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The Making of Hispanic-American Identity: an Issue in Julia Alvarez and Rodolfo Alfonso Anaya's Fiction

تكوين الهوية الأمريكية من أصل إسباني: مشكلة في رواية جوليا ألفاريز ورودولفو ألفونسو أنايا

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Abstract:

The making of the identity of colored people is a controversial subject matter in American literary fiction. This is because the concept of identity itself is open-ended, always evolving, and growing. It is forged among ongoing struggles between people—notably the Hispanics or Latinos and the Whites— a thing that can never take shape or coalesce into a reified proposition or discourse. Yet in this article, the researchers attempt to examine the formation of identity at the individual level in Alvarez and Anaya's fictional texts. Focus is to be put on how their characters engage in the problematic process of constructing their identity within mainstream North American cultures. The article also attempts to draw the reader's attention to the frictions resulting from this cultural divergence.

Keywords: Alvarez; Anaya; hybrid; identity; Hispanics

الملخص:

يعد بناء هوية الأشخاص الملونون موضوعًا مثيرًا للجدل في الخيال الأدبي الأمريكي. فإن مفهوم الهوية في حد ذاته مفهوم مفتوح ويتغير باستمرار. لقد نشأ بين الصراعات المستمرة بين الملونين - وخاصة ذوي الأصول الإسبانية أو اللاتينيين - والبيض. شيء لا يمكن أبدًا أن يتشكل أو يندمج في اقتراح أو خطاب موحَّد. يحاول الباحث في هذا المقال فحص تكوين الهوية على المستوى الفردي في نصوص خوليا ألفاريز ورودولفو أنايا. ينصب التركيز على كيفية انخراط شخصياتهم في العملية المعقدة لبناء هويتهم الشخصية في ثقافات أمريكا الشمالية السائدة. يحاول المقال أيضًا لفت انتباه القارئ إلى الاحتكاك الناتج عن هذا الاختلاف الثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ألفاريز؛ أنايا؛ هجين؛ هوية؛ لاتينيون.

Introduction

To the western thought, immigrants coming from different places of the world are always considered as being other. They are stigmatized, stereotyped, and designated by stultifying terms. They are imminent peril to the order, structure, and norms of civilized

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societies. It is a strong deviation from a naturally stratified order. (Harvard 2018) Stephen Morton describes these others as having "included death, the unconscious and madness, as well as the oriental, non-western other, foreigner, the homosexual, and the famine" (Morton, 2003, p. 59). Immersed in their arrogance, hag-ridden superiority, and belief in immutable racial hierarchies, Western scholars often ignore or simply insist to be indifferent to the idea that the largest ethnic group in the United States is the Hispanics. This article, nonetheless, considers the issue of the construction of Hispanic-American identity –as it manifests itself in Alvarez and Anaya's literary texts— as a point of departure. It is based on works that are recognizant of the Hispanics' salient relics and cultural legacies to US culture and thus concedes certain rationality of their positive contribution to a transnational frame of US literature (e.g. Nicolas Kanellos 2003; Harold Bloom 2009; Rodríguez 2010 John C. Havard 2018; and Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado 2018). The researchers believe that the Hispanics breathing legacy and expression of thought, though not exclusive, is a primordial ingredient to US literature's evolution. The huge diversity and bilingualism of Hispanic and Latino mestizo times, especially authors, will play an outstanding role in the entire epochs of literary genres. This bewildering diversity would certainly make them real Hispanophone representatives and cultural mediators, with the ability to go beyond borders and transcend cultures, ethnicity, and race. (Kanellos, 2003) These ethnic groups that scholars effortlessly mingle together as "Hispanics" and "Latinos" have created literature that proclaims identity and strives for a sense of recognition within the country of the US.

Historical Presence of Hispanic Groups in the United States

Thanks to the Mexican War (1846-1848), the speaking-Spanish citizens known as Mexican Americans were injected in the US. Compelled by different reasons to immigrate, Hispanics have anchored themselves in diverse regions in the United States. Their huge numbers have increased because of many reasons: the permanent and indelible two-way migration between the US and Mexico and the US and Puerto Rico; their omniscient presence within the territory confiscated by the US, and finally the common borders with the US and Mexico. Their diversity is reflected through their dynamic contributions in various fields: politics, economics, religion, and literature.

However, the term "Hispanics", which is most often used interchangeably with "Latinos" in some contexts, is an umbrella term that comprises a group of people from different nationalities such as the Caribbean, and Central and South American. Etymologically speaking, "the term Hispanics which excludes racial and cultural differences existing within the group, evokes Spaniards and their descendants. Following Fishman (1972) Hispanics is a group which is just like a nationality, with the

exception that it presents a level of socio-cultural organization that is "simpler, smaller, more particularistic, [and] more localistic" (Fishman, 1972, 3).

The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" have, therefore, been used to designate ethnic or cultural homogeneity among people of Latin American heritage. Interestingly, however, thanks to Hispanics' tremendous ethnic, racial, social, cultural and even linguistic diversity they could identify their belongingness to a group according to language, historical experiences, cultural values, and socioeconomic status. National origin and birthplace are also elements of identification of belongingness for others.

However, the term "Latino" refers to people originating from or sharing a heritage related to Latin American countries including Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Recently some western whites are afraid of being Hispanized by the overwhelming outnumber of Hispanics. According to the statistics of 1993, Hispanics form the fastest increasing minority in the US.[1]

The Birth of the "*Mestizaje*" and the Changing Cultural Landscape

Though it is often difficult to advocate an accurate definition of the concept of Mestizaje, it may be approached as a lived process of the racial and cultural mixture. It contains within its broad context tensions of sameness and difference, as well as clashes between inclusion and exclusion. Hale (1996) It is poignantly associated with mestizo identity which is "itself the product of a particular history of cultural hybridity between, mostly, Spain and Native America" (Rahier, 2012, p. 1), with the exclusion of other ethnic groups. According to Vasconcelos (1925), the terms including ***mestizaje***, ***mulataje***, and ***hispanismo*** in the Hispanic Caribbean would rather be considered as functioning metaphors that strive for the creation of a Latin American and Caribbean discourse that has not fully yet assimilated to what scholars and practitioners presently describe as Latin American and U.S. identities. (Vasconcelos 1925).

Surprisingly, Arteaga (1997) views Chicano identity as a deficient construct concerning the state's discretion. Arteaga adds that "to be Chicano in the borderlands is to make oneself from among the competing definitions of nation, culture, language, race, ethnicity, and so on." (Arteaga, 1997, p. 10)Premised upon Arteaga's ideas, therefore, the meaning of border and Indianness would result in conflicting meaning. The former symbolizes the cultural difference of the Chicano while the latter symbolizes the Chicano's racial difference. Analogously, as the Chicano subjectivity looms out of the Anglo-American conquest of Northern Mexico, so does ***mestizaje's*** urge out of the Chicano body. Nonetheless, the Spanish conquest of the Indians and the raping of their Indian women certainly gave birth to that original Chicano body. Eventually, the ***mestizo***- which is often referred to as the hybrid race- was the natural outcome of that cruel collision between the Mexican-Indians Spaniards. The Indian is no more than

an indigenous antecedent about the Chicano. (Amend, 2010). Subsequently, ***Indianness***, like the border, is considered both a site of origin and cultural interaction.

In the same vein, the presence of the Aztec has been outstanding in Mexican/Chicano culture while Chicanos descend racially from a mixture of many different Indians stretching from Yucatan to California. This would sound obvious because during the conquest the Aztecs were the dominant political and cultural force in Mexico. (Arteaga, 1997, p. 9)Meanwhile the mythical territories of the Aztecs, the Chicano home land-often referred to as Azlan, which were already part and parcel of the Spanish settlements of Mexico spreading from Texas to California became colonies of the United States.

Unfortunately, this geo-historical encounter between Europe and America would inevitably have great effects on the Chicano and Mexican racial birth. Ultimately, ***La Raza*** **"**literal translation— the race) as a shorthand name for the Mexican- origin community" (Gonzalez, 2018, p. xv), though it betokens a cultural significance than a political one, was used to describe all Spanish-speaking people connected to that violent sexual encounter or ***mestizaje.*** Au fond, historically speaking the first the mestizos—the racially hybrid half European and half Indian— were the offspring of Spanish conquistadors and Indian women.

The Issue of Conceptual Hybridization

It is significantly convenient for the researchers to start with the identification of the concept of racial hybridization. The most fundamental problem which scholarship on Hispanics or Chicano literature has had to cope with, in this area of study, is that of identifying this term and its associate concepts. To be familiar with these terms such as hybrid and hybridization, however, it is better to consider Arteaga's words:

> The racial hybridization means that the body, the physical manifestation of the Chicano, is itself a product of hybridity. *Mestizaje* means that the *mestizo is* the confluence of different races, in the senses of descending from an original hybrid begetting, of continually procreating *mestizo* offspring, and of simply being, in the present incarnation, multiracial. (Arteaga, 1997, p.11)

In the colonial Spanish American context, hybridity is recurrently referred to as a sign of specific by-products of European expansion. Unlike, hybridity which was a fundamental physical reality of ***Chicanismo,*** the term "hybrid" is usually understood to designate things that were newly European. Ideologically, however, many elites regarded hybridity as a means of alienation and barrier, crippling or rather prohibiting the appearance of an extraordinary Hispanic/Chicano collective identity. In this regard, Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn in their article entitled Hybridity and Its Discontents

(2003) suggest that the term "hybrid" performs a double move: "it homogenizes things European and sets them in opposition to similarly homogenized non-European conventions. In short, hybridity is not so much the natural by-product of an 'us' meeting a 'them', but rather the recognition—or creation—of an 'us' and a 'them'". (Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, 2003, pp. 5-35).

As has already been mentioned the labels have been a source of great controversial debate both within the larger Hispanic/Latino community and among researchers who work with different groups of peoples of Latin American descent. In the main, the practice of "métissage" in colonial contexts has taken a variety of identifiers and forms. Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, has identified two types of hybridity: "unconscious" or "organic" hybridity and "intentional" hybridity. (qtd. in Acheraïou 2011, p.36) Other outstanding groups of postcolonial and cultural theorists including Homi Bhabha (1949-), Stuart Hall (1932-), Paul Gilroy (1956–), Edward Said (1935–2003),Nestor Garcia Canclini (1939–), and the Mexican Jose Vasconcelos (1881–1959), to name but a few, all were fascinated by the maddening concept of hybridity in its cultural context. No wonder, then, that their personal experience of life in different cultures, or living in-betweenness, would certainly be articulated in their concern with the problematic of hybridity its interactions, and its consequences. (Miller, 2004, n.p).

Being hybrid regions par excellence, Latin America and the US have been described as sites of continuous encounters, conflicts, miscegenation, and other interactions between the indigenous or native population, the European invaders, and the black African slaves. Beneath this maddeningly elastic term of hybridity, however, lurks other hybrid notions which require convincing and adequate definitions such as identity. "Chicana/o identity," in this respect, refers to the social and cultural identity that Chicanas/os reflect and set for themselves via their fictional writings. This social and cultural identity is simply how given individuals define themselves in their social world. Pizarro Marcos asserts that "Chicana/o identity, therefore, theoretically encompasses the identities of all Chicanas/os, including those who define themselves as upper-middle-class as well as those who do not consciously ethnically identify." (Pizarro 2005, p. 4)

It should be highlighted, however, that these Chicanas/os involve Mexicans, Hispanics, Latinos, and Americans. All together they become part of the Chicana/o experience. That said, the researchers focus on two major texts where "Chicana/o" refers to females and males of Mexican descent living in and socialized in the United States. The self-perceptions of all types and categories of Chicanas/os are put under scrutiny to understand the full complexity of Chicana/o identity formations. The purpose, then, is to demonstrate how the narrative texts of Hispanic/Latino miscegenation propagate identity. Identity in Alvarez's How ***the Garcı´a Girls Lost Their Accents*** and

Anaya's ***Bless Me, Ultima*** is acted out within the matrices of cultural conflicts and ethnic categorizations.

Consequently, it is almost queer to curve or circle these issues of labeling without a careful explanation of other important coterminous terms such as "race", "ethnicity" and "identity". Within this context, both writers Alvarez and Anaya quest their characters' perturbated identities. Their respective ethnicity has placed them in a weird position—on the hyphen of human existence, where combined cultural clashes are strongly painful and hard to embrace. Ethnicity which is often referred to as "groups with a shared identity, shared origins, interests, and codes" (Spencer, 2006, p. xv), may be recognized as groups of people with unique and distinctive cultural features.

As it has already been noted, ethnicity often is a crucial means of categorizing specific groups because of structural forces such as segregation, internal factors, exclusion, and oppression. It remains the most obvious fulcrum for identity.

Implications for Contextual Criticism of Hybrid of Alvarez and Anaya's Texts

It is premised that all cultures are hybrid whenever they come into contact with each other. Thus, the proximity with cultural and racial otherness causes them tremendous unconscious transformation. These transformations and mutual effects taking place during the cultural exchange are usually uneven and perceive the actors entangled with the cultural encounters differently. This is particularly true with Julia Alvarez and Rodolfo Anaya. It is significantly helpful to be aware that Julia Alvarez and Anaya, though they come from different origins, and their novels are loosely tied, they do share several significant similarities: (1) young protagonists in a state of identity quest; (2) autobiographies, (3) use of storyteller, (4) code-switching languages, and (5) ***Bildungsroman.*** Despite their diverse and different cultural heritage, there is no denying that there are key elements that tie them all together in their representation of national pride, Hispanic culture, and identity reconstruction. They retained their heritage despite the amount of influence and pressure they had been exposed to in the host society. Thus, the reader cannot miss the commonality of content, style, form in Alvarez's ***How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*** and Anaya's ***Bless Me, Ultima.*** On the contrary, their distinctive place of origin did not prevent them from sharing common themes such as the importance of family, the importance of religion, acculturation, cultural displacement, assimilation, exile, racism, machismo, superstition, and generational Diaspora differences.

Both authors introduce young characters who are in a permanent quest for identity. Anaya, for instance, has described his writing as a quest to ''compose the Chicano worldview—the synthesis that shows our true ***mestizo*** identity—and clarifies it for my community and myself. . . Writing for me is a way of knowledge, and what I find illuminates my life'' (Clark, 1995, pp. 41-42). This is reflected in Antonio, Anaya's

young protagonist who is perseveringly trying to redefine himself within the larger society from the vantage point of his distinct ethnicity. Thus, in ***Bless Me, Ultima,*** Antonio is always aware of his cultural heritage (often questioning it as well) and attempts to forge some type of reconciliation with the larger society while maintaining a distinct identity.

Within the outset of the novel i.e. from the different circumstances surrounding Antonio's birth and his first dream to the end of the novel, Anaya is inviting the reader to follow the process of his protagonist's identity and the tormenting idea of becoming. (***BMU,*** p. 107) The rest of the novel emphasizes Antonio's "self-realization . . . quest for personal and cultural identity" (Olmos, 2003, p. 39). He also must "reconcile the opposites in his life" (40). Anaya uses these conflicts to explore the influence of culture on identity. In the end, Antonio chooses to accept all aspects of his heritage. Though he does well at school, he realizes that it will not be the only place for his education. He retains the knowledge he gleans from Ultima.

In Alvarez's novel ***How the Gracia Girls Lost Their Accents***, on the other hand, the reader can easily interpret Fifi's preference to exile herself on the Island as an attempt to identify her true self. She wants to escape her parents' restrictions and explore herself as a person who has read Simone de Beauvoir. Fifi intentionally suppresses the feeling of liberty she has developed in the United States and comes to terms with the traditions and costumes on the Island. She strives to acclimate to life on the Island. She perfectly succeeds to transform herself into a Dominican girl. (HGGLTA 116-118; ch. II) Yolanda's return to the Dominican Republic searching the landscape to keep in touch with ***la familia***, eating traditional food, reviving her lost Spanish language can be regarded as a search of her own Dominican identity which is lost under the influence of North American culture.

Ultimately, both authors recognize in their literary works an attempt to educate, inform, and inspire their readers living in a host country bereft of sufficient cultural knowledge to be able to negotiate their identities. The characters in their texts struggle with identities rooted in nation and history, but find stability in learning how to relate cross-culturally to the experience of other Dominicans and Mexicans. This is not to gainsay that stories in Rodolfo Anaya's novels, for instance, are the products of his creative imagination. They are, in fact, historical events the author uses in his portrayals of characters that permit him to explore themes relative to the Chicano cultural experience.

Anaya and Alvarez's fiction investigate a process of identity which is constructed through ethnocultural and socio-political affiliation.

Through their storytelling, fiction and history are welded in such a way to create an imaginary space of fluidity in the process of identity to represent the past and future.

That space created by these authors is a transnational imaginary space that is different from the one created in other fictional patterns. It is injected in a process of identity that recognizes its constructedness. Operating against any form of inflexibility and rigidity this imaginary space, however, is enlightened due to its various connections to multiple national, cultural, and historical paradigms. But instead of permitting characters to easily find their identity within one of these dimensions, Alvarez and Anaya's characterizations dismantle and expunge the stability of such identities to highlight a process of identity in relation within them all.

Another point of convergence that is worth indicating and which manifests itself in both novels is what some critics call "the novel formation" or "***bildungsroman".*** Anaya's first novel ***Bless Me, Ultima*** has been described as the perfect example of a Chicano '***'bildungsroman***,'' or coming-of-age novel. In the context of Latin American literature, the characters face an ironic situation: they become mature in an immature nation. Moreover, their process of social and intellectual development runs in parallel with the characters' quest for national identity. (See Alejandro Latinez, 2014, p. 6)

The traditional ***bildungsroman*** narrates events from the protagonist's vision and perception about the psychological development of a young child. The character moves through different stages and conflicts while acquiring individual experiences on the road to maturity and integration into the wider society. Interestingly, in ***Bless Me, Ultima***, the reader observes the process of the maturation of the main character through a succession of rites of passage that affect the hero deeply. Nevertheless, in Anaya's novel, the passage of time is limited to the main character's experiences from age six to eight, very much briefer than in the traditional ***bildungsroman***.

As Antonio interacts with the people in his life, he learns from those encounters. When the novel opens, he is merely a dreamer and a wanderer, a rather self-centered boy who asks many questions about himself and his future. But he moves toward self-awareness and develops a substantive core of beliefs that eventually allow him to make a choice and, at the same time, to make a different kind of place for himself

We are not surprised, then that writers like Julia Alvarez and Rudolfo Anaya, being ethnically and racially marginalized minorities in the United States, take full advantage of this genre's potential. Thus, most often the ***bildungsroman*** as exposed and manifested in their works represents the identity and adaptation difficulties of the protagonist within the dominant cultural society. In stressing an identity not always approved or appreciated by the power structure of his or her society, the ethnic or minority writer intends and strives to create new standards and perspectives from their position on the periphery—far from the center—of mainstream society.

It is hugely contentious to note that Julia Alvarez's novel *How the Garcı´a Girls Lost Their Accents*—though logically would be considered a *Bildungsroman*, or a novel

that traces the development of the hero or heroine from childhood into adulthood, through a troubled quest for identity—defies this classification. It is a categorization that Julia Alvarez herself wanted to avoid when she wrote the novel (Sirias, 2001, p. 14). Indeed, literary critics are encouraged to describe and categorize this novel as a debut because *How the Garcı´a Girls Lost Their Accents* lacks a central heroine. Instead, Alvarez makes this the story of an entire family through her experimentation with the point of view.

Increasingly, another important feature characterizing both novels is the narration in the reverse order. A technique whereby the authors tell the tale backward, describing the events of the past as if they are taking place at the moment. In Alvarez's ***How the Garcı´a Girls Lost Their Accents,*** with Yolanda at the heart of the narrative, the novel describes, in reverse order, the sisters' brief years in their birthplace, their forced immigration to the United States to escape Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, their acculturation into American society, and their lives as adults. Thus, the readers would find it easy to get into the fold of an immigrant family where they know the Garcı´as intimately. They learn what their life was like, worse or better, on the island. The readers can even experience the terror and the pain of separation of this family and share their trauma at the moment of their departure leaving behind everything that identifies them. The Garcia girls' loves, losses, triumphs, joys, and sorrows are all there for the readers to notice and observe.*How the Garcı´a Girls Lost Their Accents* details what life is like in a bilingual, bicultural family. Every now and then, Alvarez deliberately uses Spanish words and phrases, choosing expressions that have a marked emotional, ironic, or satirical impact in order to bring the reader closer into her universe. Although the reader may not share the same cultural background, he/she easily comes to identify with them.

To Julia Alvarez, on the other hand, the freedom that Mami, Laura, exercises in her role as a storyteller who tells stories of her daughters in the new country are the raw materials that inspire her fiction. The stories remind them of the terror of adaptability in the host country as well as the terror of the political regime in their Dominican Island.

No wonder then that Alvarez and Anaya's act of writing in itself is used as a tool to research to reach a compromise and a symbiosis with their selves. It is a way of voiding and exorcising their demons. Accordingly, both Alvarez and Anaya's works bring to light and exhibit a whole series of ideological and cultural issues. Thus, most of their writings include a variety of topics such as identity, integration and assimilation, racial discrimination, and Latino values and culture. These writers´ narratives will never be simple or linear as "they will always be complex spirals pulling in and twisting together the conflicts of the [authors´] present lives in the U.S. and the fragments of their island pasts" (Barak 176). Bringing evidence to this quotation, it is appropriately impressive to state that family life, cultural community, and the Spanish-speaking

environment had a profound impact on Anaya's first novel, which, as in the case of many authors, matches and parallels details of the author's autobiography. Anaya explicitly affirms: ***In Bless Me, Ultima . . . I looked at my childhood through the eyes of a novelist. .... I explored childhood experiences, dreams, folklore, mythology, and communal relationships that shaped me in my formative years. Writing became a process of self-exploration*** (qtd. in Olmos, 2003, p. 2).

With hindsight, it is possible to say that both Álvarez and Anaya do not write autobiographies as such, and their works are classified as fiction. Nevertheless, their narratives are inundated with autobiographical or semi-autobiographical data, as they focus on their own experience as bicultural beings. However, the authors themselves are unwilling to identify their works with mere autobiographies, since what they perform is to "consciously fictionalize some of their autobiographical material as an attempt to understand themselves better" (HGGLTA 139). Alvarez seems to comment on this point and says:

> A lot of the García Girls was based on my own experience—first novels usually are [. . .] But there is a lot of fictionalizing, using the material of your life but being primarily interested in making a good story. It´s the combining, the exaggeration, the redoing, the adding on, that makes it original rather than autobiographical (qtd. in Rosario-Siever, 1994, p. 35).

Oddly enough, contrary to what has just been stated, many critics identify and regard most of Julia Álvarez´s novels as autobiographical. Some of them even consider the main characters of her narratives asthe author´s alter-ego. Thus, Yolanda, from the *García Girls*, also short-named *Yo*[2] in her third novel, entitled *¡Yo!*, would be Álvarez´s alter-ego. The same is true for Antonio in Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima.* The use of the techniques of fragmentation, memory, dreams and imagination trusts in Alvarez's and Anaya's texts an "interaction of fact and fiction, of memory and imagination, of lived and imagined ethnicity" (Miguela, 2000, p. 203). On this account, it can be suggested that although Anaya´s and Álvarez´s novels are not *"a faithful account of true events and experiences [. . .] [they] provide an identity that is emotionally truthful for the writing subject"* (Miguela, 2000, p. 203-214).

Interestingly, this autobiographical account reflects the search urge for the roots of identity through revisiting childhood experience to locate identity so precisely in space and time (considers, for example, the character Camila, in Alvarez's ***In the Name of Salomé***. She is a daughter who longs so much for her deceased mother, that she becomes so absorbed in a single, emotional interpretation of the past. Because her mother is lost and unattainable, Camila cannot sustain a stable relationship with her in the present. To

overemphasize this relationship, Alvarez retold the narrative by returning to her relationship with her parents. The absent mother and feelings of loss are the terrain on which the writer exploits the key points and pivotal moments in the psychoanalytic account of the self. Clara, the oldest girl among the Garcia girls, comments on this by saying: ***"It's a borderline schizoid response to traumatic cultural displacement"*** (117; ch. II).

Thus, the idealized contemporary traveller will cross-national and cultural borders and negotiate a mutable and flexible identity for himself. Andy Bennett believes that it is not even possible to perceive identity as a static entity, framed from a common history and value system. The postmodernist flux and fluidity have inevitably thwarted the traditional certainties of the past on which identity formation was based:

> Once clearly demarcated by relatively static and ethnically homogenous communities, the 'spaces' and 'places' of everyday life are now highly pluralistic and contested, and are constantly being defined and redefined through processes of relocation and cultural hybridization (Bennett, 1998, p. 4).

Contemporary migrants are thus freed from the binary oppositions of the past which were helped them define and inscribe within clear-cut narratives of belonging. They are now free to assume multiple and hybrid identities.

Conclusion:

It is recognizable that Hispanics and Latino American thinkers in general and writers, in particular, have doggedly struggled to establish their identity in the white American society. They all desired to construct an identity for their descendant population. Therefore, tremendous books and an avalanche of articles have ultimately examined the issues of identity in their writings and works. Voluminous books and essays have emphasized the ambiguity present in the Hispanic identity because of the torn values of the indigenous Americans and the Spaniards. The plight of the ***mestizo*** identity increased due to the simultaneous conflict and mixture of cultures. In this respect, the present article attempted to emphasize the centrality of identity-construction in the Hispanic/Latino narrative texts, notably Alvarez and Anaya's fiction. The researchers investigated their respective works by which they sought an identity that was not Hispanics or Latinos but yet not white American. What should be highlighted, however, is difficult to tackle the concept of identity because it has always been in a state of flux and fluidity. It is open-ended always growing and evolving but never a static entity, especially in the Hispanic/Latino-American literary context.

The problematization of the formation of identity in the works of Alvarez and Anaya is cultural and historical. Therefore, the quest for the making of identity is in itself an aspect of the quest for the Hispanic man's identity that was inaugurated in a

four-hundred-year-Mexican culture based on the external authority of American and European origins.

Interestingly, this article explored the construction of the Hispanic/Latino hybrid identity based on the literary works which pondered the characters' psychology captured between uneven and asymmetric cultures. Nevertheless, what is worth noting is that the process of fostering identity and founding a place for the native Hispanic population in an antagonistic society was not easy for thinkers and scholars, let alone Alvarez and Anaya. Being said, Anaya and Alvarez's characters ***de facto*** plunge into a process of living that helps them make use of their experience of diaspora and support a stable construction of identity in a relation.

The analysis of both writers' works is not yet over. It would be deemed interesting to see if their works impacted other ethnic minority groups of different cultures, notably, Arab American writers.

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Référence :

[1]- Statistical Abstract of US Washington DC, 1993. p 30-31.

[2]- *¡Yo!* is a very significant title for her novel since she is playing with the different meanings the word "Yo" has in the narration. It is clearly the shortening of "Yolanda", who is the protagonist of the book. Moreover, it is also the Spanish first person pronoun equivalent to the English "I." Since "Yo" is presented between two exclamation marks as Spanish grammar requires, it suggests that the title is celebratory of her Latino self.