his life. However, when he becomes an adolescent he changes his mind. Before, when he is younger he "recognizes pieces of himself in the road signs: GO LEFT, GO RIGHT, GO SLOW" (66). That might have helped him feel that he belonged in his surroundings. However, the teenage Gogol finds it difficult to relate to his own name as it draws people's attention towards him and makes him feel out of place:

> For by now, he's come to hate questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain. He hates having to tell people that it doesn't mean anything "in Indian." (…) He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. (75-76)

In high school he refuses to read Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" because "he believes, [it] would mean paying tribute to his namesake, accepting it somehow" (92). Gogol is how he is known in school, but to a girl he meets at a party he decides to introduce himself as Nikhil. He and his friends were pretending to be college students, and when Kim asks his name, he decides he does not have to lie about it too: "[h]e remembers the other names that had once been chosen for him, the one that should have been" (96). That is another moment of agency, a new identity he takes and that grants him courage to kiss to his friends amazement. "But he doesn't tell them that it hadn't been Gogol who'd kissed the girl. That Gogol had had nothing to do with it" (96). That gives him assurance to later, when he is going to leave his parents' home to go to college, file for a name change, from Gogol to Nikhil.

For Carine Marques, "naming in *The Namesake* symbolizes the feeling of the hybrid subject who lives between two worlds, an imagined one, and the 'concrete' one which forces the characters to deal with their migrant heritage" (2). Dealing with one's heritage is often problematic for second generation immigrants, as observed in this kind of literature and not differently seen in relation to Lahiri's protagonist. That situation changes only in adulthood when the character is ready to deal with the feeling of hybridity proposed by Marques and changes his name officially from Gogol to Nikhil. The former represented his displacement of having a Russian name that is not in accordance to either his Indian or American identity (Marques 10), whereas the latter bridges the two worlds: "Nikhil, the good name his parents tried to give him

could be shortened to Nick, and therefore would be a Bengali name that could be perfectly translated into an American name" (Marques 10). It seemed the perfect solution for his condition at the time, a solution that finally makes him whole as his name's meaning, "he who is entire, encompassing all" (Lahiri 56). Nevertheless, through his adulthood he is not sure he has made the right choice, especially after hearing from his father that it was Nikolai Gogol's book he had been reading when he suffered a train accident. In the wreckage, the reflection of the flashlight from one of the members of the rescue team on the torn book and on the crumpled page he had on his hand made him visible and enabled him to be saved. The feeling that he may have made a wrong choice is aggravated after his father's death. For many people, like his parents and their Bengali friends who have known him since he was a boy, he will always be Gogol. Another indication that he never quit being Gogol is the fact that not even once has he been referred in a different way by the narrator.

Lahiri's novel serves to demonstrate that very often in immigrant writing the younger generations try to find ways of coming to terms with their heritage, and that one's name is an essential part of this never-ending process. This is one of the issues that will be further discussed in the next section.

1.2. US Immigrant Writing: Names that Cross Borders

In 2006, Interpol produced *A Guide to Names and Naming Practices*, which emphasizes the importance of learning about one's name so as to have a better understanding about its holder. A name "can indicate gender, marital status, birthplace, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and position within a family or even within a society" (Interpol 2), information that may prove

useful in the investigation process. In 2010, the Southern American Regional Organized Crime Information Center displayed a similar concern while releasing *The Law Enforcement Guide to International Names*. Besides agreeing on the sort of information that can be acquired through names, it acknowledges that "America is the land of immigrants, and many jurisdictions contain communities populated with persons from around the world" (Adams 3); thus, the knowledge offered by the guide would help authorities to deal better with crime organizations of foreign origin, whose naming conventions vary tremendously from country to country.

Anthropological studies such as the ones compiled by Barbara Bodenhorn and Gabriele vom Bruck are not interested in how much names can contribute to law enforcement, but rather in how they vary cross culturally and the critical role they play in social life (3). Names are indeed the source of one's identity in terms of the categories highlighted by the Interpol's guide; however, as pointed out by Bodenhorn and vom Bruck, whereas "names may reveal crucial information about gender, kinship, geographical origin, or religion," "[a]t the same time they may also provide the vehicle for crossing boundaries between those very same categories" (4). In contemporary works in English by immigrant writers in the US, such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Maxine Hong Kingston, Richard Rodriguez, Sigrid Nunez, Sandra Cisneros, and Julia Alvarez, the crossing of some of these boundaries can be clearly observed. Even though some are fictional, their works have very strong autobiographical components or present situations very likely to have happened, and thus deserve the attention not only of literary studies, but also of sociological inquiries. *The Namesake*, for instance, was inspired by Jhumpa Lahiri's restlessness about her own name because, in a way, she lived a situation similar to Gogol's. "[Her] pet name inadvertently became [her] good name" ("My name"). She also declared that the two names system has "always fascinated [her]" ("My name"). In another interview, Lahiri explains that

> Jhumpa has no meaning. It always upset me. It's like Jhuma without the P, which refers to the sound of a child's rattle. In this country you'd never name your child Rattle. I actually have two good names. The first is Nilanjana and the other is Sudeshna. My mother couldn't decide. All three are on the birth certificate. I never knew how to write my name. Am I Jhumpa N. S. Lahiri? Am I Jhumpa Nilanjana S. Lahiri? I just never knew. (Lahiri, "Crossing" 19)

As the interviews suggest, there is a lot of herself in Gogol. Lahiri seems to use her character and writing to explore and understand her own experience. Richard Rodriguez is another immigrant author who presents a similar reflection; in "Aria of a Bilingual Childhood," first chapter of his autobiography, one has access to his shift in language and name, which just like in Lahiri's case mark the separation from the world their family's country of origin represents and the United States. Rodriguez's two languages (Spanish/English) and two names (Ricardo/Richard) bring him a sense of belonging, either to the American or Mexican community**.** For him, his two names were like switches to the private and public spheres, because they are part of the worlds that Spanish and English respectively represent. This separation started at school and it is marked by the moment his first teacher calls out his name in English:

> The nun said, in a friendly but oddly impersonal voice, 'Boys and girls, this is Richard Rodriguez.'(I heard her sound out: *Rich-heard Road-ree-guess.*) It was the first time I had heard anyone name me in English. 'Richard,' the nun repeated more slowly, writing my name down in her black leather book. Quickly I turned to see my mother's face dissolve in a watery blur behind the pebbled glass door. (9)

Spanish is his language of affection, while English and his anglicized name sound for him rather

impersonal. The passage symbolizes different moments of linguistic constitution immigrants may experience in their lives. The first undoubtedly is being translated; monolingual America seems to ask that from them, especially in Rodriguez's case, since his childhood was before bilingual education movements took place. His first name is translated to sound more American-like and in a similar fashion his last name is converted to available phonemes in the English speakers' repertoire. It is known that speakers of different languages present difficulties with certain sounds in a foreign language. Nevertheless, this kind of literature shows a certain lack of interest from White Americans in even trying to learn how immigrants' names sound in their native tongue. In this sense, Rodriguez's and Gogol's experiences do not seem dissimilar. The difficult school experience and the name translation is a common feature in the works presented here.

The nun repeating his name slowly may suggest a patronizing attitude that is observed not only towards those who do not speak the language, but also those who look foreign to American eyes. Her writing his name on the leather book invokes the immigrant experience of altering immigrants' names on Ellis Island, which happened more frequently to immigrants other than those of Latin American origin in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Before a series of racial movements that started in the United States in the 1970s, "adopting names that sounded more American might help immigrants speed assimilation, avoid detection, deter discrimination or just be better for the businesses they hoped to start in their new homeland" (Robert n.p). Rodriguez's book not only describes this period but also has a strong assimilationist tone.

The image of the dissolving face on the glass door is one of the passages in Rodriguez's book that show that, for him, assimilating is the only way. At a first look, the author seems to be simply describing a common rite of passage, a mother checking in on her child at the first day of

school and leaving as soon she realizes he is fine. However, the image of the mother, who represents the private sphere – conversely Spanish – dissolves right after his English name is uttered, invoking him to enter a new world: Anglo America. That moment represents a division of his thought world into two parts, that he was never able to inhabit simultaneously and which he never thought he should do.

Differently from what could be observed in *The Namesake*, there is no mediation in Rodriguez's account. His name pronounced in English or Spanish is a constant reminder of which world he is in (20); language becomes a physical place. Whenever his teachers noticed that he was not paying attention in class, their calling out his name had this effect. He, however, considers this separation positive. Outside home he is Richard: "I also needed my teachers to keep my attention from straying in class by calling out, *Rich-heard* – their English voices slowly prying loose my ties to my other name, its three notes, *Ri-car-do"* (20). At home, his three-note name is among the sounds of Spanish that made him feel at ease, sounds of words that meant:

> *I am speaking with ease in Spanish. I am addressing you in words I never use with los gringos. I recognize you as someone special, close, like no one outside. You belong with us. In the family.*
>
> *(Ricardo.)*" (15)

Esperanza, from Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*, like Rodriguez, also has her name changed by the American Other:

> At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name – Magdalena – which is uglier than mine.

> Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. (10)

From this passage we see how much a name is linked to a language, more specifically to its pronunciation. In the mouth of others who do not speak Spanish, her name acquires different sounds, it becomes ugly, it becomes less worthy. It is implied that she is not proud of her Hispanic heritage. Her name is not gold even in her native language, it is silver. However, in English it becomes less worthy, it is tin. It is not clear why she does not like her sister's name. One hypothesis is that Magdalena is not originally a Spanish name, and thus even more foreign, more out of place. Also, one should consider the religiosity taught to Latino children from a very young age, thus the girl may recognize the Biblical reference. Esperanza seems to miss what Rodriguez and her sister have: a name or nickname that brings this feeling of belonging.

The encounter with the Other, the Americans at the expensive Catholic school she attends (53), is marked by names and causes anxiety in the girl to the point of her disliking her namesake and wishing she could have another one: "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do" (11). She does not want to be laughed at, and more than once she resents what she is called, she is afraid of being made fun of once more, like she is at school. She is so used to being mocked because of her name that any time the question 'who are you?' comes up, she desires for her name to be "anything but Esperanza" (15). She is surprised when the two sisters she meets on her new neighborhood do not do the same. Despite the fact that the sister's names are American - Rachel and Lucy - they also have a Mexican heritage. They were born in the US and one of the sisters makes a point of saying so (15). Another Latino to move to Mango Street is Meme Ortiz. "His name isn't really Meme. His name

is Juan" (21). He manages to have everybody call him what he wants, and Esperanza conveys the impression that she envies that.

Esperanza does not have an English name, a pet name or any other she could go by. She is always Esperanza. Another very frequent image presented by immigrant writers is the second generation competent bilingual. Different from their parents, they have access to two thought worlds at a young age. Being fluent in both languages allows Esperanza to explore the two different meanings of her name and choose the one she likes best:

> In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing. (10)

Regina M. Bertz believes that Esperanza's saying first the meaning of her name in English is a way she has to "dismiss her Hispanic ethnicity" (19). As the passage suggests, in *The House on Mango Street* names are associated not only to the idea of belonging to a community, but also of inheritance of a tradition, as Esperanza, for instance, "was [her] great-grandmother's name and now it is [hers]" (10). Still according to Bertz, "[the character's] name is important because it represents tradition; ancestral connections provide the foundation to a person's identity, but the protagonist attempts to reject these connections through her disapproval of the Spanish meaning to her name" (19). The ancestral connections she dismisses have a lot to do with the position occupied by the Latinas. That is a position she refuses for herself: "[she] ha[s] inherited her name, but [she] [doesn't] want to inherit her place by the window" (Cisneros 11). The place she does not want to inherit is that of female submission. Esperanza tells us that she was born in the Chinese year of the horse, like her great-grandmother. Horses are often

associated to the idea of strength, but being "a horse woman" is not to be praised in her culture; she explains it "is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexican, don't like their women strong" (10). Her great-grandmother was said to be a "wild horse woman" who was tamed into a marriage she did not want; the girl's "great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off" (11). What was left for the older Esperanza was to look out the window "her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow" (11). By saying that, the girl denounces the lack of opportunities for women in her environment. It is very significant that she, unlike her sister, is not nicknamed. She is always Esperanza in English; she is the hope for mobility of many generations of women that came before her, she is her only hope for moving out of the community.

Adriane Ferreira Veras points out that the character "has the additional burden of having a name charged with meaning" (233). For her, "Esperanza's name becomes then a sign of a hybrid cultural context which she needs to mitigate among opposing cultural meanings to come to terms with her own identity (self)" (233). *The House on Mango Street* covers only one, though significant, year in Esperanza's life; we do not know whether in adulthood she is going to be able to change her name the way Gogol did. That was the way the Indian-American found to come to terms with his hyphenated identity. As for the Mexican-American, the novel does not indicate a future name change as she desires in the beginning. Instead, it closes by pointing to the girl's possibility of undergoing such process (her hope, not Esperanza) through storytelling and writing. She fantasizes and writes down the story of the girl who did not belong to the barrio, that one day will pack her bags and say goodbye to Mango Street, but who will come back "for the ones [she] left behind. For the ones who cannot out" (Cisneros 110). Although attentive to her

first name, she does not seem to notice she will also have to fight her expressive surname, Cordero. She cannot be like a lamb provided she wants to remain in the position she hates to be, like "a red balloon tied to an anchor" (9).

A last name, more precisely the lack of one, calls the attention of the twelve-year old girl. The novel raises awareness of the conditions of illegal immigrants. It bothers Esperanza that one of her neighbors, Marin, knows so little about a man she met in one dance: "Geraldo. That's all" (65). That was how he introduced himself. He is killed in a hit-and-run. But why should people bother to look for more information about him? He was just "another *brazer*," "another wet-back" who, like so many, works hard to send money back home. Geraldo has no last name, also like so many, he is an undocumented worker "who [does not] speak English" (66). Maybe there was a time he introduced himself to the ladies at the dances with a last name. Maybe he, like Saramagos's José, realized his poor family name is insignificant and would take him nowhere (Saramago 9). It also suggests that differently from the people in Mango Street, he did not want to establish bonds in the US and wanted to go back to Mexico after having provided for "[t]he ones he left behind[and who] are far away" (66).

Unlike Mexican customs or as in many Western cultures, the tradition of naming a child after a relative does not exist for Bengalis because for them names are an expression of singularity: "[t]his sign of respect in America and Europe, this symbol of heritage and lineage, would be ridiculed in India" (Lahiri 28). *The Namesake* teaches us that "[w]ithin Bengali families, individual names are sacred, inviolable. They are not meant to be inherited or shared" (28). That does not mean that Indians do not suffer from a series of expectations. In addition to the already mentioned duality of private and public, represented respectively by their pet and good names, names seem to regulate gender roles in that society. When Gogol's mother, Ashima,

is in labor she does not call out her husband's name for help, because saying out loud their husbands' name is "not the type of thing Bengali wives do" (2). Alternatively, "she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as 'Are you listening to me?'" (2) Not even when she thinks of her husband she thinks of his first name (2). All the time they have been married, "she has never once uttered [his name] in his presence" (165). After his death it continues to be a taboo, while explaining to friends the details preceding his fatal heart attack she refers to him as *he:* "'I know why *he* went to Cleveland,' she tells people, refusing, even in death, to utter her husband's name. '*He* was teaching me how to live alone'" (my italics, 183).

Something very similar seems to take place among Chinese people, added to the taboo between male and female, there is the generation gap. In *Woman Warrior*: *Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston describes a school experience Rodriguez and Esperanza did not go through. A boy is laughed at because he failed at providing his father's name in a form they were filling in. Their teacher was not patient, she did not know how Chinese families work: "The teacher sighed, exasperated, and was very sarcastic, 'Don' t you notice things? What does your mother call him?' she said. The class laughed at how dumb he was not to notice things. 'She calls him father of me,' he said" (177). Immigrant writers very often describe the lack of solidarity of those that have successfully assimilated or at least have more awareness about the American culture. They either seem to have forgotten their origins or want to belong with Americans by making fun of the different ones. Kingston and her sister "laughed, although [they] knew that his mother did not call his father by name, and a son does not know his father' s name. [They] laughed and were relieved that [their] parents had had the foresight to tell [them] some names [they] could give the teachers" (177).

Also at school she turns into an Other a little girl as Chinese as herself. Among the

reasons she dislikes this girl are the fact that she is "the quiet one" and "her China doll haircut" (34); the girl is a Chinese female epitome. She is the younger sister of one of the narrator's sixth grade classmates. One day she finds herself alone with the girl in the bathroom and decides do to some dubious good to her, she decides she is going to make the girl talk:

> Say 'Hi,' I said. 'Hi.' Like that. Say your name. Go ahead. Say it. Or are you stupid? You're so stupid, you don't know your own name, is that it? When I say, 'What' s your name?' you just blurt it out, o.k.? 'What's your name?' (177)

She gives up on having her say her name. She starts pinching the girl and pulling her hair, hoping she would say anything, hoping she would break the Chinese female silence. She starts suffering the pain she is inflicting upon the little girl, blaming her for her actions, which can be interpreted as Chinese women not standing up for themselves. She wants to believe she is doing that to help the little girl and says it out loud. Actually, she inflicts upon the girl more than physical pain but the psychological pain she has had for having to be from an Asian family in the US.

> You don' t see I'm trying to help you out, do you? Do you want to be like this, dumb (do you know what dumb means?), your whole life? Don' t you ever want to be a cheerleader? Or a pompon girl? What are you going to do for a living? Yeah, you're going to have to work because you can' t be a housewife. Somebody has to marry you before you can be a housewife. And you, you are a plant. Do you know that? That's all you are if you don't talk. If you don't talk, you can't have a personality. (180)

Morris Young sees three purposes in Kingston's torture of the girl. First, it makes the girl "enter her into the public discourse of culture" by declaring who she is. Secondly, it "reif[ies] the differences between herself and the girl" (108). For Young, Kingston's "knowledge, for example, about why children do not know their fathers' names, gives her an authority over the

girl since she can claim she is somehow more American by knowing her father's name even though it is an alias provided by her mother to appease Western expectations". Thirdly, the torture "is symbolic of the torture both of them experience as being constructed as less than American" (108).

She wants to be like the American girls, who talk. Another way she states her superiority over the little girl is by the extent of her vocabulary. She can reach to double entendre of the words in English (e.g. dumb) that native speakers take for granted. It bothers her that the girl is silent exactly the way she was in her first year in kindergarten because she had to speak English. Because Kingston is older than the girl she is able to compare what silence means in each of the two cultures and provide a double entendre for the word dumb. Her understanding of dumb equates silence and stupidity. Silence is appreciated in her parents' culture, women are supposed to be quiet thus submissive to be liable for good marriages. Asian women, even more than man, are thought to hold feelings and opinions for themselves. Silence is understood as stupidity in America, a sign you have nothing to say. If in her parents' culture she was not supposed to be noticed, in the US she learns she has to speak up and being noticed is desirable. Only this way she could become a cheerleader, draw attention of men and get married. Otherwise she would have to be taken care of by her parents for the rest of her life. All she wants from the little girl is that she says something, to have a personality, therefore utter her own name.

Yet another Asian and taciturn character to go to through name and identity modifications is Sigrid Nunez's Chang. In *A Feather on the Breath of God,* the unnamed protagonist, who shares with the author the same rich background, a German mother and a Chinese-Panamanian father is actually not worried about her own namesake, but about her father's. His daughters have been raised to speak English only and not the languages of their

immigrant parents. That is one of the reasons the family does not communicate well; the mother managed to become proficient in English, she praised herself for speaking better than the other women in the projects in which they lived (33), but Chang could never do the same. His daughter complains: “It is only a slight exaggeration to say that we had no language in common” (4). She believes that he did not learn the language on purpose. His family interpreted his silence as a “cultural thing”: “Taciturnity: they say that is an Oriental trait” (5). Even if that is part of his personality she would like to believe that there was a time he spoke in Chinese. The lack of a common language prevented them from speaking to one another. She was able to learn “unbearably few facts” about him (5). As far as she can tell, he was born in Panama but spent most of his childhood in China with his father’s second family, to later to return to Panama at the age of ten and immigrate illegally to the US with his uncle, when he was about twelve. During World War II, he joined the American army and that was how he became an American citizen and met his German wife. The most interesting facts are the ones related to his name.

In the school he attended in the US, Chang had a different name. Chang’s daughter finds at their house an old school notebook of his that proves it. On its cover he had written “Charles Cipriano Chang” which, according to her, “was neither [her] father’s first nor his last name” (7). She did not recognize the middle name either and found it

> [h]ard to believe that [her] father spent his boyhood in Shangai being called Carlos, a name he could not even pronounce with the proper Spanish accent. So he must have had a Chinese name as well. And although our family never knew this name, perhaps among Chinese people he used it. (7-8)

Similarly to Rodriguez, he gained a more American name at school. Nevertheless he suffered

more transitions. Before Charles, he went from the Panamanian Carlos he could not say properly, to an unknown Chinese name. He got his citizenship in World War II and surprisingly changed his name back to Carlos. Also, "he dropped his father's family name and took his mother's" (8). That is one of the many things she could not understand about her father. In her words, "Why a man who thought of himself as Chinese, who had always lived among Chinese, who spoke little Spanish, and who had barely known his mother would have made such a decision in the middle of his life" (8). Since they did not talk much, her mother was the one to provide the explanations. For the mother, this name change was the way he found to have a link with his Panamanian brother who was the family he had left at the time. Taking one's mother's name is "in keeping with Spanish cultural tradition" (8). Her mother also suggests that he "thought he would get along better in this country with a Spanish name" (8), which also made no sense to his daughter: "He'd been a Chinatown Chang for twenty years. Now all of a sudden he wished to pass for Hispanic?" (8)

There are two other hypotheses for his disposing of his Chinese name. The first, it might have been the citizenship officer's fault; it seems "plausible, given that immigration restrictions for Chinese were still in effect at that time" (8). If that was the case, nobody can blame Carlos for trying to maximize his chances. Did not Jews become Christians and adopt new surnames to escape from the Holocaust? In literature, Homer's Odysseus's is probably the smartest tale of name change; he ingeniously tells the Cyclops people know him by Noman, which caused the creature's peers to ignore his cry for help when he said no man was hurting him. Therefore, getting a new identity is sometimes a survival strategy.

The second hypothesis, which the narrator thinks is more likely to have happened, the mother blames Chang for not being able to communicate well in English and not being able to

fix the possible misunderstanding between him and the official (8). She wonders what her life would have been like had her father kept his last name; what she surely knows is "that having a Spanish name brought much confusion into [her] father' s life" (9). In the end of his life, his Hispanic name drove a priest to his deathbed: "No one had sent for him. He had doubtless assumed from the name that this patient was Hispanic and Catholic, and had taken it upon himself to administer Extreme Unction" (25). His family did not know what to do, they did not stop the priest and were surprised when Chang who has never been a religious person went along with it "feebly crossing himself" (25).

An eponym is a name or noun that derived from a person's name. The literature shows that in the US some common immigrant names started being used instead of nationalities as eponymous adjectives. In Nunez work, this sort of stereotyping is not done solely by white Americans. Chang is one of those common names for Chinese, Carlos's daughter "read somewhere that there were seven million Changs in the world" (179). In a section entitled "How common is your last name?", the PBS website offers an embedded engine search in which one can look for the ranking of their name in the American census. Chang is less frequent than the Spanish Rodriguez. It ranked 687th in the 1990 census and 424th in 2000, while its counterpart ranked 22nd in the older census and the 9th position in the more recent one. It is then a fallacy to call every Chinese person a Chang. I am not suggesting that because Rodriguez is a very common surname in the US, Latinos should be given this nickname.

Following this dangerous association it seems logical that she would find another Chang in her school. In fact there was one: "Joey Chang, one of the very few Asians in [her] grade school" (Nunez 179). She does not remember exactly telling him about her father, but his parents called her to invite her family to a barbecue (179). The visit did not go as planned by the

Chinese-American family because Chang's children and wife were not Chinese at all. The narrator feels they disappointed the Changs : "We did not return the Changs' invitation, and they did not invite us to their house again" (180). In her mind "[she] could imagine Joey's parents saying to him after [they] left: 'They aren't really Chinese!'" (180) The very immigrants contribute to stereotyping. The passage describes their search for their equals, someone who shares a language, a culture, a name. Conversely, Nunez's narrator, from a second generation and a family who never cared for maintaining tradition, has been angry at her father for most of her life for his epitomizing the silent withdrawn Chinaman (22).

This section has dealt with what is commonly called ethnic literature. That is a definition that should not be used to belittle these works or set them apart in a place of exoticism, but it is not harmful if you think of the ideas they explore and which bring them together. To Alleen and Don Nilsen, the recurrently ethnic related-themes explored in this kind of literature are: "developing pride in their heritage and ethnicity; feeling disadvantaged because of their ethnicity; resenting labels applied to them from outside of their own group; facing challenges in crossing social barriers between ethnic groups; having attitudes different from their parents' ideas about assimilating into mainstream culture" (103).

Those are ideas that the characters discussed here manifested, and which are going to be seen also in Alvarez's works. Gogol is a character who became proud of his roots; in their own way all characters worried about what Americans thought of them; Gogol and Rodriguez are the ones seen more clearly crossing between the two worlds; all of them seem to disagree with their parents on what should be kept from their heritage. When the issue is assimilation, they all seem to think, in different degrees, it is the way.

I have also tried to show that character's names reflect issues of gender, class, nationality and acculturation or assimilation, sometimes also lived by their authors, who had their names modified, if not in the way it is written in their immigration papers, at least in the way it is pronounced. Pronunciation and sounds are prominent aspects, and therefore cannot be ignored. Although characters' names often help in their characterization, their physical features are not defined in a strict sense or change because of naming practices, as suggested by Humpty Dumpty. Instead, it has more to do with their subjectivity, with how they see themselves and how they are seen by others.

In Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* and *¡Yo!*, the relation characters have with their namesakes is not always as explicit as in Lahiri's work. There are no strict rules in Latin America concerning pet names or good names, but we will see that, in immigration, some names are considered better than others. Thus, a reading of Alvarez's two works with a focus on the names of her characters will show not only mastery in the craft, but also the variety of functions these names have, comprising almost all functions mentioned so far and in some ways an analogous experience to the immigrant writers and characters cited, and, in other ways, a dissimilar and unique experience.

1.3. Hoo-lee-ah! Who?!

As discussed in the previous sections, authors' names may also be a text to be read. This time I do not mean the contemporary authors who write for a young adult readership that Alleen and Don Nilsen mention; neither am I talking about women writers who had to use male names to get published, nor about Willa Carter, Paul Auster or J. M. Coetzee, who have left traces of their names in their narratives. Julia Alvarez's name did not have to be abbreviated or changed to

a male one to be accepted by a readership, but there are some traces of her name – or should I say her own experience about her name - and her family's name being changed in the two works I analyze. An account of Alvarez's immigration and name changes can be read in her "Names/Nombres". She informs us that "[w]hen they arrived in New York, [their] names changed almost immediately" (89). At the immigration services at the airport, her father became Mister Elbures. The little Julia feared that correcting the officer could mean not being allowed into the country; but, to herself she said, "trilling [her] tongue for the drum roll of there, All-vah-rrr-es!" (89). As seen with Richard Rodriguez, the musicality of Spanish resides in her name.

At the hotel, her mother was Missus Alburest and in their apartment building the superintendent called Mr. Alvarez, Mister Alberase. The author's first name also underwent many changes. She went from Hoo-lee-ah, the way she was known by only Papi, Mami, her uncles and aunts, to Jew-lee-ah, the way the neighbors called her. Here, the change is less drastic than Rodriguez's Ricardo/Richard, but the different ways to pronounce her name likewise mark the difference between public and private spheres. At school, she was Judy or Judith. Her name was even once mistaken by Juliet by a teacher. Her mother would quote her 'friend' Shakespeare: 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet' when telling her she should not correct her "new friends and teachers" (89). In high school, her friends had new names for her: Jules, Hey Jude and the "troublemaking friends [her] mother forbade [her] to hang out with called [her] Alcatraz" (89). Throughout her school life, her "initial desire to be known by [her] correct Dominican name faded" (90). It was alright for her to be Judy as long as she blended in with the "Sallys and Janes in [her] class" (90); similarly her character Lucinda strongly wanted to be among "the Sarahs and the Betsys and Carolines" (*¡Yo!* 40).

Alvarez's accent and skin color would not fool the other kids and they soon would ask

about her origins. They also would have fun hearing her say her full name in Spanish, which comprises, “according to Dominican custom”, her “Mother’s and Father’s surnames for four generations back” (91): “Julia Altagracia María Teresa Álvarez Tavares Perello Espaillat Julia Pérez Rochet González” (92). And their mouths would drop to all that.

Each of her sisters had a distinguished experience. Ana, the author’s younger sister, had her name easily translated to English, without variations she “was plain Anne” (91), a pun intended by the writer with the expression plain Jane; however, she is being ironic because Alvarez’s sister had nothing plain about her:

> she turned out to be the pale, blond ‘American beauty’ in the family. The only Hispanic thing about her was the affectionate nicknames her boyfriends sometimes gave her Anita, or, as one goofy guy used to sing to her to the tune of the banana advertisement, Anita Banana. (91)

In the late sixties United States, there was a trend of pronouncing Third World names correctly among university students, and Ana got her Dominican name back. Alvarez remembers being corrected once when she called her little sister in college. When she asked for Ana, a hesitating voice answered: “Oh! You must mean Ah-nah!” (91).

Their older sister is said to have had the most difficult time because “Mauricia did not translate into English” (90). Ironically she, whose name sounded the most foreign, and Alvarez, opposed to Ana, were born in the United States. She’s been called Maria, Marsha, Maudy and Maury. The author felt sorry for her sister because hers is “an awful name to have to transport across borders” (90). That represents also the cultural border that Latinos in the United States belong to – a border that among other aspects is notably made by language; the border in which

she places her bicultural characters.

The Dominican-American writer also explains her name in the website Teachingbooks.net, in a section dedicated to teaching the pronunciation of presumably difficult authors' names. In about one minute recordings they share some story about their namesake, revealing some cultural or historical background. Alvarez echoes her essay and adds some interesting details. She starts by introducing herself with the American version of her name, Jew-lee-ah AHL-vah-rehz, adding that "until [she] was ten and came to the United States [her] name was Hoo-lee-ah All-vah-rrr-es". She also echoes the explanation about her official name in carrying all last names of four generations in legal documents. But, most importantly, she adds that people sometimes ask her whether she "got insulted that in the US she became Jew-lee-ah All-vah-res", a reduction to the four generations she carries in her legal documents, to which she answers, in a way that reminds us of Cisneros's Esperanza, that "it was a relief not carry so many names around," probably feeling she had dropped the burden of many generations. And, at the same time, she makes us recollect Lahiri's Nikhil when she adds that "since [she] is Dominican-American, half and half, it is always nice to have it both always, [her] short American name pronounced the Spanish way Hoo-lee-ah All-vah-rrr-es".

In more recent years, in an interview to the Vermont Public Radio, when asked how she pronounces her first name, the author explains that "[She is] an immigrant so [she] got used to many ways to pronounce [her] name when [she] came to [the United States]. She is Jew-lee-ah and Hoo-lee-ah and a lot of things in between". She says she "understands that the pronunciation in English is Jew-lee-ah" and she poignantly remarks that if [one] call[s] [her] Hoo-lee-ah, [she] might even answer in Spanish." She immediately warns: "so be careful!" (Alvarez, "Julia"). This last comment reinforces the idea that the way her name is pronounced may trigger some

change in her behavior, something that can be seen also happening with her characters.

I failed to notice that Alvarez very likely lost the orthographical accent. Once a professor from the Spanish department gave me back a paper about Alvarez that I had written in Portuguese all marked. She personally told me: 'Alvarez should have an accent!' She meant the orthographical sign that marks the stress in the first syllable, but the accent present in her novels and poetry is quite another - the flavor of her Dominican Spanish in her English. The mark indicating stress seems to have been long lost; in none of her books it is signaled, nor in her official website, not even on the cover of the Spanish editions of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*. Notwithstanding, the accent can be found on the paperback Spanish edition of *¡Yo!*, translated by Dolores Prida, but only on the page that brings the title of the novel and the translator's name. A typo? A diacritic mark someone intentionally added? It seems Spanish speakers and scholars want to bring the accent back. Even when they write about the author in English they feel it is missing. It is so true that Juan Pablo Rivera feels the need to explain why he writes Alvarez without an accent by adding a note to his article "Language Allergy: Seduction and Second Languages in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*":

> I write "Alvarez" without an accent because this is how the author spells her name, and how it appears in most of the critical bibliography (in Spanish and English) about her oeuvre. As in the case of Richard Rodriguez's surname, the loss of an accent may be read as a symptom of grammatical acculturation, but, we may ask, with names like "Alvarez" and "Rodriguez" in the United States, is the accent really needed to mark the author's difference? (133)

What about the accent on the protagonist family's surname, was it necessary? As shown

in the introduction, many critics have developed an interest in the title of both novels and proved that the names that are part of them are important to the reading of both works. In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, it signals the importance of language to this work (López Ponz). David Mitchell affirms that "[t]he careful positioning of the verb 'lost' at the heart of the novel's title promises a document that will ferret out the moment or moments of cultural extinction/assimilation for the title characters" (166). Other critics seem to read the title differently; Barak and Suárez think that the name García itself presents the impossibility of fully assimilating or fleeing from their first tongue. In *¡Yo!*, the book that is expected to be "a literal telling of the 'I' [or self]" (Suárez 136), because the *yo* means both I and ego in Spanish, is actually a collection of stories that others - not the García girl nicknamed Yo - have to tell. However, there is no paradox if one thinks of that as the author's strategy to draw attention to the dialectal process by which identity is constructed. As Carine Marodossian states, "[i]n thus circling a central character we never hear from directly, the novel offers a portrait of the self as constructed within a countless number of interlocking identities" (126). It tells us how much of them there is in Yolanda and how much of Yolanda there is in them in almost any page you open it, as mentioned in the introduction. That is because "[i]dentity is thus reconfigured as an intersubjective and collective process insofar as the constitution of the self occurs in its reflection through others rather than in opposition to them" (Marodossian 126).

Critics very often affirm that "it is through Yo[landa García] that Julia Alvarez expresses herself" (Goldblatt 130). In 1990, unlike García, the author's surname was not featured in a list of the twenty most common names in the US (while the former was 220th, the latter was the 18th most common last name reported by the American census). The patronymic became more common in 2000 (8th), and in 2013, you can see people complaining that despite the general

assumption "not all Latinos have the last name GARCIA," as seen in a picture in Appendix B. The picture is part of a series by a student from Fordham University in New York who identifies herself on her blog, Nortonism, as just Kyiun. She asked friends from the same institution to "write down an instance of racial microaggression they have faced on a poster for [her] to take a picture of them" (Nortonism). The term Microaggression was coined by the psychiatrist Chester Pierce in 1970 (*Microaggression* 5) and expanded by Derald Sue as Racial Microaggresions, which are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards a person or group" (*Racial* 237). As we will see, microaggression is a term that describes well what the fictional García family has to go through in the US. What is surprising, however, is that one of Kyiun's pictures shows a male student, Jaime Rodriguez, considering being called García a microaggression. He wrote that "[w]hen [he] gave a speech about racism, the emcee introduced [him] as 'Jaime Garcia'. [His] name is Jaime Rodriguez, not all Latinos have the last name GARCIA." Has the success of Alvarez's novel contributed to such assumption? Or was that something that she, like the student, had to hear? By choosing a more common Latino name than hers for her characters, which like her own is frequently written without the diacritic, is the author suggesting hers and Yolanda García's experience is more common than one thinks? What about the sonority found in both her American name (Jew-lee-ah) that was transmitted also in Yolanda's name and which is to blame for her American nickname Joe?

It seems that, in addition to the many autobiographical elements in both novels, the protagonist's name is indeed, like in Lahri's case, another way to explore and understand her experience. It can certainly be said that having her name and her family's changed so many times

made the writer grow more observant of this issue. Conversely, it is not uncommon to find in many of her works some episode or character's name that will make readers either laugh at or spare a thought about the name they have just read. A more detailed study on the topic could be the focus of a future research. So far the only one of her books that has been analyzed using an approach based on names is *Saving the World* (see April Marshall's "'Onomastic Emphasis' in Julia Alvarez's *Saving the World*").

Marshall's article aims at proving that names are a device employed to join the two narratives presented in the novel. In order to do so, she establishes connections mostly between the two protagonists, Alma Huebner and Isabel Sendales y Gomez. The former is a writer in a writer's block who finds in writing the latter's story, the nun who helped in the expedition which took the smallpox vaccine to the Dominican Republic in the nineteenth century a solution for her problem. One possible association pointed out by Marshall is the similarity to one of Isabel's family names to *senda* which translates into path. Isabel's story shows "a path to faith and grace for Alma, which is ironic because Alma's own name reveals what she lacks, a sort of reverse 'onomastic emphasis'" (233). Another way the two women are connected is by the fact that they both experience name changes, a constant theme in Alvarez's fiction. Isabel's last name changes many times throughout her journey; Alma has to adopt a pen name so as not to "shame or endanger her family who had escaped to America from a dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, she had agreed not to use 'their' name and adopted a pseudonym" (Marshall 232).

Other works that show Alvarez's concern about names are *In the Time of Butterflies*, *In the Name of Salomé*, and *Before We Were Free.* Because the protagonists are historical figures, the Mirabal sisters, Alvarez could play only with the secondary characters' names in *In the Time of Butterflies.* In the prison to which three of the main characters are sent, Magdalena is the name

of their cell mate whose past is unknown and may be dubious; Milady is the one who is often nice to one of the sisters, Maria Teresa. The latter explains that the guards are nicknamed according to "some feature of their body or personality that lets you know instantly what to expect from them. Bloody Juan, Little Razor, Good Hair" (231). The one who brings the prisoners presents is Santicló, "after the big, jolly American 'saint' who brings gifts even to those who don't believe in Jesus or the three Kings" (247); and, there is one that Maria Teresa cannot understand, Tiny since "[t]he man is as big as a piece of furniture you have to move in a truck. Tiny what? " (231). One can always expect a naive character in Alvarez's book on which she relies most of the comic relief, thus, in this novel that one is certainly Maria Teresa. Maybe more naive is the old countryman Minerva Mirabal meets at the National Office of Missing persons. He "gave all thirteen sons the same name to try to outwit the regime. Whichever son is caught can swear he isn't the brother they want" (107).

While reading *In the Name of Salomé* one can see the complex ways in which a mother and a daughter are connected by the name they share. Alvarez's fictional poet Salomé Ureña "did not want [her] daughter to carry [her] name" but to have her own and "be borne up and away from the life she was closing down around [her]" (299). However, she gives in to one of her sons' suggestion for his sister's name. Her daughter, Salomé Camila does not think she is worthy of her mother's name and only when she acquires a stronger sense of her identity that she embraces what she has inherited; that is seen in the last scene of the novel when the blind Camila teaches a boy his first letters using the letters of her future tombstone in which is written her full name (357). In this same novel we can also read an interesting passage that suggests names have the power over their beholders. Trying to explain the indigenous look of one of their younger brothers, one of Camila's siblings develops a theory that "the Taíno name that [their father] once

used as a pseudonym and then gave to his newborn son, Cotubanamá, has worked like the Creator's Word in Genesis and made the boy into a likeness of his native name" (290).

Names also help Alvarez to create what Jessica Wells Cantiello calls "serial readers" (87). The ones who enjoyed her first novel are very likely to buy its sequel looking forward to seeing what happened to the García Girls and immediately recognize Yolanda's nickname on the cover. Many names Alvarez's with which serial readers are already familiar make appearances in her later book for young readers *Before We Were Free*. The García girls have a mild participation since the book's protagonist this time is their cousin, Anita de la Torre. Her name has been taken to be a reference to Anne Frank (Blauman 176). The twelve-year-old girl also writes a diary telling the horror of the persecution she and her family suffer from a totalitarian regime. The Dominican girl had a better fate than her German peer. She manages to flee with her family to the United States and there she becomes, in her new school, Annie Torres (145). On the nature of the serialized readership Alvarez develops, Cantiello explains:

> [i]t might be unusual for an adult reader of Alvarez to follow her to the young adult shelves, but it would be more common, maybe even expected, that a young adult reader consumed by Anita's story would want to find out what happened to her cousins, with whom she reunites briefly at the end of the book. By writing a prequel (or really a parallel text) to García Girls for young adults, Alvarez cultivates a serial readership that will, by default, read her work intertextually. The versioning, therefore, becomes a way to communicate with her serial readers. (87)

At the same time continuity engages readership, Cantiello argues that the author's versioning poses a challenge to the serial readers who question the "inconsistencies" (96) and have "the

impulse to correct the versions" because facts are told in a slightly different manner in all three books. Cantiello does not mention that, in addition to the facts, there is an important name change in the latest book. One can say for sure that the reference to Anne Frank was intentional because the García girls' relations on their mother's side, the de la Torre family, contrary to their father's, is well developed. The reader of both *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*, instead of Anita, expected to find Carmencita, the 'true' García girls' cousin, Sofía García's childhood playmate (*How* 225) and Lucinda's and Mundín's younger sister (Appendix A).

Although my analysis of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!* probes into the effects proper names have inside and outside the text, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at some toponyms, especially after the Dominican Giovanni Di Pietro's review on Alvarez's autobiographical *Something to Declare.* The chapter "In the Name of the Novel" tells us one of the research trips the author takes to find inspiration for a new book. She goes after the story of the Virgin of Necedah, a city in Wisconsin whose name was given by the Winebago Indians which means yellow waters (Alvarez, *Something* 229). According to Di Pietro, the town's name sounds extremely similar to the Spanish word *necedad* (stupidity or foolishness in Spanish), especially when spoken by somebody from the Dominican Republic's capital, Santo Domingo, as they delete the final consonant sounds. Still according to him, Julia Alvarez finds a phony cult there, *necio* (foolish). But I think he goes too far saying that the inclusion of this chapter could be interpreted as the author's to come to terms with her religiosity, that is, going back to the Catholic Church. His interpretation is not only a misreading of the chapter, but also a common thought from a colonial past that insists on the superiority of the European religion and on the denial of the other spiritual beliefs that are part of Alvarez's and his own Dominican background.

What is seen in Alvarez's novel is actually plurality, as stated by Kelli Lyon Johnson: "[t]he mestizaje of spirituality emerges in Alvarez's narrative space as she depicts not only the Catholicism of the Spanish but also the Santería and vodou as they are practiced on the island" (*Writing* 133).

Despite sounding farfetched, Di Pietro's text made me pay attention to the way characters refer to the city of New York and to the Dominican Republic. The variants Nueva York/New York are not always interchangeable in Alvarez's selected works. Nueva York, for instance, is not simply the Spanish name for the American biggest city. It represents the land of opportunities and dreams on the mouths and in the minds of the poor people on the island. As observed by María Cristina Rodríguez, "[e]xcept for Chucha, who like so many maids in the Dominican Republic are a fixture in the Patrono's house, the women dream of one day going to New York and seeing with their own eyes the places the patrono's children talk about" (4). It is in one of the many songs sung by Gladys, one of the many maids the Garcías had back in the Dominican Republic:

> Yo tiro la cuchara,
>
> Yo tiro el tenedor
>
> Yo tiro to'lo' plato'
>
> Y me voy pa' Nueva Yor' (*How* 257)

The song describes her wish to break free from the silverware and kitchen utensils she has to tend (spoon, fork, and plate), which represent her place of servitude on that household and which she dreams of throwing away to go to the US, as suggested by David T. Mitchell (*Immigration*

34). Primitiva is another maid that "[f]or years, (…) had been saying that she wanted to go to Nueva York" (*¡Yo!* 56), given the opportunity she "work[s] so hard to give [her daughter] all the opportunities she never had" (56). Her wish to find "a place away from the exploitative world of the Dominican caste system" (Mitchell, 34) is so strong that whenever any of her *patrons* traveled she offered to help packing so that she could "sprinkle in [their luggage] a special powder made of her ground fingernails and bits of her hair and some other elementos the santera had charged her twenty pesos to prepare" (*¡Yo!* 54), to increase her chances of one day going to the city. But she is not set free in Nueva York; she goes from the de la Torre's house in the Dominican Republic to the García's apartment in the United States.

Nueva York is also the New York of those who have not assimilated yet. It is also a political decision for people like Carlos García, who never desired to cut the ties with the Dominican Republic. Maintaining the Spanish version shows that his view of the United States has not changed, it is the land of his exile but it will never be his home. Even when he sees the turmoil in the Dominican Republic is not going to cease any soon and decides to stay, it is to become "*un dominican-york*" (*How* 107), maybe like a Nuyorican poet whose use of Spanish in English is intentional. Carlos's broken English may be interpreted as a mix of inability and willfulness; after all he is an exile of the regime the United States helped to ascend.

In both novels, very rarely do Dominicans refer to their own country by its name. 'The Island' is the way they mostly call it. But such metonymy for the island of Hispaniola, which is formed by their country and Haiti, might be indicative of two problematic ideas. First, it shows the complex relation between the two countries and the myth of White Dominican superiority. Second, it shows how Caribbeans feel in relation to the continental America, a feeling of littleness and isolation caused by their colonial past. I am not saying that the country's name

does not appear in the works, but it is often uttered by Americans, who like the Dominican-Americans, also call it “the D.R,” “ a country where everyone wasn’t guaranteed life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (*¡Yo!* 37). The use of just the initials may also represent a belittling of the country where democracy makes no sense. In two distinct moments the author’s alter ego has difficulties around its meaning. To a *campesino* who comes to work in the house where the main protagonist is staying during the summer, she “painstakingly (…) explained what that was” (*¡Yo!* 249); to an American ex-boyfriend she claimed that the word does not mean the same thing as there (190). That is reinforced by another way they refer to the island: ‘old country’ (*How* 34). It is indeed the country they lived before and not the new one they are living now. But it also suggests old ideas/ideals.

Having made a digression about toponyms, I guess I could mention also the animals that figure in Alvarez’s first novel (in the second, although one of the characters is nicknamed bird in Spanish, there are no significant animals). Three are the named animals in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*: Yolanda’s grandmother’s Canary, a dog from a hunter Yolanda meets, and a kitten she seizes from a mother cat. The author’s bestiary and the violence committed against it are a stand-in for the violence suffered by the family during Trujillo’s dictatorship. Like Felicidad, the canary is how Yolanda “imagines herself in a jail cell” (200) if taken by the SIM, Trujillo’s secret police. She imagines further “[t]he guards would poke in rifles the way Yoyo pokes with sticks when no one in the big house is looking” (200). Under a dictatorship state there is no Felicidad (happiness). Schwarz is the kitten named by Yolanda after the instrument of its imprisonment and torture, a drum. Yolanda is young and not very good with words yet, but uses the drum her grandmother brought for her from the American toy store F.A.O. Schwarz to try to communicate. Yolanda also uses the hollow of it to put the baby cat. It is also the instrument for

silencing the kitten; whenever it meows, revealing its presence, Yo hits the drum with her hand (287). It seems the girl is reproducing her surroundings without noticing.

Kashtanka is the dog which found Schwarz in Yolanda's drum. She asks its owner if it was okay to pet a kitten. Paradoxically the man answers that while still a suckling, it should not be taken away from its mother; "[t]o take it away would be a violation of its natural right to live" (285). The little Yolanda can see the hypocrisy in what he is doing: "Hunting! Some of the birds he was aiming at this very moment were mothers with worms for their babies. I did not know at the time the word for saying one thing and doing another" (286). Kashtanka is also the name of the abused female dog in the homonymous story by Anton Tchekhov that Alvarez might have read. Direct and indirect references to other authors' works, as well as famous authors' name dropping, are very common in her works, particularly in her first novel. She may want to give a hint of her influences and show how much she has read. An explanation for that may be found in *¡Yo!*; a student of her alter ego Yolanda had difficulties to following the conversation he had with her at her office because "[i]t was wild talking to her (…) [e]verything he said, she tied into something she'd read" (172). Silvio Sirias confirms that "Alvarez is a remarkably well-read person" whose readings have influenced greatly her work and whose "literary lineage (…) spans across cultures, nationalities, and languages" (6).

The thematic way in which Alvarez's works are often connected to one another cannot be ignored. In "Liberty" the theme is not only immigration, like in the story of the García girls, but also the presence of an animal. Liberty is the name of the dog around which short-story built, an account that could either be told by Yolanda, as an expansion and versioning of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (in Cantiello's terms), or by the author herself. The pet was given by the American consul to thank the unnamed narrator's family for being nice to him, since he had been

given the position in their country. The same consul would eventually help them get their American visas, thus giving them liberty twice. The father called it Liberty because of the US Constitution's "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," saying the dog was a 'lucky sign" (33). But Liberty could not run free through the premises because the mother did not want it to destroy the house; it had to stay in a pen. When it is time to leave for the US, the girl does not want to leave the animal behind; her Tía Mimi (which is Yolanda's and Alvarez's aunt) promises "[she] will find Liberty there" (40). However, they could not fool her; she "sense [s] it is a different kind of liberty [her] aunt means" (40). But what is left for her is the "hope that when [they] come back—as Mami has promised we will—my Liberty will be waiting for me here" (40). Neither Alvarez nor Yolanda comes back to live in their native country which takes many years to have its liberty.

All that said, what is the importance of characters' names and naming practices to *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!* ? Do they fulfill or create expectations in the reader? Do they show gender issues like fairy tales do? Do they fall into the categories proposed by Alleen and Don Nilsen (those of fun, establishing the setting, and especially ethnicity)? Does the cultural translation affect them in the same way it affected Lahiri's Gogol? Those are some of the questions to be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

The Anthroponomy of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!*

And if one were to compile all the names that one has ever been called?
Would they not present a quandary for identity?
Would some of them cancel the effect of others?
Would one find oneself fundamentally dependent
upon a competing array of names to derive a sense of oneself?
(Judith Butler, *Excitable* 30)

In Alvarez's first novel, after being intrigued by its title, while readers may be still wondering who the García girls are and how and why they lost their accents, they are presented with a whole set of names through a family tree, displayed on two pages before the first chapter (Appendix A). In the García girls' family tree may one may already find what seems to be the roots of some of the racial and gender problems presented throughout the story. On the right page there is the de la Torre family. Literally their family name could be translated as 'from the tower;' I see it as a metonymy for castle, which represents well their well-off houses built inside their compound surrounded by tall walls and the almost feudal relation they have with their many employees. In the family tree and throughout both novels, their last name is always preceded by the definite article *the* as expected in English whenever one is referring to a family as a whole or to specific members of that family (Carter, *Cambridge* 350). If a silent reading of 'the de' already produces an estrangement, reading it out loud aggravates its cacophonous effect.

Whenever referring to this specific family, one has to stutter, one seems to be repeating the definite article in English as if one was not enough. Poignantly, Michael Swan's *Practical English Usage* explains that "we use *the* when we want to say 'You and I both know which I mean' (58). This is one of the few families to descend straight from the Spaniards, thus they have to be acknowledged as the one and only de la Torre.

The Spaniards from whom they descend are shown as The Conquistadores; immediately under the family's name in a straight line from The Conquistadores is "The great-great-grandfather who married a Swedish girl." The straight line continues and after the fair skinned great-grandmother come the girls' grandparents on their mother's side, Papito and Mamita. Papito and Mamita had five children, Laura, the García girls' mother, and four other children that are listed along with their spouses Tío Mundo (who married Tía Carmen), Tío Arturo (married to Tía Flor), Tía Isa (who according to the family tree married and divorced an American, more blue blood in the family?), and Tía Mimí (just "married finally"). Tío Mundo and Tía Carmen had three kids, who are more prominent in the narrative, Lucinda, Mundín and Carmencita. Tío Arturo along with Tía Flor, Tía Isa and Tía Mimí gave birth to what the García Girls called "The hair-and-nails cousins", those who are everything but the feminist women Carla, Sandra, Yolanda and Sofía García learn to be in the United States. With the exception of Lucinda, who eventually becomes one of them, the hair-and-nail cousins do not have a name in the family chart or in the narrative, which does not seem to be because they are numerous but rather because they are just embellishments who conform to what is expected from Dominican women.

The García family is represented on the left page and left side of the family tree. It is connected to The Conquistadores in a waved dotted line intercalated with two question marks the Spanish way ¿ and?. From the García family side there is no mention of famous great-

grandparents or even grandparents. There are the girls' father, Carlos, "33 other known Garcías" and Tío Orlando (who, in spite of being married to Tía Fidelina, had Manuel Gustavo "by una mujer del campo").

The representation of the two families from which the García girls' parents come already raises feminist concerns and prepares the reader for this recurrent theme the in the novel. A lot about gender roles is stated in Tía Mimi's "finally married" and in Tío Orlando's illegitimate child. The first piece of information suggests that women in the Dominican Republic are prepared solely to fulfill this social obligation and more importantly to the renowned families, continue their lineage. That becomes a problem for the protagonist Yolanda because she has different choices in life. The fact that one of the men in the family had an extra-marital affair suggests that women should accept it as the norm. Orlando's wife's name does not seem randomly chosen by the author. The fact that she is called Fidelina, a possible variant of Fidelity, suggests that women owe men their loyalty, while the latter do not. Such assertion is confirmed in the first chapter when it is said the women wait for their husband's return from their Happy Hour which should be better called Whore Hour, "the hour during which a Dominican male of a certain class stops in on his mistress on his way home to his wife" (7). She does not know anything about Tío Orlando's infidelities and his "half dozen children from *una mujer del campo*" (118). He is the only one of Carlos's siblings introduced in the family tree and his deeds, Manuel Gustavo's paternity for example, are famous[6] among the Dominican "*alta sociedad*," whose ladies "are delighted by this juicy bit of gossip" (119). Just the "almost totally sightless," "milky dark eyes" of the "sweet and dedicated to la Virgen" (118) aunt Fidelina cannot see. Unfaithfulness runs in the Garcías blood; of the thirty-five children Carlos and Orlando's father

[6] The name Orlando derives from an Italian version of the name "Roland," which stems from the Old High German "Hruodland," meaning "renowned land," "famous land" or "fame of the land." (wiki.name.com)

had, twenty-five are legitimate (216).

The theme of infidelity returns in *¡Yo!*; this time a man from de la Torre family is the guilty one, Tío Arturo, showing that it is not an exclusive trait of the Garcías' side of the family.[7] Silvio Sirias observes that "[i]n the macho world, men are expected to demonstrate their virility, regardless of their marital status" (46). Thus "[s]exual conquests elicit other men's admiration" because they "are a sign of a man's strength, importance and cunning" (46). Unlike Tía Fidelina, Tía Flor (Tío Arturo's wife) does not have cataract. But Arturo's wife prefers to turn a blind eye on the situation, in her words: "Arturo's eye would often come to rest on [one of the maids] (…) [b]ut that is as far as it ever got" (228). She chose to believe that "[a]s he himself put it, he was a lover of all arts, including the natural art displayed on a beautiful human face or chest or, [she] suppose[s], a backside" (228). She is the relative to worry the most about appearances; she was nicknamed "the politician" by the cousins and is "capable of [her famous] smile no matter the circumstances" (*How* 5). On Flor's name is another confirmation that women should stay pretty and quiet like flower arrangements.

Also to contribute to the macho system are the girls' cousin Mundín and two other uncles, Tío Max and Tío Ignacio. Tío Max, an uncle on the mother's side, is not in the family tree and is mentioned just once in *¡Yo!* because he epitomizes Sandra's fear of her baby boy becoming a "big womanizer" (17). Mundín is the nickname of the girls' cousin Edmundo Alejandro de la Torre Rodríguez, named after his father and their grandfather. No matter how old

---

[7] It is a theme that bothers the author to the point of her including itt again in her historical novel *In the Time of Butterflies.*

he is in the story, he is always Mundín. His full name can only be heard in his mother's "punishment voice" (*How* 233*)* when he had done some mischief. The same happens with the García girls: "Carla Antonia!" Laura calls out the first daughter "in her voice of authority" (*How* 160); or the third "'Yolanda Altagracia, you forget yourself,' (278). Edmundo's nickname does not serve only to distinguish him from the other two Mundos, but to the reader, it alludes to how limited his (and Dominican men's) view sight is.

Before going in their regular summer trips to their homeland, the García girls mocked the "people who would have power over [them] all summer" (*How* 111) by playing with their names and "translating them into literal English so they sounded ridiculous" (111). In their amusement "Tío Mundo, was Uncle World" (111). If they kept going with the rest of their relatives' names they would certainly get to Mundín, Little World. Mundín's world is little concerning gender roles. Although he had a "liberal education in the States" (125) and there he is the García girl's "buddy" (127), "back on the Island, he struts and turns macho, needling [the girls] with the unfair advantage being male [t]here gives him" (127). His American cousins could be liberated women, but his sister had to be a virgin. He sides with Manuel Gustavo (Sofía's Dominican boyfriend) when Carla, Sandra and Yolanda plot to separate him from Sofía. As the girls observe, "[m]ale loyalty is what keeps the macho system going" (127), and that is why he wanted to protect his new buddy.

Tío Ignacio, possibly one of the 33 known Garcías, is the one to contribute and try to get away from the macho system at the same time. The name Ignacio comes from the Latin *ignis* (fire), but the character fails to prove he is an intensely ardent and passionate macho since "[h]e's never married and is always getting ragged about being homosexual" (*How* 119). He proves his loyalty to Tío Orlando and to the macho system by "offer[ing] to take Manuel

Gustavo on as his own illegitimate son" (119). It is something he does also to his own benefit. That way, "two men are off the hook with one bastard" (119).

In a like manner to Alvarez's first novel, Gloria Naylor's *Mamma Day* opens with a family tree, along with a map of the island of the fictitious community her story is about. The use of "graphic representation of tropes conventionally used to signify a cultural nation," both the family tree and a map of the island in Naylor's work, are for Daphne Lamothe a sign of the author's "interest in the ideas of traditional rootedness and collective identity" (194) which, added to the great importance given to dating, marriage and childbirth through the narrative, contribute to the idea of "the existence of an organic, natural, and homogenous community" (194). Lamothe uses the anthropologist Liisa Malkki's and Paul Gilroy's ideas to support her assertion of the importance of paying attention to such tropes. From Malkki, she brings the notion that "botanical metaphors, metaphors of kinship, maps, and family trees present the 'national order of things' as the 'natural order of things'" (Lamothe 194)**.** From Gilroy, she draws the notion that "the trope of kinship, the use of the family as a figure for cultural nation conveys essentialist notions of cultural and racial authenticity, and deals inadequately 'with the obvious differences between and within black cultures'" (194).

Likewise, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* places great importance on family ties, on traditional family values, traditional names, and the family's role in reminding the girls of who they are. The idea of a homogenous community is brought by the "hair and nail cousins" and the "33 known Garcías" seen in the family tree. As if the tree was not enough there is also a very suggestive map which is "the cake in the shape of the island" (6) which has its own table (3), and on top of which candles are not going to be lit all over it because "[they] are just for the big cities"(6). Also like *Mamma Day,* dating, marriage and childbirth are a concern through the

narrative. The hidden agenda behind the parents' choice to frequently send the girls back to their homeland is to marry their daughters to Dominican men, "since everyone knew that once a girl married an American, those grandbabies came out jabbering in English and thinking of the Island as a place to go get a suntan" (109). Although the story is told in reverse chronology, if one follows a linear timeline it is possible to perceive that "[t]he significance of the family ties continues to grow after the Garcías immigrate to the USA; the parents send them to the Island to spend summers there, so that they wouldn't lose touch with la familia" (Bados Ciria 155).

The Mirandas are not featured in the family tree, but are also part of the García girls' *familia*; their name is going to be extremely important to Yolanda. "Tía Marina y tío Alejandro Miranda" (18) are names from a list of relatives her aunts wrote for Yolanda when she decides to drive by herself in the countryside. They thought it might be of help. In fact knowing these relatives' names proved to be very helpful when Yolanda finds herself in danger, surrounded by two men she believes are going to rape her. The first moment she is muted by her own fear; then, mistaken for an "Americana," she starts talking in English and the men are "rendered docile by her gibberish" (21). But "only when she mentions the name Miranda do their eyes light up with respect," proving "[s]he is saved" (21).

Miranda is also the name of the complex that Jennifer Bess believes Julia Alvarez and her central characters suffer: that is, "the condition of occupying the seemingly contradictory roles of victim and heir simultaneously" (79). That is a nomenclature Bess takes from Laura Donaldson's analysis of Shakespeare's Miranda in *The Tempest.* It is the condition of the Caribbean white woman who at the same time suffers oppression and enjoys of the privileges from the "colonizing father and husband" (Donaldson, qtd in Bess 79). From reading Stephen Greenblatt's new historicist analysis of Shakespeare's play, Bess learns that the English playwright had been

influenced by "William Strachey's account of the 1609 Caribbean shipwreck" (79). That allows the critic to establish connections from Prospero's daughter to the Consquistadores from whom the García girls' descend: "[t]hrough a complicated family tree – one she features at the beginning of the novel – Alvarez traces the history of the García family back to Miranda's time, back to the Conquistadores" (79).

Like Paul Gilroy, Ramón A. Figueroa sees the use of the trope of kinship as an attempt to represent the nation. He is concerned about the way race is portrayed in Alvarez's first novel and questions whether the true Dominican racial configuration is adequately represented through the family tree. For him, the family tree is contentious, especially considering historical investigations such as Frank Moya Pons's which, in his account of the Dominican life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shows that there was a high degree of racial miscegenation among all social classes on the island. For Figueroa thus, such genegeology shows the "falseamiento de la identidad dominicana" exposed by the absence of black or mulatto in the Garcías's origins (733). That is, the purity in the Garcías' heritage is implicitly stated, which for Figueroa is a problem since it is a denial of the cultural and racial mixture in the process of national formation, one of the central problems to the national Dominican issue to date (734).

Figueroa believes there is a greater purpose in the dotted line that connects Carlos's family to the Conquistadores. For him that is a way for the author to suggest that, even before the beginning to the story, there is a narrative there, one that has been silenced for long on the island. He sees the novel as a contribution to a bigger project that consists in demystifying history and redefining what it means to be Dominican (737). Rebecca Harrison and Emily Hipchen are two other critics who find meaning in the family tree and see *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* as autobiographical. Thus, the family represented is also Alvarez's family (19). They

argue that by "[s]elf-consciously tracing her own family to the 'Conquistadores,' Alvarez takes stock of the tortured history of her country, while countermanding the inevitability of reenacting colonial principles in the *post*colonial nation" (15). The two critics also seem to see some poetic justice in it: "Alvarez's ancestors may have been guilty of the atrocities of conquest, yet she and her family also suffered persecution and exile at the hands of Trujillo, another strong man trying to lay claim to the marvels of Hispaniola, especially its women" (15).

2.1. The (Now) Nuclear Family

"Back on the island we lived as a clan" (*¡Yo!* 21). That is how Laura describes their life among extended family in the de la Torre compound. She also has her own views on the reconfiguration of familial relations they undergo once they move to the US. Laura, Carlos and the four girls become a nuclear family, "which already the name should be a hint of that you're asking for trouble cooping up related tempers in the small explosive chambers of each other's attention" (22). In their homeland they all had a relative they identified with and chose to relate to. They are now the only de la Torres and Garcías around. In their new country they are forced to relate to one another. They are also forced to rethink the relationship they have with their names, which changes for some of them.

In their teenage years, the García Girls are sent to an all-girl preparatory school after their mother found out "[s]ome girlfriends of Sandi's got her to try a Tampax" (*How* 108). There they had a different kind of fame from the one they had in the Dominican Republic, a fame "based mostly on the rich girls' supposition and [the García sisters'] silence" (108). Some of their classmates were the daughters of the family brand names they used like Hoover, Hanes, Scott,

and Reese (108). Their family name, García de la Torre, did not bring recognition from the "brand-named beauties," but their Spanish name was associated to other third world students who were "filthy rich and related to some dictator or other" (108). Before going to the boarding school, the girls suffer with nicknames. The American kids are very mean to them, "epithets ('spic,' 'greaseball') were hurled [their] way" (*How* 107). Those are some of the nicknames that, for critic Cherríe Moraga, show that "in the United States [Latinos] will never have it all, they will always remain 'spics,' 'greasers,' 'beaners,' and [ultimately] 'foreigners' in Anglo-America" (302). Beaner is more commonly used to describe the Mexican habit of having beans for breakfast, while greasers and grease balls are offensive forms for underpaid workers and their oily skin from frying all day in kitchen restaurants. Although still derogative, only spic describes the García girls properly for their privileged immigrant experience and for their inability of distinguishing short and long vowels, thus pronouncing the word 'speak' that way. But labels do not see specificity. Suzanne Oboler argues that

> ethnic labels, like all names, are by their very nature abstractions of a reality – in many ways, a necessity of speech in a society as large and complex as the United States. As such, their usage perhaps inevitably includes singling out particular socially constructed attributes, whether related to race, gender, class, or language. The attributes are imputed to be common to the group's members and are used to homogenize the group. (xv)

Studying a year at public school, Carla is the sister who is seen suffering the most with the ethnic labels attributed to her. The boys at Carla's school, who called her "dirty spic," would physically harass her and be insensitive to her crying "Please stop," that seemed to make things worse as they would mimic her "'Eh-stop!'(…) 'Please eh-stop'" (*How* 153). The boys throwing stones at her feet and pulling her clothes was not what stuck with her when she was away from them, but

their faces and especially their words, which "trespassed in her dreams and her waking moments" (164). In her nightmares she could hear them saying "Go back! Go back!"

The fact that Carla registered the nicknames and hatred words more than the physical assault can be explained by Butler: "[c]ertain words or certain forms of address not only operate as threat to one's physical well-being, but there is a strong sense in which the body is alternately sustained and threatened through modes of address" (5). The only way to escape from the insults that followed Carla even in her sleep is closing her eyes and pray (164). In her prayers she would include first "the names of her own sisters" and then "all those she wanted God to especially care for here and back home" (*How* 165). The big "endless list of [family and] familiar names" brings easiness to the girl's heart and puts her to sleep "with a feeling of safety, of a world still peopled by those who loved her" (165).

That same year, one day on her way back from school she is harassed by a man in a car who exposes himself to the girl. Carla does not have enough vocabulary in either of the two languages to explain what happened to the two officers who go to the Garcías' to answer Laura's call. Carla's mother works as an interpreter for her daughter and the policemen. They appear to be impatient and want to talk directly to the girl. One of them approaches her to ask whether she could describe the man. The girl is so used to only being addressed by derogative words, especially by male Americans, that when she hears him say her name "Carla felt herself coated all over with something warm and too sweet" (161). Getting older does not mean escaping from labels. That is what can be seen in what Dexter Hayes thinks of Yo, his girlfriend at the time: Man, what's he doing falling in love with this complicated *spic chick* in the middle of his life?" (my italics, *¡Yo!* 192).

The girls' mother, Laura de la Torre García, does not seem happy being just *Mami* in the United States. She has the surname of one of the few rich families in her country of origin. Coming from a traditional family makes her name of extreme importance for her and brings along a set of beliefs. The American school where she enrolls her girls has to be Catholic, since she did not believe in evolution and "[n]o child of hers was going to forget *her* family name and think she was nothing but a kissing cousin to an orangutan" (my italics, *How* 152). Back in the Dominican Republic, her name granted her a comfortable life, a house full of maids to help her take care of her daughters, and her great status followed by immediate recognition, more than anything else. Old habits die hard, therefore when she immigrated she still introduces herself with pride: "'García de la Torre,' Laura would enunciate carefully, giving her maiden as well as married name when they first arrived" (*How* 139). In the United States she has a hard time not being recognized, the reaction to her fancy introduction is nothing but "blank smiles [from people who] had never heard of the name" (139). Inventing is the strategy adopted by her to deal with her new situation, that is, obscurity. Laura is very determined, "[s]he would show them. She would prove to these Americans what a smart woman could do with a pencil and pad," which she used to sketch her ideas for new gadgets" (*How* 139). Sadly, Laura's inventions had either already been thought of or were nonsense and were not appreciated by her nuclear family, especially by the girls. She becomes a joke, "their Thomas Edison Mami, their Benjamin Franklin mom" (137). Carla is the only one who thinks her sisters should be more understanding towards their mother: "she needed that acknowledgment [because] [i]t had come to her automatically in the old country from being a de la Torre" (139). She wanted to have her laurels in the new country as well. [8]

---

[8] The mother's name comes from the Latin word 'laurus', which was the word for laurel leaves. (wiki.name.com)

Her many frustrated attempts make her pass the crown, or the chance to get one, to her daughter Yolanda. She is the daughter with whom she has the hardest time getting along due to the child's sharp tongue but probably mostly because there is a lot of Laura in her. One of Yolanda's nicknames supports that. She often calls Yolanda *little Yo* or the corresponding Spanish version *Yosita*, as if she is an extension of herself. Thus when Carlos destroys the subversive speech Yolanda had written to present at school the next day, Laura helps her write a new one. It does not matter she is not going to get credit for it. After that she stops inventing, the speech was her last invention; "[i]t was as if, after that, her mother had passed on to Yoyo her pencil and pad and said, 'Okay, Cuquita, here's the buck. You give it a shot' (*How* 149).

Passing the baton or her pad to Yolanda may not be a conscious choice. In *¡Yo!* she describes a time before the writing of the speech, when the girls are still adapting to their new school and a social worker pays her a visit because Yo has been telling stories there. Although she tells the visitor she does not know "where Yo got that need to invent," (34) we know where it came from. Replacing the Spanish *yo* for the American *I*, or the psychoanalysis *ego,* sometimes brings a very telling meaning. In this sentence, for instance, it is as if she is questioning her own needs. The same can be said about the mother's dissatisfaction when Yolanda gave up poetry for some time, "[s]ecretly, the mother was disappointed because she had always meant for her Yo to be the famous one" (*How* 46). The girl's creativity and need to tell stories are part of her strategy of coping with the exile, like her mother's need to invent. Laura admires and envies Yolanda's ability to express what she cannot (the horrors of the dictatorship), even if it is through fiction (*¡Yo!* 34).

One cannot blame Laura for wanting recognition, as it is not uncommon for parents to desire their offspring to accomplish something they could not. That is also seen in the girls'

father, Carlos. To some extent he does the same that Laura does. His common fatherly frustration for not having a male first born child is evidenced in the name of his first daughter, Carla. His frustration increases since he has one girl after another. In front of his wife he hides his male pride; those who comment on the fact that he has just girls, he retorts: "*Good bulls sire cows"* (*How 57)*. He only gives away his fear of his family name being lost when his first grandson is born. He had not been talking to his daughter for six years, but because of the baby "the old man had been out to see her – or really to see his grandson – twice" (26). He even starts liking his son-in-law because of the child:

> It was a big deal that Sofía had had a son. He was the first male born into the family in two generations. In fact, the baby was to be named for the grandfather – Carlos – and his middle name was to be Sofia's maiden name, and so, what the old man had never hoped for with his "harem of four girls," as he liked to joke, his own name was to be kept going in this new country! (26)

Little Carlos is neither his first grandchild nor Sofía's first baby. Her first born is a girl, to whom he does not pay much attention, which makes his daughter Sofía resent him. Symptomatically, she is not named in the story. But to the baby boy, all their glory:

> During his two visits, the grandfather had stood guard by the crib all day, speaking to little Carlos. 'Charles the Fifth; Charles Dickens; Prince Charles.' He enumerated the names of famous Charleses in order to stir up genetic ambition in the boy. 'Charlemagne,' he cooed at him also, for the baby was large and big-boned with blond fuzz on his pale pink skin, and blue eyes just like his German father's. (27)

Carlos also sees many accomplishments in his American grandson's future. "[He] can be

president, [because] [he was] born [t]here," he "can go to the moon, maybe even to Mars by the time [he] [is] of [his grandfather's] age" (27). It is clear Carlos wants the baby to be an extension of himself; if not of his genes directly, since he inherited the traits of his German father, of his full name. Sofía hates his "macho babytalk" and all the things that, according to her father, the baby, "no bigger than one of her [daughter's] dolls, was going to be able to do just because he was a boy" (27). Also, the accomplishments he hopes for little Carlos are things denied to him for being an immigrant. His standing by his grandson's crib is almost a ritual. Juan Pablo Rivera thinks this is one of the scenes in the novel that shows the characters' belief in the power of words:

> Regardless of their linguistic skill and unfamiliarity with speech-act theory, bilingual characters in [Alvarez's first novel] are well aware that words make things happen, or that they do not, as when Yolanda's father, Carlos, "enumerated the names of famous Charleses in order to stir up genetic ambition in" (Alvarez 26) his grandson. (Rivera 124)

The original Carlos does not profit from the power of his own name. The irony in what the character is called lies in the fact that etymologically it means "full-grown," "a man" or "free man."[9] He is in fact "the only central character that is male" in Alvarez's first novel and "[a]s a Latin American, he subscribes to the supremacy of men within the family" (Sirias 30). However, the character is not as fully developed as the female characters in the family. He is not exactly free, since for many years he cannot go back to his own country because there he would be arrested as a dissident of the regime; initially in the United States he does not have all rights as "[t]he Garcías were only legal residents, not citizens" (160). Moreover, in the new environment he should be relieved of the pressure from Laura's family; back home her family name is more

---

[9] wiki.name.com

important than his and after they get married, they start living in her family compound. But the immigrant Carlos becomes less of a man.

While the women in the family become more independent and question their role as they become more proficient in English, immigrant men do not develop in the same way and seem to weaken. I say immigrant men because, in addition to the Latin American origin, this is the one aspect that approximates Alvarez's Carlos to Nunez's Carlos. All the Latin American machismo sustained by Spanish disappears in the United States. For Carlos Chang, if he ever had some (since he did not pick up enough Spanish in his few years in Panama), it disappears completely, along with the will of talking altogether, to Americans and to anybody in that country. His daughter believes he was once talkative in Chinese, and sees that happen just once in the US. For Carlos García, the macho attitude disappears around American women; "he look[s] down at his feet" and is "not himself," he "round[s] his shoulders and [is] stiffly well-mannered, like a servant" (*How* 180).

Papi, Lolo, Dad, and his title *el doctor* are other names used for him that do not diminish him, though. Papi is the only way his girls address him, the word they learned as short for father in their mother tongue; they cannot imagine Carlos as anything else. Lolo is the affectionate way his wife calls him. Dad is also her exclusive; "[s]he was the only one in the family who called him by his American name" (*How* 37). Being el doctor confers on the character, as Cantiello notes, the tendency to doctor the truth (96), and think of his version of the facts as the right one, when many times he is contested by his friends. The tendency to bring "the process of doctoring (…) from his professional to his personal life" (96) is another connection between the character and Alvarez's father; Cantiello reminds us of the essay about him in Alvarez's *Something to Declare*, entitled "El Doctor" (96).

Sofía or Fifí, the youngest of the girls, is more than once labelled "the one without degrees" (*How* 28, 58). Once in a family gathering, her mother explains that "[they] didn't name her wrong" because Sofía, her poet daughter says, "was the goddess in charge of wisdom long ago" (58). Indeed "she is the smart one, all right" (58). Laura adds she "didn't mean books either! [She] meant smart" (58). Her 'wisdom' comes for her easiness and willingness to embrace the world, not from books. Her two older sisters, Carla and Sandra, major in psychology, while Yo in English but that does not help them understand better their problems. Sandra and Yolanda have mental collapses; Carla, who always loved analyzing everything, marries a fellow psychologist so that she could discuss her "unresolved childhood issues with her analyst husband" (42). Sofía's name is ironic, considering that, in addition to bookish knowledge, she lacks the memories of their island childhood, since she was too young when they left. "[T]he other three are always telling [her] what happened that last day," (217) the day they had to leave the island. The best saying to describe this character is certainly 'ignorance is bliss'; knowing the least makes her the least complicated of the sisters.

Although she is the one of the sisters with plain looks, Fifi had "non-stop boyfriends"; as a consequence, her siblings envy her and want her counseling (28). She is also smart in her choice for husband; and, she is the only one to be seen having a healthy relationship in the first novel (after many attempts apparently Yo has found a nice match in *¡Yo!*). She married a German, and the foreign bilingual couple living in the US is the only one to communicate well, in the common language they share which is originally from none of them. Rivera does not see a lot of proficiency in her husband Otto's English (125); it is indeed said to be accented and probably less proficient than Sofía (*¡Yo!* 5). But that does not matter; a few cultural misunderstandings actually make things better between them since "[t]he novel, thus, praises the

gains and losses of bilingualism. Bilinguals understand each other, [the novel] proposes, because they are used to misunderstanding" (Rivera 125). In the beginning, Carlos is not very understanding of their relationship. He found the letters the couple exchanged when they started dating and demanded to know from Sofía if "[she] was dragging [his] name through the dirt" (*How* 30).

Once more I state that it can be inferred from the author's essays (like "Names/Nombres" and the ones included in *Something to Declare)*, poetry, and interviews that names are a strong autobiographical component in both Alvarez's selected works. Nevertheless, with the exception of some maids' names, who were part of the author's life and to whom she pays tribute (especially in her poetry book *The Other Side/El Otro Lado)*, the reader will not find a one-to-one correspondence. Her parents' and sisters' names were not the ones found in the novels (Laura, Carlos, Carla, Sandra, and Sofía), but the effect the real names had on immigration can be paralleled to the ones in the realm of fiction. There is much of Laura in Julia Alvarez's mother:

> Unfortunately for my mother, I grew up to be a writer publishing under my maiden name. At first, my mother flushed with personal pride when friends mistook her for the writer. "The poem in your Christmas card was so beautiful! You're quite the poet, Julia!" But after I became a published writer, friends who had read a story or an essay of mine in some magazine would call up and say, "Why, Julia, I didn't know you felt that way. . . ." My mother had no idea what ideas she was being held responsible for. When I published a first novel with a strong autobiographical base, she did not talk to me for months. (*Something* 110)

That was the same reaction Laura had after Yo publishes her openly autobiographical novel which makes the family feel exposed. The character wanted acknowledgment, but not that way. She confesses to one of her daughters: “I tell you, I want my equal time. I want my chance to tell the world how she’s always lied like the truth is just something you make up” (12). Alvarez’s father’s name, Eduardo, has no direct bearing on the one of the head of the García family. However, through an analogy of the etymology of Carlos’s name, we can approximate non-fictional and fictional fathers. The young Julia asks her father one day how he saw himself, to which he answered “I am the rock,” he said, nodding (…) I am a rock,” he repeated, liking his analogy. “Your mother, you girls, my sisters, everyone needs my support. I am the strong one!” In other words, being a provider is what he learned to be the function of a man.

Etymologically, Sandra’s and Carla’s names do not have meanings of their own, they are female versions of male names. They are also versions of Alvarez’s sisters’ names, as found in “Names/Nombres.” Sandra, or Sandi, refers to Ana. She has the “fine looks, blue eyes, peaches and ice cream skin, everything going for her” (52) and both her name and nickname are easily translated into English. Carla, like Mauricia, is a name that will very hardly pass for anything else than Hispanic, especially its thrilling of the *r* that the girl may have soon given up on trying to have people pronounce the way it was in her country of origin. The sound that, as I will explore in Chucha’s analysis, got many people killed. But for the girl, the *r* sound just represents the comfort of the “girl she had been back home in Spanish” (*How* 153).

2.2. Violet

Yolanda spends a great part of her life drilling people on how her name is pronounced,

especially her American boyfriends – "Jo-laahn-dah," she would say (47) her "pure, mouth-filling, full-blooded name" (81). That does not keep her from being given a long list of different names and nicknames, three of which are already exhibited on the family tree. She is "Yo, Yoyo or, in the States, Joe" (Appendix A). As I have demonstrated in the explanation about the novels' title, her first nickname is the most commented on and draws attention to itself for being also the Spanish first person pronoun which makes her "the 'I' of the narrator" (Luis, *A Search* 846). William Luis also calls attention to her nickname Yoyo, which describes very well the character's in-between condition. Her pet name "recalls the toy in constant motion, going up and down, moving from one extreme to the other, from one culture to the other, touching upon both but not remaining a part of either one of them" (847). Rivera points out that the toy epitomizes "the messiness of acculturation, the extent to which acculturation occurs as an uneven process in a novel that, from the title, promises that acculturation has been finally, even seamlessly achieved" (Rivera 128).

For both Luis and Miguela Dominguez, the character's many names represent her search for identity. Although in different levels, it is the same search Cisneros and the other immigrant characters mentioned pursue, which "is an indication of [their] internal search for [their] own self, a self not defined by any of the two cultures that make up [their] world" (Miguela Dominguez n.pag.). For that reason, in his discussion about *How The García Girls Lost Their Accents*, Juan Pablo Rivera argues that "[m]igrants, the novel reminds us, gain names as they gain identities, a reason why diasporic literatures are overwrought with reflections about the challenges of translating one's self" (123). Her many names make of Yolanda "a multiple being" (Luis, "A Search" 846):

> She is North American and Dominican, she is Carla, Sandi, Sofia, and Yolanda

> and embodies the different narrative perspectives which their voices represent. She is also Yolanda and not Yolanda. This idea is present in the novel by the multiple names used. She is Yolanda, Yoyo, Yosita, Yo and, last but not least, the English Joe. (846)

Heather Rosario-Sievert also sees this multiplicity of "identities and personalities in crisis" in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents.* She argues that the "crises often have language at their root" (132). The male name Joe, for instance, is a result of the anglicizing of her nickname Yo, which for Rosario-Sievert defeminizes the character. Priscila Campello points out that the Americanized name reflects the position in exile characterized by doubts and contradictions, and that the same way Joe does not state clearly the gender of the person being talked about, Yolanda fails to state clearly in which of the two cultures and language she lives (121).

In a rhyming game she plays with her husband John, the one to call her Joe, she wanted him to find a match for her name. He cannot find something that rhymes with "Joe-lan-dah" (71) thus she gives up on her Spanish name, already mispronouncing by him to offer his version of her: "So use Joe. *Doe*, *roe*, *buffalo"* (71). They are words that, like Joe, belong to the English thought world. They are words that, like the gendered confused Joe, diminish her as all of them are related to animals. They are an indication of how she is induced by him. In spite of refusing his new nickname for her – squirrel – she ends up submitting to his zoomorphic suggestioning.

Even momentarily agreeing, she tries to flee from Joe; she wants her 'I' (yo/self) back: "'*I'* – she pointed to herself – 'rhymes with the sky!'" Dominguez Miguela interprets this moment as an unconscious attempt Yolanda makes to flee from "the constrictions of names" (72). But John does not allow such escape: his reply to her 'I rhymes with sky' is "But not with

Joe!" (72). As a matter of fact, Alvarez constantly uses italics to indicate a different tone of voice. The American tries to establish his power by colonizing and taming her with his language and at the same time placing her as sexual object; as he says that, he at the same time uses his own body to objectify and silence her. He "wage[s] his finger at her" with "eyes softened with desire" and as a way of silencing her "[h]e placed his mouth over her mouth and ohhed her lips open" (72). The only thing left for Yolanda is "running like the mad, into the safety of her first tongue" trying to say "Yo rhymes with *cielo* in Spanish (…) into the dark, mute cavern of John's mouth" (72). For Johnson,

> John represents many of the "proudly monolingual" citizens of the United States that immigrants and exiles face in their new lives; the Americans' refusal to speak another language reflects a deeper refusal even to accept another language as valid or meaningful. (64)

His kiss is also a way of silencing Yo; Johnson adds that "[t]his silence – the anti-language he is trying to impose – allows John to control her and limit the spaces available to her as well" (64). The anglicized version of her name is yet another silencing: it affects Yolanda more than she could know. When she considers leaving her husband, she is not only indecisive about the content of the breakup letter she tries to write, but also about how to sign it;"[s]he thought of signing it, Yolanda, but her real name no longer sounded like her own, so instead she scribbled his name for her, *Joe*" (*How* 79). She could not be as assertive at this moment like Lahiri's Gogol was when he signed Gogol G in preschool. Yolanda had drafted a different message before she decided for only "Gone to my folks" (79). She started with "*We are not working. You know it, I know it, we both know it*" (79) but was unable to go any further when she writes his name and is taken over by it: "[h]er hand kept writing, automatically, until the page was filled

with the dark ink of his name" (79). The outcome of Yolanda's struggle with Joe and John is her admission to a mental institution; in her break down she loses the ability to speak.

There are in fact more Yolandas in Alvarez's novel than the critic Luis has pointed out and many more identities strongly tied to one of the character's languages if we keep following her through *¡Yo!*. Still from the first novel there is John's Josephine (*How* 76), a new nickname he though up once trying to convince her to make love to him, probably because it sounds like Joe when pronounce by an American. Additionally, "[h]e had named her Violet after *shrinking violet* when she started seeing Dr. Payne" (74). Albeit being a mockery of the fact she is seeing a shrink, John would probably comply with the idea of her becoming, not sexually but in other aspects, less outspoken and a more shy and introspected person, like the idiom shrinking violet suggests. Even without John knowing, Yolanda is a Greek name that means violet flower[10].

Her mother is another one to contribute greatly to the long list of "identities and personalities in crisis." In addition to the ones mentioned by Luis and already explored, Yosita and Yoyo, she called her daughter Cuquita. It was the García girls' communal nickname, and it indicated "whoever was in her favor" at the time (136). The mother does not understand her daughter when she complains "she wants *her* name" (my emphasis) and excuses herself by saying "you have to take shortcuts when there's four of them" (*How* 47). Four girls gave a lot of work to Laura to the point that among many things like birthdates, careers and their boyfriends she "confused their names or called them all by the generic pet name, 'Cuquita'" (42). It is as if Laura cannot avoid creating new Yos. When she visits Yo, who is at the mental hospital as an aftermath of her marriage with John, she starts well but spoils it soon after:

---

[10] wiki.name.com

> ‘*Ay*, Yolanda.’ Her mother pronounced her name in Spanish, her pure, mouth-filling, full blooded name, Yolanda. But then, it was inevitable, like gravity, like night and day, little apple bites when God’s back is turned, her name fell, bastardized, breaking into a half dozen nicknames – ‘*pobrecita* Yosita’ – another nickname. (81)

There is one more name given to Yolanda which is Laura’s fault. Once, for Christmas, she ordered a set of personalized pencils for her daughter, but the American company “substituted the Americanized, southernized *Jolinda*” (*How* 90). In college, she has one of the pencils left but it is “so worn down [that] only the hook of the J was left” (90). Also, as if it there were not enough evidences that Yolanda is Alvarez’s alter-ego, there is her first name initial in the character’s pencil. It is not stated in the novel if Laura complained to the company. She might have appeased her disappointed daughter if one of her wrongly translated sayings, “when in Rome, do unto the Romans” (135); or, she might have quoted Shakespeare, like Alvarez’s mother, “A rose by any other name” (Alvarez, *Names* 89).

The pencil with the J marks the moment she meets one of her love interests, Rudy Elmenhurst. She knew she liked him even before meeting him because she believed they had something in common. For immigrants or persons with a different name, the first time a new teacher or professor calls the roll is discomforting. None of Lahiri’s Gogol’s teachers in high school, with the exception of an English one, knew how to pronounce his name and asked if that was the real one or short for some another one (Lahiri 89). In her school experience, Yolanda had teachers and professors “stumbling over [her] name and smiling falsely at [her], a smile [she] had identified as one flashed on ‘foreign students’ to show them the natives were friendly” (*How* 88). That made her feel “profoundly out of place” (88). But listening to the roll she feels happy because there might be someone in that classroom like her “the absent Rudolf Brodermann

Elmenhurst, the third, who also had an odd name and who was out of it because he wasn't there" (89). Because of his name she thought he might be an immigrant like her, but he was American like apple pie. Rudy, like most men in Yolanda's life, wants her to Americanize. But at the same time they do not want her to be 'the girl-next-door.' They want a sexually liberated Latina.

"[W]hen forced to select from a rack of personalized key chains" (*How* 69), Yolanda is Joey. The reference to a selection from the key chain rack is also present in Lahiri's *The Namesake*. But when Gogol is a child, "[i]t doesn't bother him that his name is never an option on key chains or metal pins or refrigerator magnets" (66). This is one of the many subtle ways the country tells them that assimilating is the only way. This assertion is confirmed by Rivera, who sees the rack of key chains as "an adult toy that attempts to fix Yolanda's name, albeit a false one, Joey" (128). For Anglo America, she needs to be fixed.

Her cousin Lucinda, who was sent to the same boarding school the García girls attended, also thought Yolanda needed to be fixed, in a different way though. While Lucinda was trying hard to keep up with "the Sarahs and the Betsys and Carolines" (*¡Yo!* 40), Yo found her own set of new friends. They were Trini, who "dyed her hair blond in mockery of the blond, preppy in-crowd at the Miss Wood's"; Cecilia Something, "one of those genius types, skinny with cokebottle glasses and a smart mouth"; and, Big Mama, "a large, overdeveloped girl (…) who put her hand through a window, *to feel pain, to feel deeply alive*" (39). A friend of Lucinda's nicknames Yolanda Yo-Gore. Lucinda's explanation is that "Heather had a thing about nicknames from Winnie the Pooh" (*¡Yo!* 40). Lucinda was Lucy-Pooh and Heather was Heffalump (40). Lucy's nickname suggests how much her roommate liked her by letting her be the main character of the children's story. There is no clear explanation for the nickname Heather chooses for her own. Heffalump is the name given to elephants in the Winnie the Pooh series, it

is a mockery of the way little children may say the word elephant. But Yo is assigned the one nobody would like to be, the pessimistic and gloomy old grey donkey that Heather may have thought it was pertinent to describe Yo at that time. Lucinda observes that “[s]he and her friends looked like they’d just stepped out of a funeral parlor” (42), they also enjoyed writing somber poetry.

Teasingly, her sister Sandra refers to her as Miz Poet (*How* 60), not because she is in one of the most prolific phases of her writing life, but because she has become “so goddamn sensitive to language” (60). Sandra had just called a man a “piece of beefcake” and Yo corrects her: “That’s offensive’ (…) Just call him a man” (60). Sandra, who also had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital, apologizes and tries to be sympathetic to her sister, who is heartbroken: “He’s such a turd. How many times has he done this now, *Yo*?” (my emphasis 61). Right away their psychologist sister tries to help: “‘Yolanda,’ Carla corrects her. ‘She wants to be called Yolanda now’” (61). The third daughter does not react well to that: “What do you mean, *wants to be called Yolanda now*? That’s my name, you know?” (61). What for many may be seen as an overreaction on her part is actually a positive attitude. Although this scene is in the beginning of the novel, it is one of the most recent chronologically. It shows she may be on her way to coming to terms with her name and heritage in a similar fashion to Lahiri’s Gogol, by embracing the name that was intended by her parents, not the ones she has gained along the way.

She is called Yolander by her landlady. Her inability to pronounce her tenant’s name, though common among Americans usually not fond of different names, in Marie Beaudry’s case marks the linguistic difference between her and Yolanda as well as her attitude towards foreigners. Sirias sees her as *¡Yo!*’s “most racially prejudiced character” (111). She owns her narrow view of the world to “her lack of education, as well as her low socio-economic status”

(Sirias 111). When Yolanda first comes to her house and starts talking about being a foreigner and about her background, she becomes uneasy:

> All the time I'm wondering if she's giving me some story because she's talking English better than me. So I say, 'You sure picked up English,' and she looks at me a moment and says, 'Language is the only homeland. This poet once said that. When there's no other ground under your feet, you learn quick, believe me.' (153)

Little does Marie know about any other soil than that the one she steps on and little is also her knowledge of the world. What she thinks about foreigners is actually an overgeneralization made by meeting Yolanda. Marie starts liking foreigners although she has not met not many to draw good conclusions: "the two [she has] met in a day are two more than [she has] known all [her] life" and the "one thing [she] appreciate[s] about [them] (…) is how willing they are to go along with the way [Americans] do things in [the United States]"(156). Actually, the only person really from abroad she has met is Yolanda. The second one to whom she refers is Yo's friend Tammy Rosen. She got the impression she was not American because of her explanation of her name which "is really Tamar and the Rosen's been shortened from Rosenberg when her family came over from Germany during the Holocaust" (156). In any case, here is someone else who appreciates Yolanda only for her desire to conform to their culture.

Yet, outside the US, back in the Dominican Republic, she is Doña Yolanda. There she is also looked at with a certain curiosity by lower class Dominicans and the people hired to help her in one of her stays. In Brazil, unlike Dom, Dona is the title name which survived our colonial times. In the Dominican Spanish, both Don and Doña remained and deserve attention. In *Orígenes de los apellidos hispanoamericanos*, Prudencio Bustos Argañaraz explains that the

Spanish Don comes from the Latin sir and was originally used just for God (20), then it was extended to saints and popes. Little by little over the centuries it became more loosely used and gained some other meanings. When it started to be used to define kings and the nobility, it became a hereditary title (20). In the XVII century it was possible to become a Don by one's merit, especially in the high posts of the military (22). After the XVII century it was a less strict title and in the second half of the century it described all men who belonged to the high society to later describe the white wealthy people (23). Nowadays in Spain and other Spanish speaking countries, it continues to mean a sign of respect, but in Argentina it has lost this signification and it is used quite ironically especially when the person's first name is omitted and just the family name is used (24). Doña was a less strict title and attributed to the Dons's wives.

We can see that these two name titles are of great importance to the understanding of the social aspect of both novels, as almost all historical uses described by Bustos Argañaraz are part of the Dominican imaginary portrait by Alvarez. They mark the white elite of the Dominican Republic and their status of nobility. They reify their power over the colored majority of the population. If Alvarez's project is to revoke colonial principles, as stated by Rebbeca Harrison and Emily Hipchen (15), it is not surprising that her alter-ego Yolanda does not accept being called Doña. That is a title she is not comfortable with. She does not want to reproduce the system and questions her hair-and-nail cousins. When she and her sisters visited their homeland, "[t]hey'd talk and talk about the unfairness of poverty, about the bad schools, the terrible treatment of the maids" (*¡Yo!* 37).

The colored Dominicans Yolanda relates to when she goes for island visits find her ways different. The caretakers of the house where she is staying are surprised "[s]he is treating [them] like Americans" (*¡Yo!* 119), that is not only in the working system, respecting their regular

working hours and paying overtime but in the way she wants to be addressed. One of the caretakers prepares her sister-in-law for a visit to Yolanda's house: "She will tell you not to call her doña (…) [s]he says that she is just to be called Yolanda" (128). In the caretaker Sergio doña also gains other meanings; "[e]very time [he] prepare[s] to say, Yolanda, [he] look[s] at her, so white and sorry-looking, and all [he] can get out is Doña Yolanda" (128). She also reconfigures doña when she meets a woman from the countryside who needs help writing a letter, she "addressed her as Doña Consuelo and asked to be called Yo" (102) with the excuse that "it [was] [her] baby name and it stuck" (102).

Two colored Dominicans to be called Don and Doña are Fabio and Tática. The former is an example of how one can become a don for military deeds; he is the superior of the two SIM guards that go to the de la Torre compound looking for Carlos. The latter is the owner of the island's whorehouse, thus she enjoys a good reputation among Dominican machos and foreign men visiting the country. Significantly she is in a way part of Victor Hubbard's, the CIA agent, tactics to get his calls from the US and get girls on the island.

Last, but probably one of the most important ones, is the nickname she is given by her father, my little doctora (*¡Yo!* 304). That is because when she was a little girl, back in the Dominican Republic, he would often find her "see[ing] through pages" of his medical books. Her nickname has a greater significance. In the end of the book Carlos counts on Yolanda telling stories to fulfill his destiny that was interrupted by the dictatorship. After all, "[his] grandchildren and great grandchildren will not know the way back unless they have a story" (309). He wants from her stories that are going to work like the stories the girls told to the photos of sick people in his books. She told them stories "to make them feel better" (300). Those were Scheherazade's stories, stories that are also told by Yolanda to survive. They are stories that will

help heal a nation.

2.3. The men in Yolanda's life

Yolanda tries hard to find a nice man in her life. But it seems a good man is hard to find, especially for a hyphenated woman. When the García girls reunite after the birth of Sofía's daughter, Yolanda sits on the floor and starts "knitting furiously at a tiny blanket" (59). That may symbolize the girls' lives and Yolanda's love life as well: the girls' because it brings all the color their mother used to dress them when they were kids, it has "pink and baby blue and pastel yellow squares with a white border" (59). It is a complex work, it takes time, and if a mistake is made you have to start over again. The García girls' life in the exile was not easy and there may be plenty moments that they would like to do over. Yolanda's love life is not simple either. While she knits, she talks to her sisters, trying to understand what went wrong the last time she tried getting involved with someone and she presumably knits furiously for thinking she has lost too much time already:

> Since Clive left, Yolanda is addicted to love stories with happy endings, as if there were a stitch she missed, a mistake she made way back when she fell in love with her first man, and if only she could find it, maybe she could undo it, unravel John, Brad, Steven, Rudy, and start over. (63)

Although what we see in this scene is Yolanda being clueless of what the problem was, Ibis Gomez-Vega attributes her problem with men to her awareness that she and the men with whom she gets involved speak a different language. For him, "language is also associated with carnal knowledge and experience, two areas in which the Catholic Dominican girl is not well versed"

(91). And, in fact most men Yo meets expect her to be "hot blooded, being Spanish and all" (*How* 99), but the same way Yo is caught between two languages and two worlds, she is caught between the "woman's libber, sometimes the Spanish Inquisition" (*¡Yo!* 192).

In some of the men's names one can sometimes find the clue as to why their relationship did not work. In the knitting scene, we see Yolanda crying over Clive. According to the website wiki.names.com, Clive "was originally an English surname which gained popularity as a first name due to the successes of Sir Robert Clive - known as Clive of India - a British general who captured the majority of India for the British Empire in the 18th Century." Indeed he seemed to be with Yolanda just for the conquest. From the narrative one learns that he is married and infers that more than once he has promised to leave his wife for her to always go back to her again (*How* 61).

Rudy or Rudolph Elmenhurst, Rudy Brodermann Elmenhurst, the third is the already mentioned college student with whom Yolanda gets involved in the hopes he, with a different name like hers, would be more understanding of her predicament. He is the one who wanted her to be "hot-blooded" because of her Hispanic heritage and the one who is extremely rude to her when she does not correspond to this expectation and give in to his sexual advances (*How* 99).

Dexter Hays is the womanizer Yolanda takes as lover when she is older. She apparently feels more at ease with her body, but he is still not the solution for her. Even though his chapter in *¡Yo!* is entitled "The suitor," he does not suit her well. Besides, his proposals for her are lousy: So just marry me and take care of me and you can still have good sex" (190). Why would Yolanda, who was able to flee from Dominican sexism, fall for a man like this? He is the man who just sees her as a sexual object, as a "complicated spic chick" (192) and who also controls

her language. To one of his jokes about her country, Yolanda replies that she is "vomitously sick", but "'There's no such word,' he countered" (203). So Dex, who just wanted to have sex, soon becomes her ex.

James Roland Monroe is the one whose relationship with Yolanda is not sexual. Still a fourteen year in a boarding school, she develops an interest for him. Maybe, if it had not been for Lucinda's interference, they could have communicated through poetry. He "was more of a Yo-type guy" for his interest in poetry (*¡Yo!* 42), according to Lucinda. Even not being her usual type, Yolanda's cousin competes with her for James's love. James is nicknamed Roe, so it sounded logical he would pick Yo. Surprisingly he chooses Lucinda, though Yo is constantly in his mind. When Lucinda made him promise to talk to her cousin and say they could not see each other anymore, she could "swear [she] heard 'Yolinda' in his reply to her: "Sure I will, Yolinda" (48). Roe "married Courtney Hall-Monroe, [and] had three kids, Trevor, Courtney, and James Roland IV" (50). Is that a hint that he was just having fun with the Latina cousins? Another hint that he and Yolanda were not meant to be together comes from the rhyming game with John, when she rhymes Joe with "*Doe*, *roe*, *buffalo"* (71). We have seen that the game did not end well for her. Darryl Dubois, or Sky Dancer, was Yolanda's first husband for "about eight months" (*¡Yo!* 135). We do not have access to how sexual their relationship was, but the pattern of abusive men seems to have started there. He also demanded changes from her. Following him she dropped college and he wanted her to change her name (we never learn which name he picked for her). When talking to her advisor about her academic future, "[she] does not think Sky Dancer will like it" (78). The professor manages to convince her to graduate, which she did with honors (79). To the announcement of Yolanda María García's name in the ceremony, "the hippie boy-husband stood up and shouted": "That's not her fucking name!" (79). He tore the diploma he

picked from her hands and demanded that "if they want [her] to graduate, let them give [her] one with [her] fucking name" (79).

The already cited second husband John, as Johnson stated, epitomizes the all American guy who refuses to validate any identity that is not WASP (64) even though he was a "big-wig Englishman" (*¡Yo!* 135), a hint that it was really about the language she spoke. He tries to make Yolanda as standard as his own name. If he is a John-Doe, he wants her to be a Joe. [11]He is one of the several men in her life that believe they own her. In addition to changing her name on a hot night he wanted to have sex with her, "[h]e printed J-o-h-n on her right breast with a sticky finger as if he were branding her his" (*How* 76).

Tom is not a very significant man in her life, although for her friend Tammy he is, because he was "her first post-divorce boyfriend" (*¡Yo!* 233); she had already been married to Darryl and to John. Tom is in *¡Yo!* for the humorous effect. He is a double date she has with her friend and roommate Tammy. One night they have Tom and Jerry in for dinner. Tom, like the cartoon cat, spends a long time on a frustrated chase for Yolanda.

2.4. The Help

Most of the maids' names are a homage to the women who contributed to Alvarez's upbringing in the Dominican Republic. They were the ones who taught the writer about the world as well as her first words and a "first world [she] can't translate from Spanish" ("Bilingual Sestina," line 6, *The Other Side/El Otro Lado* 3). The army of maids, along with her mother and

[11] Joe is an American everyman name. In the combination "G.I. Joe," it is meant to be the generic American soldier and is a title of a movie and an eponymous line of military action figures. (wiki.name.com)

aunts, were Alvarez's first inspiration and whom she considers to be her first muses (*Something* 149). That can be seen in the second stanza of her poem "Bilingual Sestina":

> Gladys, Rosario, Altagracia – the sounds of Spanish
>
> wash over me like warm island waters as I say
>
> your soothing names: a child again learning the *nombres*
>
> of things you point to in the world before English
>
> turned *sol*, *tierra*, *cielo*, *luna* to vocabulary words -
>
> *sun*, *earth*, *sky*, *moon*. Language closed (*The Other Side/El Otro Lado* 3)

Her Spanish was not that "of Calderón de la Barca or Cervantes or even Neruda, but of Chucha and Iluminada and Gladys and Ursulina" (*Something* 21-22). The maids were the ones to teach Alvarez the *nombres* of things in her mother tongue thus their *nombres* (names) populate the Dominican American's poetry and fiction. From all the names of the people who work for the de la Torre family in both novels, very few do not have a real life correspondent. However, the most interesting name choices are those without an equivalent in the non-fictional realm and which are often ironic. That is the case of Nivea, the black maid who was named after the American moisturizer her mother rubbed on her, in hopes of lightening up her baby's skin (*How* 260). For Johnson, "Nivea's story reflects Alvarez's awareness of the importance of skin color in class hierarchies in the Dominican Republic" (*Writing* 140). There are the white de la Torre Garcías and the colored servants in their color coded uniforms, whose family names are unknown and sometimes are even given generic names by their patrons.

On their arrival on the de la Torre compound, many of the servants are given a nickname,

or what Rodriguez sees as “generic names” that help in the process of making their servants invisible (*Colorless* 35). That is true for Chucha and Primi. Primi is short for Primitiva, the nickname Maria Trinidad was given by the de la Torre because “she was a young wild girl just hired out of the campo” (*¡Yo!* 66). Her daughter wanted her to go back to using her real name, but she says she is “used to it” (66). Although Chucha is found in Alvarez’s openly autobiographical writing, the name of the fictional character is important as it helps in telling the silenced narrative of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Chucha’s original Haitian name is never mentioned, the only identity she has is that as the de la Torre’s maid. Her nickname came from the way she called the girls Chachas, from the Spanish “muchachas, girls, which is how come [they] had ended up nicknaming her a play echo of her name for us, Chucha” (*How* 220). David Mitchell believes Chucha “articulates the now largely clichéd role of the loyal domestic slave” (*Immigration* 35), she is loyal like a dog. Chucha is also the word for female dog in some Spanish-speaking countries. It might not have been the children’s intention but it confirms her position of loyal servant.

Chucha is the way Alvarez weaves Trujillo’s genocide into the story. Chucha’s inability to speak Spanish correctly traces her back to the racial cleansing promoted by the dictator, from which she managed to escape. Since there were many black Dominicans, the dictator’s men would test their victims’ nationality by their ability to pronounce correctly the name of the sprig of parsley shown to them. The right answer should be *perejil*, but both sounds expected for the *r* and the *j* are too difficult for Haitians to produce in the same way Spanish native speakers do. Failing the test meant being Haitian, therefore led to extermination. Had Chucha been put to the test, she would certainly have failed because “she couldn’t say certain words like the word for parsley or anyone’s name that had a *j* in it” (*How* 218).

Another generic name found among the Dominican characters is Chino (Chinese in Spanish), who is very unlikely from Asian descent but “whose slightly slanted eyes have earned him his nickname” (201). These examples show that nicknaming in the de la Torre compound is a sign of erasure of identity. All nicknames are demeaning but the servants do not seem to realize that. The nickname her mother had is one of the grudges Sarita, Maria Trinidad’s daughter, holds against the de la Torre. She dislikes so much the nickname Primitiva to the point that she hates the word primitive even in English (*¡Yo!* 66). And, maybe for Chino it is more interesting to go with an Asian identity than a Black identity in the Dominican Republic.

Other servants with common Hispanic names also render an interesting reading. What to say of the dark maid Iluminada who is responsible for bringing the matches to light up the candles of the cake in the shape of their country? Notably she takes almost half a chapter to find matches, bring them, and when she does, it is not her that uses them, but Tía Carmen. She tells children that are eager to help with the matches that “[l]ighting is grownup business” (*How* 11). That confirms Rodríguez assertion that in both novels “all servants are like children” (*Voiceless* 4). I think there is more to it. Tía Carmen’s not letting the maid help light up the candles that represent the country’s main cities is the same as saying that only the white elite can make changes in the Dominican Republic.

What about Florentino, whose name from the Latin *florentinus* means blossoming and charming and reminds of flower in Spanish? He is fine to take care of the de la Torre’s garden but not fine to wear a flowered shirt he was given by Dexter Hayes. In the American man the shirt is typical of a tourist; in the gardener, the “peacock-blue and orange Hawaiian shirt” gains a different meaning, according to one of Yolanda’s aunts: “‘Ay, Dios mío, look at that pimp shirt Florentino is wearing” (*¡Yo!* 201). César does not have his own imperial chariot to ride; he has to

content with being the de la Torre's chauffer. Yolanda's helpers in *¡Yo!*, like Sergio, carry their position of servitude already in the name: "Sergio is the Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese form of the Latin name Sergius, which probably meant 'servant,' or 'attendant,' and is thought to be of Etruscan origin" (wiki.name.com).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have told how it had come about at such length because we are anxious that the reader should realize himself that it could not have happened otherwise, and that to give him any other name was quite out of the question.

--Nicolai Gogol, "The Overcoat"

This work attempted to show how one should pay attention to names while reading a literary work, for they can reveal a lot about the authors, among other aspects, the time period and the culture a work is inserted, and contribute to different understandings of the works themselves. Alvarez's selected novels are not exactly recommended for a young adult readership. However, they display many of the resources related to naming and as discussed by Alleen and Don Nilsen in this kind of literature. As I briefly exemplified, names are used to achieve a humorous effect in other works by the Dominican-American. In the selected novels humour is achieved through allusions, through the sound a name has or through the irony present in it. Two good examples of allusions are when Yolanda chooses to say goodbye to John through a letter, a reference to 'Dear John letters'[12] (*How* 78); and, when Tom and Jerry come to have dinner with Yolanda and Tammy, "they can't keep [them]selves from joking about [the cartoon characters]" (*¡Yo!* 145).

Fanning, the last name of the doctor that helped Carlos in New York, is an example of a name that, if it does not amuse the reader, at least it makes the García girls laugh. Mr. and Mrs.

[12] "A letter from a woman informing her boyfriend or fiancé that she is ending their relationship or informing her husband that she wants a divorce" (dictionary.com).

Fanning are the only American couple that befriends the Garcías in their first year in the US. The night they take the Dominican family out to dinner, the girls have a great time when they realize that their "name sure sounded like the word for a person's bottom they had recently learned in the playground at school" (*How* 171). It is hard not to laugh while reading that "[t]hey were such nice people, that was the truth, Mami said, they gave you hope that maybe at *the bottom* Americans were kind souls" (my italics 172).

Names in Alvarez's works are very often a word play. One of the minor characters, Penny Ross, follows her husband in his new job position to another state. In the beginning she is understanding, but after "each lonely, unemployed [thus penniless] month in Dayton, she became withdrawn and nagging" (*¡Yo!*.179). She wanted to have her own money and importance. Irony also lies in the Spanish names used by Alvarez, as I explored when talking about the employees in the de la Torre compound. Alvarez does not write only for an English monolingual readership, the use of Spanish and Spanish names may be seen as a way to attract and talk to bilingual readers too. I did not develop in this work the ways in which the writer uses Spanish vocabulary, which I intend to explore in a future paper, so as not to stray from the main theme of the this Master's thesis. However, as far as names are concerned, what Lourdes Torres states about Esmeralda Santiago's *América's Dream* can be said also in relation to Alvarez's two novels: "[t]he author plays with bilingual puns; meanwhile, her subversive use of English and Spanish rewards the bilingual, bicultural reader" (Torres 86). Either in English or Spanish, many of Alvarez's characters' names are puns.

Those interested in gender studies could possibly make a queer reading using the etymology of the already commented Ignacio added to Yolanda's adviser in college, Professor Garfield. He has to go through a 'field of spears' as his name suggests, before he is able to come

to terms with his homosexuality. When it comes to a Feminist reading based on onomastics, I believe I have provided enough examples to show that such study can be carried out in both works.

Judith Butler argues for the sovereignty of language when she claims that "[b]eing called a name is one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language" (*Excitable* 2). As she puts it, it is just one of the conditions of constitution (2). In addition to Althusser's subjectivation, in which the speaker is more passive, she considers Austin's Speech Acts, which grants agency to speakers, to conclude that the process of constitution in language and through names is two-folded. Speakers do not have total control of what they say or over what is said to them by other speakers, but one is not rendered completely powerless in this interaction. Butler suggests that "agency begins where sovereignty wanes" (16). Throughout my analysis of names in the two selected novels by Alvarez I could demonstrate mostly how names are part of the process of linguistic subjectivation of the characters. There are also moments of agency related to names. We saw, for instance, that the girls did not call her father *dad*; Laura "was the only one in the family who called him by his American name" (*How* 37). The American name *mom*, on the other hand, acquires greater significance than the male correspondent; it shows intention and a conscious use of their two languages. As the girls grow older, they learn the words they need in their new language and use them the way they please. As a result, they never called their female parent "Mom except when they wanted to tell her how much she had failed them in [the US]. She [thought herself] a good enough *Mami*, fussing and scolding and giving advice, but a terrible girlfriend parent, a real failure of a Mom" (*How* 135).

The subtle difference between the Spanish informal and affectionate way to refer to mother and its English equivalent is something the García sisters already master. While their less

proficient father is always Papi, probably because he would not be able to notice their usage of language, thus the strategy would not be as effective. Also, he is the one who is more resistant to changes. When it comes to his daughters, he is probably in the US the same Papi he would have been in the Dominican Republic, the keeper of his daughters' honor and afraid someone is going to deflower them.

Another moment of agency related to their linguistic proficiency was briefly mentioned in the analysis of Mundín. Before packing to go their homeland to spend one more summer vacation, the girls "played with their [relatives'] names, translating them into literal English so they sounded ridiculous" (*How* 111). For them, "it was a way of getting even with people who would have power over [them] all summer" (111). In their name game, "Tía Concha became Aunt Conchshell, and Tía Asunción, Aunt Ascension; Tío Mundo was Uncle World, Paloma, [their] model cousin, turned into Pigeon, and for spite [they] surnamed her, accurately, Toed" (*How* 111). They also just use the initials of Sofía's Dominican boyfriend, Manuel Gustavo, to nickname him after "M.G., a make of cars [they] consider slightly sleazy, a car one of [their] older cousins might get his Papi to buy him to impress the Island girls" (121). To any mention of his name the García girls, except Sofía, would "rev up [their] imaginary motors" (121) in 'Rrrmms' that followed each of their cries of indignation: "He's such a tyrant," "He's breaking Fifi's spirit" (121).

Yet, another moment that has to do with their learning a second language comes unusually from a Spanish word, Chapita –Trujillo's nickname. Yolanda is only able to confront her father because she is in a new environment and because she made her new language her homeland. The girls had the example of their mother: they had seen how "Laura was the leader now that they lived in the States" because "[s]he had gone to school in the States" and "spoke

English without a heavy accent" (*How* 176). Carlos tore Yolanda's speech and her reaction was to think of "the worst thing she could say to her father" (*How* 147). With the fragments of her speech she grabbed from the floor, she "pronounced Trujillo's hated nickname: 'Chapita! You're another Chapita!'" (147). For the critic Bess, her defiant reaction was only possible because she was buoyed by her mother's support (88). Nevertheless, their ability to go against the Dominican natural order of things and withstand the male oppressor was all due to the confidence recently gained from mastering their new language.

I have also shown how family names and name titles are important for the Dominican social system to the point of saving Yolanda from a moment of danger (*How* 21) and in a way that Sergio cannot call Yolanda anything but Doña Yolanda (*¡Yo!* 128). By allowing her employees to drop what by custom should be her name title, Yolanda also allows them to experiment a position not common to them. She gives them some agency in discourse not only in the way of addressing others, but also by listening to them. Their position of servitude is something they have reproduced for so long that they are reluctant to act differently. However, Sergio's children are willing to try. On their way to Yolanda's house, just after Elena explains to her mother how Yolanda prefers to be called by her first name and Sergio explains he cannot get used to it, one of the boys assertively says: "I will call her Yolanda" (128). The other children immediately chorus, "Yolanda! Yolanda!" (128). But their moment of agency is suppressed right away by the first boy's mother: "You little nothing, you be fresh to the lady and I'll show you what a guayaba branch is good for" (128).

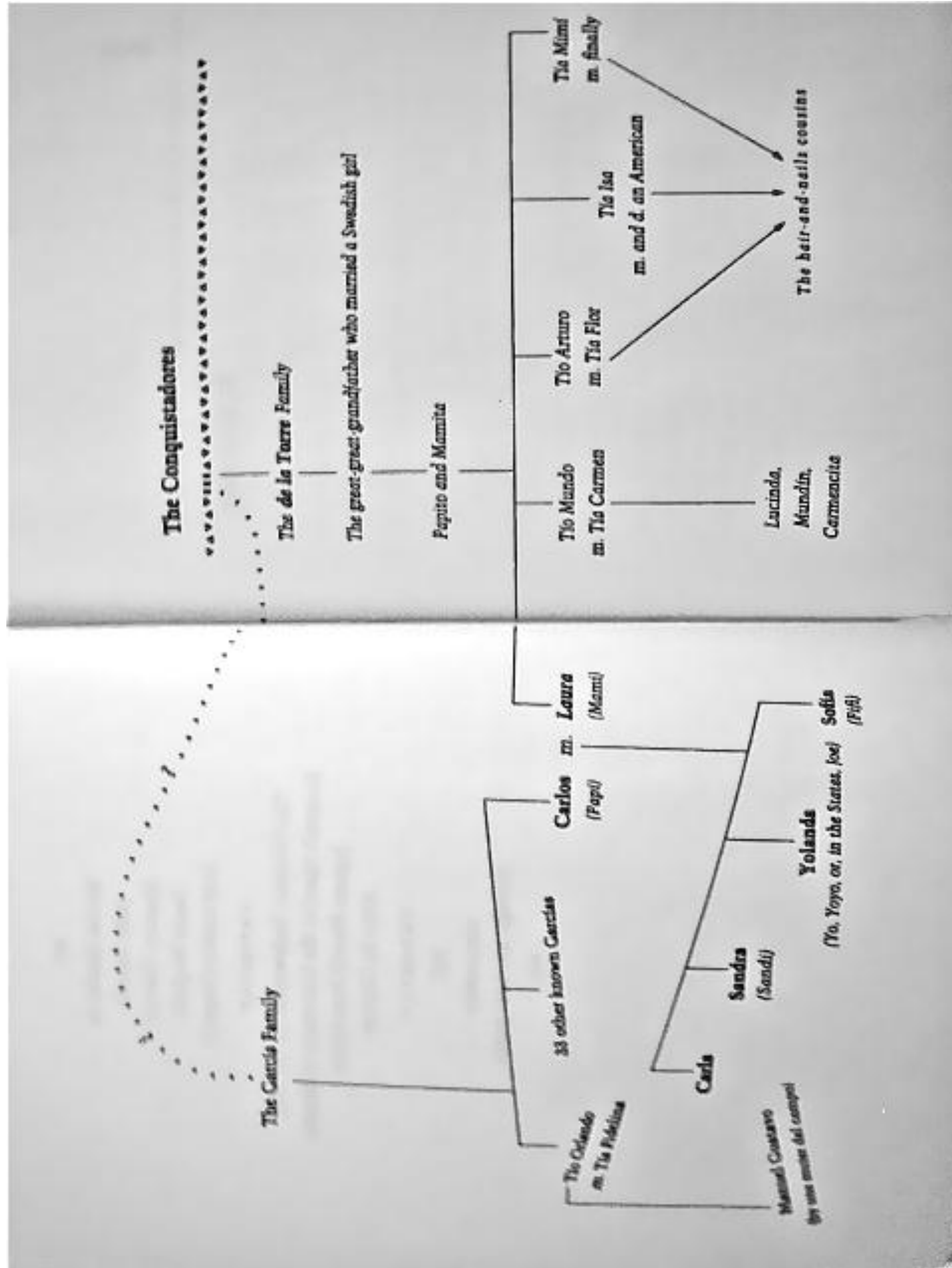
This study is not thorough; there are still names to be explored and for some I could not yet establish connections. For example, the last man in Yolanda's life we hear of is Douglas Manley. His name does not rhyme with Yolanda's, neither do they engage in any rhyming game.

He is already divorced with one teenage daughter, which may have given him more experience. Although from Kansas, it is in her homeland that Yolanda meets him, in a church mission he was helping. His background, not his name, links him to Alvarez' husband, Bill Eichner. From Douglas's last name one may expect another macho in Yolanda's life. But he is the one to try to understand her complexity and to become *the man* in her life.

The literary characters' and author's names used extensively in both works, very often as adjectives, form a set of names that I did not explore in this work. It could be the focus of a future study, as I believe they are more than a vain attempt by Alvarez to show how much she has read, thus they could bring new light to some passages of both works. Another study could be carried out considering the brand names, which for me are there more than to signal acculturation. Ultimately, it seems pertinent to suggest a detailed study of names in the author's extensive oeuvre, which could unveil even more meanings.

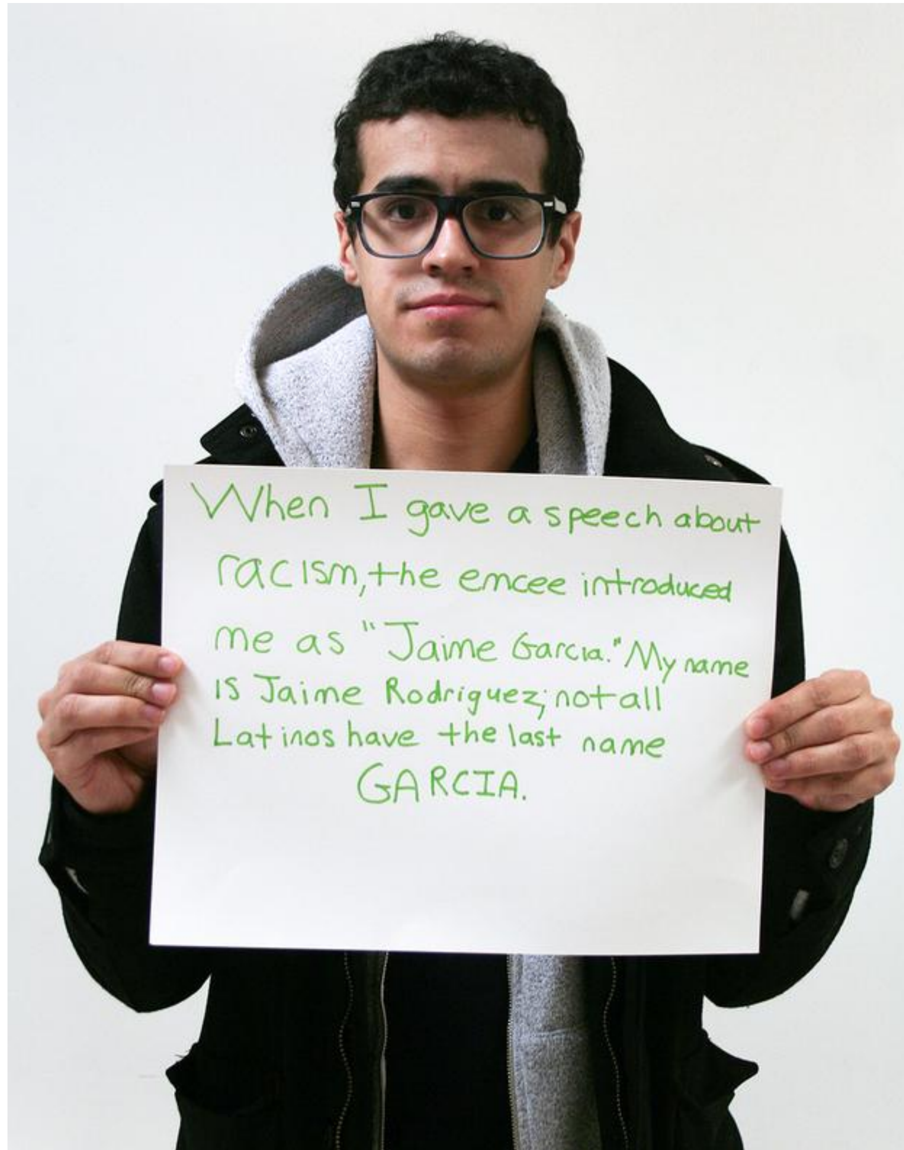
What is known so far is that etymologically Yolanda means violet flower. Such meaning may remind us of *Romeo and Juliet'*s balcony scene. As I mentioned before, onomastic studies often quote Shakespeare's Juliet's assertion that, had a rose had another name, it would have smelled as sweet. However, as I have demonstrated, in literature the names of characters are a constituent part of who they are. Alvarez's flower had to be called Yolanda in order to convey the many meanings I consider in this work. Thus, by this analogy, neither she nor the other characters would smell the same by any other namesake. Also, what is true for Gogol/Nikhil is true for Yolanda and Alvarez's other characters: "the reader should realize himself that it could not have happened otherwise, and that to give [them] any other name was quite out of the question" (Gogol 173).

A P P E N D I X A



(Alvarez, *How n.pag.)*

A P P E N D I X B



(Nortonism)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Angela. Special Research Report: Law Enforcement Guide to International Names. Regional Organized Crime Information Center, 2010. Web. 27 Mar. 2013. <http://info.publicintelligence.net/ROCICInternationalNames.pdf>[13]

Alvarez, Julia. "An Interview with Julia Alvarez." *Penguin.com*. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.

---. "Audio Name Pronunciation: Julia Alvarez." *Teachingbooks.net*. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.

---. *Before We Were Free*. New York: Knopf, 2002. Print.

---."Disappeared Does Not Take a Helping Verb in English." *Syracuse Magazine* 10.4 (1994): 32-37. Print.

---. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1991. Print.

---. *In the Name of Salomé*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 2000. Print.

---. *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1994. Print.

---. "Julia Alvarez on *Return to Sender*." Vermont Public Radio. Vermont NPR News Source, 12 Jan. 2009. Web. 13 Jan. 2013.

---. "Liberty." *Elements of Literature: Fourth Course*. New York: Holt, Rinehar, 2000. 32-40. Print.

---. "Names/Nombres." *Differentiated Instruction for English Language Learners: Level II*. Los Angeles: EMC, 2009. 89-93. Print.

---. *Saving the World*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2006. Print.

[13] Although the MLA bibliography guidelines instructs one not to provide http addresses in the case of electronic sources, I found it useful to provide in my bibliography the two website addresses from which I retrieved two leaked documents, since they cannot be found in these two institutions official websites.

---. *Something to Declare*. New York: Plume, 1999. Print.

---. *The Other Side/El Otro Lado*. New York: Plume, 1996. Print.

---. *¡Yo!* Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1997. Print.

Auster, Paul. *City of Glass*. New York: Penguin, 1985. Print.

Azevedo, Sebastião Laércio de. *Dicionário de Nomes de Pessoas.* Rio de Janeiro, 1993. Print.

Bados Ciria, Concépcion. "Caribbean Identity and Migrancy: the Novels of Julia Alvarez." *Revista Española de Estudios Norteamericanos.* 17 (1999): 113-121.

Ballard, Michel. *Le nome propre en traduction.* Paris: Ophrys, 2001. Print.

Barak, Julie. "'Turning and Turning the Widening Gyre': A Second Coming into Language in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *MELUS* 23.1 (1998): 159-76. Print.

Beauty in Truth, Dir. Prahibha Parmer. Perf. Alice Walker. Reelout Film Festival. 2013. Film.

Bertills, Yvonne. *Beyond Identification: Proper Names in Children's Literature*. Turku: Abo Akademi UP, 2003. Print.

Bertz, Regina M. "Chicana 'Belonging' in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street.*" *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature Special Issue "Border Crossing"* (2012): 18-33. Print.

Bess, Jennifer. "Imploding the Miranda Complex in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents.*" *College Literature* 34.1 (2007): 78-105. Print.

Bing, Jonathan. "Julia Alvarez: Books that Cross Borders." *Publishers Weekly* 16.1 (1996): 38-39. Print.

Blauman, Wendy Sue. "Language and Border Crossings in the Works of Julia Alvarez: Identity, Homeland, Education, and Orality." Diss. City U of New York, 2008. Print.

Bodenhorn, Barbara, and Gabriele vom Bruck. *The Anthropology of Names and Naming.* New York: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

Boter, Babs. "Fabrication of Selves: Girls of Color Coming of Age." Diss. U of Amsterdam, 2005. Print.

Bright, William. "What IS a Name? Reflections on Onomastics." *Language and Linguistics* 4.1 (2003): 669-80. Print.

Bronte, Charllotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin, 1966. Print.

Burrows, Sonja S. "Beyond the Comfort Zone: Monolingual Ideologies, Bilingual U.S. Latino Texts." Diss. U of Oregon, 2010. Print.

Bustos Argañaraz, Prudencio. *Orígenes de los apellidos hispanoamericanos*. Real Academia Matritense de Heráldica Y Genealogía. n.pag. Web. 10 Dec. 2013.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

---. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York:Routledge, 1997. Print.

Campello, Priscila Campolina de Sá. "O exílio e o retorno do imigrante na obra de Julia Alvarez/Yolanda García." Diss. UFMG, 2008. Print.

Cantiello, Jessica Wells. "'That Story about the Gun': Pseudo-Memory in Julia Alvarez's Autobiographical Novels." *MELUS* 36.1 (2011): 83-108. Print.

Cardona, Nancy K. "'They Treated Me Like a Geography Lesson': Beauty Culture and Ethnicity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents.*" *Voices: A Journal of Chicana/Latina Studies* 1.1 (1997): 12-26. Print.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; and, Through the Looking Glass*. Philadelphia: G.W. Jacobs, 1912. Print.

Carter, Natalie. "Kittens in the Oven: Race Relations, Traumatic Memory, and the Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Rupkatha Journal* 2.3 (2010): n.pag. Web. 20 Mar. 2011.

Carter, Ronald, Michael McCarthy. *Cambridge Grammar of English.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

Castells, Ricardo. "The Silence of Exile in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *The Bilingual Review* 26.1 (2001): 34-42. Print.

Cather, Willa Sibert. *My Antonia.* Boston: Mifflin, 1954. Print.

Chandra, Sarika. "Re-Producing a Nationalist Literature in the Age of Globalization: Reading (Im)migration in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *American Quarterly* 60.3 (2008): 829-50. Print.

Cisneros, Sandra. "Intersections: When Languages Collide." *NPR News*, National Public Radio. 11 Mar. 2008. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

---. *The House on Mango Street.* New York: Vintage, 1984. Print.

Coetzee, J.M. *Foe*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.

Collingwood, Stuart Dodgson. *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*. New York: IndyPublish,

2004. Print.

Criado, Miryam. "Lenguaje y Otredad Sexual/Cultural en *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* de Julia Alvarez." *The Bilingual Review* 23.3 (1998): 195-205. Print.

"Daniel Defoe." 2014. *The Biography Channel.* Web 4 Oct. 2013.

"Diccionario de la lengua española." Real Academia Española. Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2001. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs.* Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973. Print.

*dictionary.com.*Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

Djordjevic, Jelena, et al. "A Rose by Any Other Name: Would it Smell as Sweet?" *Journal of Neurophysiology* 99.1 (2008): 386-93. Print.

Domínguez Miguela, Antonia. "Growing Up Latina in the United States: Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*." *U.S. Latina Women's Narrative* 15 Jan. 2002.Web. 4 Sep. 2012.

Duany, Jorge. "Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, Color and Class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico." *Latin American Perspectives* 25.3 (1998): 147-72. Print.

Ellis, Shirley. "The Name Game." 1964. By Chase, Lincoln, and Shirley Ellis. Shirley Ellis: *The Complete Congress Recordings.* Connoisseur Collection, 2001, CD.

Ferreira, Ana Clara. "A autobiografia ficcional: os desdobramentos do eu na obra *Verão*, de J.M. Coetzee." MA thesis UniRitter, 2012. Print.

Figueiroa, Ramón A. "Fantasmas Ultramarinos: La Dominicanidad en Julia Alvarez y Junot Dias." *Revista Iberoamericana* 212. LXXI (2005):731-44. Print.

Frever, Trinna S. "'Oh! You Beautiful Doll!': Icon, Image, and Culture in Works by Alvarez, Cisneros, and Morrison." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 28.1 (2009):121 -39. Print.

Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000. Print.

Gogol, Nicolai. "The Overcoat." Ed. Ken Mitchell, Thomas Chase, and Michael Trussler. Regina: Canadian Plains Research, 1999. 172-95. Print.

Goldblatt, Patricia F. "Book Review: *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*". *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 4.4 (1998): 129-34. Print.

Gómez-Vega, Ibis. "Hating the Self in the 'Other' or How Yolanda Learns to See Her Own Kind in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Intertexts* 3.1 (1999):85-96. Print.

Guedes, Rodrigo Silva. "Secular Readings of Good and Evil in R. L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." Diss. UFMG, 2007. Print.

Griffin, Merv. "Shirley Ellis 'The Name Game' (Merv Griffin Show 1965)." *YouTube.* YouTube, 30 Nov. 2012. Web. 4 Jan. 2013.

Hall, Catherine. *"Bilingualism and Identity* in Julia Alvarez's Poem 'Bilingual Sestina'" *MELUS* 28.4 (2003): 125-43. Print

Harris, Bruce. “Rafael Trujillo.” Moreorless: Heroes & Killers of the 20th Century. Bruce Harris 2008. Web. 5 Jun. 2011.

Harrison, Rebecca, and Emily Hipchen. *Inhabiting La Patria: Identity, Agency, and Antojo in the Work of Julia Alvarez*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2013. Print.

Hoel, Helga. “Personal Names and Heritage: Alice Walker’s ‘Everyday Use’”. *American Studies in Scandinavia* 31.1 (1999): 34-42. Print.

Hoffman, Joan M. “‘She Wants to Be Called Yolanda Now’: Identity, Language, and the Third Sister in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*.” *The Bilingual Review* 23.1 (1998): 21-27. Print.

Interpol. A Guide to Name and Naming Practices. 2006. Web. 27 Mar. 2013.<http://www.mountainrecce.com/INT%20NAMING%20PRACTICES%20guide2006.pdf>[14]

Johnson, Kelli Lyon. “Both Sides of the Massacre: Collective Memory and Narrative on Hispaniola.” *Mosaic* 36.1 (2003): 76-91. Print.

---. *Julia Alvarez: Writing a New Place on the Map.* Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2005. Print.

Kerby, Erik. “Negotiating Identity in the Transnational Imaginary of Julia Alvarez and Edwige Dandicat’s Literature.” MA thesis Brigham Young U, 2008. Print.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. New

[14] Although the MLA bibliography guidelines instructs one not to provide http addresses in the case of electronic sources, I found it useful to provide in my bibliography the two website addresses from which I retrieved two leaked documents, since they cannot be found in these two institutions official websites.

York: Vintage, 1975. Print.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. "Crossing Over: Questions for Jhumpa Lahiri." *New York Times Magazine*. 7 Sep. 2003. Web. 2 Mar. 2013.

---. "My Family Finds My Name Odd, Inappropriate." *The Times of India*. n.pag.n.d. Web. 6 Apr. 2013.

---. *The Namesake*. New York: Mariner, 2003. Print.

Lamothe, Daphne. "Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*: Bridging Roots *and* Routes." *African American Review* 39.1 (2005): 155-69. Print.

López Ponz, Maria. "De cómo Laura García perdió su acento." *Entreculturas*. Grupo de Investigación en tradución, comunicación y lingüística aplicada. 27 Dec. 2010. 49-56. Web: 19 May 2011.

Lovelady, Stephanie. "Walking Backwards: Chronology, Immigration, and Coming of Age in *My Ántonia* and *How the García Girl Lost Their Accents*." *Modern Language Studies* 35.1 (2005): 28-37. Print.

Luis, William. "A Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Callaloo* 23.1 (2000): 839-49. Print.

---. "(Dis)locating the 'I' of the 'Yo' in Julia Alvarez's *¡Yo!* and Mario Vargas Llosa's *La fiesta del Chivo*." Rethinking the Americas: Crossing Borders and Disciplines. *Vanderbilt e-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies* 1(2003): 61-85. Web. 9 Apr. 2011.

[wiki]name.com. 13 Feb. 2010. Web 20 Aug. 2013.

Mardorossian, Carine M. *Reclaiming Difference: Caribbean Women Rewrite Postcolonialism*

Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2005. Print.

Marques, Carine Pereira. "'What Is in a Name?': Dislocations and Relocation in *The Namesake*." *Em Tese* 18.2. UFMG, 2012. Web. 30 Jan. 2013.

Marshall, April D. "'Onomastic Emphasis' in Julia Álvarez's *Saving the World*." *Names* 57.4 (2009): 229-35. Print.

Matias, Tito. "Hyphenated Americans in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Revista Fragmentos* 1.1 (2006): 35-41. Print.

Mayock, Ellen C. "The Bicultural Construction of Self in Cisneros, Alvarez, and Santiago." *The Bilingual Review* 23.3 (1998): 223-29. Print.

Mitchell, David T. "Immigration and the Impossible Homeland in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Antípodas* X (1998): 25-40. Print.

---."'The Accents of Loss': Cultural Crossings as Context in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." *Beyond the Binary*. Ed. Timothy Powell. Rutgers: Rutgers UP, 1999. 165-84. Print.

Moraga, Cherríe. "Art in América con Acento." *In Other Words: Literature by Latinas of the US.* Ed. Roberta Fernandez. Houston: Arte Público, 1994. 300-06. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon.* New York: Signet. 1978. Print.

Mujčinović, Fatima. *Postmodern Cross-Culturalism and Politicization in U.S. Latina Literature: From Ana Castillo to Julia Alvarez*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. Print.

Naylor, Gloria. *Mamma Day*. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.

New International Version. [Colorado Springs]: Biblica, 2011. BibleGateway.com. Web. 3 Oct. 2013.

Nilsen, Alleen Pace, and Don *L. F.* Nilsen. *Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature.* Lanham: Scarecrow, 2007. Print.

Nortonism. "Microagression." nortonism.tumblr.com. Tumblr, 3 Dec, 2013. Accessed 14 Dec. 2013.

Nothomb, Amélie. *Roberts des Noms Propres*. Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2002. Print.

Nunez, Sigrid. *A Feather on the Breath of God.* New York: Picador, 1995. Print.

Oboler, Suzanne. *Ethinic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. Print.

Okihiro, Gary Y. *Common Ground: Reimagining American History.* New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2001. Print.

Orel, Harold. *The Brontës: Interviews and Recollections*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1997. Print.

Parikh, Crystal. "Regular Revolutions: Feminist Travels in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *In the Time of the Butterflies*." *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 3.1 (2011).n.pag. Web. 24 Apr. 2011.

Pereira, Alice de Araújo Nascimento. "A (her) Story of One's Own": Fiction and Autobiography in Julia Alvarez's Fiction." MA thesis UERJ, 2011. Print.

Pessoa, Fernando. "A Heteronímia." Casa Fernando Pessoa. n.pag. n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.

Rivera, Juan Pablo. "Language Allergy: Seduction and Second Languages in *How the García*

Girls Lost Their Accents." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 2.2 (2010): 123-35. Web 20 Mar. 2011.

Robbins, Emily Rebecca. "'At the Center of her Art': Ex/Isle, Trauma, and Story-Telling in Julia Alvarez's First Three Novels." MA thesis U of Kansas, 2007. Print.

Robert, Sam. "New Life in U.S. No Longer Means New Name." *The New York Times*, 25 Aug. 2010. Web. 8 Dec. 2013.

Roditi, Edouard. "The Several Names of Fernando Pessoa." *Poetry Foundation.* 2009. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.

Rodríguez, María Cristina. "Voiceless and Colorless: The Hidden Women in Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Acccents* and *¡Yo!*." *Homines* . Web 6 Jun. 2011.

Rodriguez, Richard. *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. New York: The Dial, 1982.

Rosario-Sievert, Heather. "Anxiety, Repression, and Return: The Language of Julia Alvarez." *Readerly/Writerly Texts Essays on Literature, Literary/Textual Criticism, and Pedagogy* 4.2 (1997): 125-39. Print.

Saramago, José. *All the Names.* Trans. Margaret Jull Costa. San Diego: Harvill, 2000. Print.

Schultermandl, Silvia. "Rewriting American Democracy: Language and Cultural (Dis)Locations in Esmeralda Santiago and Julia Álvarez." *The Bilingual Review* 28.1 (2004): 3-15. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. New York: Signet, 1998.

sheknowsbabynames.com. Web. 1 Dez. 2013.

Shelley, Mary Wolstonecraft. *Frankestein, or, the Modern Prometheus*. London: Penguin, 1994. Print.

Shorinko, Jeanine, et al. "A Rose by Any Other Name . . . : Color-Naming Influences on Decision Making". *Psychology & Marketing*. 23.12 (2006): 975-93. Print.

Sirias, Silvio. *Julia Alvarez: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood, 2001. Print.

Soyinka, Wole. "A Name Is More Than the Tyranny of Taste." *Black Camera* 5.1 (2013): 237-50. Print.

Stefanko, Jacqueline. "New Ways of Telling: Latinas' Narratives of Exile and Return." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 17.2 (1996): 50-69. Print.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories of the Supernatural*. New York: Scholastic, 2001. Print.

Suárez, Lucia M. "Julia Alvarez and the Anxiety of Latina Representation." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 5.1 (2004): 117-45. Print.

Sue, Derald Wing. *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*: *Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. New Jersey: Wiley, 2010. Print.

Sue, Derald Wing, et al. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice". *American Psychologist* 62.4 (200): 271-86. Print.

Swan, Michael. *Practical English Usage.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

thinkbabynames.com. Web 20 Aug. 2013.

Torres, Lourdes. "In the Contact Zone: Code-switching Strategies by Latino/a Writers." *MELUS* 32.1 (2007): 75-96. Print.

Veras, Adriane Ferreira. "Language and Identity in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*. *Antares* 5.1 (2011): 228-42. Print.

Walker Alice. "Everyday Use." *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women*. Florida: Harcourt, 1995. Print.

Wamitila, Kyallo Wadi. "What's in a Name: Towards Literary Onomastics in Kiswahili Literature. *Afrikanistiche Arbeitspapiere* 60.4 (1999): 35-44. Print.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. London: Pimlico, 2000. Print.

Wilburn-Saboe, Dawn M. "'It Is About Love. What Else?' Toni Morrison's Necessary Actor: Revisions of Self in *Song of Solomon*". MA thesis Sonoma State U, 2010. Print.

Wilde, Oscar. "The Importance of Being Earnest." *Plays*. New York: Penguin, 1954. Print.

Yitah, Helen Atawube. "'Inhabited by Un Santo': the *Antojo* and Yolanda's Search for the 'Missing' Self in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents.*" *The Bilingual Review* 27.3 (2003): 234-43. Print.

Young, Morris. *Minor Re/Visions: Asian American Literacy Narratives as a Rhetoric of Citizenship*. Urbana: NCTE, 2004. Print.

Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization.* New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.