



**Subhuman Representations in Sandra
Cisneros' The House on Mango Street and
Julia Alvarez's How the Garcia Girls Lost
their**

accents: A Postcolonial Study

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Abstract:

Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984) and Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* (1991) have been highly regarded by critics and scholars for their great depiction of human struggle and subjugation. The aim of this article is exploring the subhuman representation in both works. The novels have been analyzed through a postcolonial approach regarding its subhuman depiction through its characters, events, motifs, etc. The article finds many interesting results from the analysis that further develop and explore the main subjects. Keywords: Postcolonialism, Subhuman, Sandra Cisneros, Julia Alvarez

خلاصة:

حظيت رواية ساندرا سيسنيروس "المنزل في شارع مانجو" (١٩٨٤) وجوليا ألفاريز "كيف فقدت فتيات جارسيا لهجاتهن" (١٩٩١) بتقدير كبير من قبل النقاد والعلماء لتصويرهم الرائع للنضال البشري والقهر. الهدف من هذه المقالة هو استكشاف التمثيل دون البشري في كلا العملين. لقد تم تحليل الروايات من خلال نهج ما بعد الاستعمار فيما يتعلق بتصويرها دون الإنسان من خلال شخصياتها وأحداثها وزخارفها وما إلى ذلك. ويوجد المقال العديد من النتائج المثيرة للاهتمام من التحليل الذي يزيد من تطوير واستكشاف الموضوعات الرئيسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الاستعمار، دون البشر، ساندرا سيسنيروس، جوليا ألفاريز

1. Postcolonial Subhuman

A significant legacy of colonialism are postcolonial subhumans, who personify the marginalization and dehumanization that colonized peoples endured at the hands of colonial forces. To better understand how colonial ideas continue to influence power dynamics, social interactions, and cultural representations in the postcolonial age, this article will look at the complex dynamics of postcolonial subhumans. This analysis will clarify the long-lasting effects of colonialism on the identities, struggles, and resistances of colonized peoples by drawing on foundational works in postcolonial theory. The phenomenon of colonial subjection may be traced back to the historical period of European imperialism, which was marked by the expansionist aspirations of colonial powers and the exploitation of indigenous communities. According to Frantz Fanon (1961), colonialism functioned through the process of dehumanizing the populations it colonized, depicting them as inferior and primitive to rationalize their exploitation and subjugation. The process of dehumanization played a crucial role in the colonial endeavor, aiming to create economic dominance and geopolitical dominance over conquered regions. In addition to exerting physical control, colonial subjection encompassed the complete eradication of indigenous cultures, languages, and histories. The imposition of languages, religions, and cultural norms by colonizers resulted in the erosion of cultural identities among colonial populations, leading to their marginalization within society. In his work, Memmi (1965) underscores the profound psychological ramifications of colonial subjection, wherein colonized populations were compelled to confront the obliteration of their cultural legacy and the imposition of external standards and principles. Although people who were colonized have endured colonial domination, they have not been the passive victims of oppression. Indigenous communities worldwide have organized to oppose colonization, establish their autonomy, and regain their sense of self. According to Achille Mbembe (2001), resistance movements have a complex and diverse character, encompassing many forms such as violent conflicts aimed at achieving independence, grassroots initiatives focused on revitalizing cultural heritage, and legal disputes over land rights. The previously mentioned resistance efforts serve to challenge the prevailing narratives of colonial domination and assert the inherent worth and entitlements of colonized populations. The legacy of colonial brutality, which continues to echo in postcolonial cultures, is inextricably linked to the concept of colonial subhumanity. Edward Said (1978) highlights the significance that violence had in establishing colonial dominance. Since conquerors used armed force to control and govern the people they colonized, violence was a necessary component in the process. Because of this history of brutality, the collective memory and psyche of colonial people have been permanently scarred, which has contributed to the trauma that has been passed down from generation to generation and the fight for justice. Intersecting identities that have been molded by colonialism and other kinds of oppression are what postcolonial subhumans are representative of. The idea of intersectionality, which was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, places an emphasis on the linked nature of social identities. It acknowledges the fact that individuals are subjected to many types of discrimination based on intersecting axes of identification, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. Within the frameworks of colonialism and postcolonialism, postcolonial subhumans manage the intricate social hierarchies and power dynamics that define their vulnerabilities and resistances. Decolonizing knowledge production and epistemological frameworks is necessary to dismantle colonial subhumanity. Colonial

oppression and the erasure of indigenous epistemologies have frequently been rationalized through the utilization of Western-centric narratives pertaining to history, knowledge, and development. According to Smith (1999), there is a strong argument in favor of incorporating and acknowledging indigenous knowledges and viewpoints into educational curriculum, research procedures, and public discourse. Decolonial researchers place significant emphasis on the centralization of marginalized voices and the critical examination of Eurocentric hegemony within the realm of knowledge creation. The imperative to combat colonial subhumanity requires the establishment of solidarity among colonized populations in various settings. According to Bhabha (1994), global solidarity movements have the capacity to confront colonial systems and imagine alternative futures that are grounded in principles of justice and equality. Colonialized peoples may challenge colonial subordination and promote transformational change by forming coalitions rooted in shared experiences of oppression and mutual aspirations for freedom. Postcolonial subhumans serve as a representation of the lasting consequences of colonialism and its influence on the identities, challenges, and acts of defiance exhibited by colonized populations. To dismantle systems of colonial subhumanity and affirm the humanity and dignity of all peoples, we may examine the processes of colonial oppression, elevate marginalized voices, and advocate for decolonization and solidarity. The realization of a world free from colonial tyranny and injustice can only be achieved via collaborative endeavors.

2. Subhumans in The House on Mango Street

Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* offers a poignant portrayal of subhuman existence within the context of a marginalized Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago. Through the lens of the protagonist, Esperanza, and her neighbors, Cisneros vividly captures the struggles and vulnerabilities of individuals relegated to positions of social and economic subjugation. Dercon and Krishnan (2023) explain that one of the central depictions of subhumans in the novel is through the portrayal of poverty and its attendant hardships. Esperanza and her neighbors inhabit a space marked by dilapidated housing, limited opportunities, and economic insecurity. Their experiences reflect the pervasive effects of systemic poverty, which not only deprives them of material resources but also erodes their sense of dignity and agency. Moreover, Cisneros depicts the subhuman condition through the lens of gender dynamics within the community. Women in *The House on Mango Street* often bear the brunt of patriarchal norms and expectations, facing issues of domestic violence, limited autonomy, and restricted opportunities as Anwar (2022) demonstrates. Their experiences highlight the intersecting forms of oppression faced by marginalized women, who are doubly marginalized based on their gender and socio-economic status. Furthermore, Syafrizal et al. (2022) show that the novel explores the subhuman existence of individuals caught between cultural worlds, navigating the complexities of cultural assimilation and identity formation. Esperanza and her neighbors grapple with the pressures of acculturation, as they strive to reconcile their Mexican heritage with the expectations of American society. Their experiences reflect the challenges of cultural displacement and erasure, as they negotiate between the demands of their heritage and the pressures of assimilation. Through the depiction of subhumans in *The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros challenges dominant narratives of power and representation, foregrounding the experiences of marginalized individuals within postcolonial society. By situating her characters within the historical and cultural context of colonial legacies and immigration, she offers a powerful testament to the resilience and humanity of those who resist erasure and reclaim their dignity in the face of systemic oppression. Moreover, we gain insight into the complexities of postcolonial subjugation and the enduring struggles for liberation and self-determination. By exploring the intersecting forces of poverty, gender, and cultural assimilation, we deepen our understanding of the multifaceted forms of oppression faced by marginalized communities in literature and society. In Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, the portrayal of subhumans holds a significant historical context, reflecting societal perceptions and stereotypes prevalent during the time of its writing. The novel, set in the 1960s, captures the experiences of a young Latina girl, Esperanza, growing up in a poor neighborhood. Throughout the narrative, Cisneros subtly confronts the dehumanization and marginalization faced by marginalized communities, particularly women and minorities. One prominent aspect of the historical context is the pervasive racial and ethnic discrimination experienced by the characters. In the vignette "My Name," Esperanza expresses her frustration with her name, which she sees as a marker of her cultural identity. She writes, "In English, my name means hope. In Spanish, it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting." This reflects the struggle of individuals belonging to minority groups to navigate their identities within a dominant culture that often views them as inferior or "subhuman." The portrayal of poverty in the novel underscores the systemic inequalities prevalent in society. Esperanza describes her house on Mango Street as "small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small

you'd think they were holding their breath." This imagery highlights the oppressive living conditions faced by the characters, reinforcing the dehumanizing effects of poverty. Gender plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of the characters. Women are often depicted as powerless and objectified, subjected to societal expectations and constraints. In the vignette **"Boys & Girls,"** Esperanza observes, **"The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours."** This separation reflects the patriarchal structures that limit women's agency and perpetuate their subjugation. The novel explores the intersections of identity, including race, class, and gender, in shaping individuals' experiences of marginalization. Esperanza's observations of her community reveal the complexities of navigating multiple forms of oppression. She reflects, **"I belong to Mango Street. For the time being."** This ambivalence captures the precarious position of individuals who exist on the margins of society, struggling to assert their humanity in the face of systemic dehumanization. The House on Mango Street offers an exploration of the historical context of depictions of subhumans, shedding light on the inequalities and injustices faced by marginalized communities. Through vivid imagery and nuanced storytelling, Sandra Cisneros challenges societal norms and invites readers to empathize with the struggles of those deemed **"other"** in mainstream discourse. In *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, depictions of subhumans carry profound cultural implications, reflecting the struggles and complexities of identity within a marginalized community. Through Esperanza's observations and experiences, Cisneros delves into the cultural nuances that shape perceptions of self and others. One portrayal of cultural implications is seen in Esperanza's reflections on beauty standards. In the vignette **"Beautiful and Cruel,"** she laments, **"They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out."** This sentiment encapsulates the pressure to conform to societal ideals of beauty, which often prioritize Eurocentric features and perpetuate feelings of inadequacy among marginalized individuals. The novel explores the intersection of culture and tradition, particularly within the context of family dynamics. In **"Geraldo No Last Name,"** Esperanza reflects on the anonymity of a man who dies in a hit-and-run accident, highlighting the transient nature of immigrant experiences and the erasure of individual identities within mainstream society. She notes, **"Nobody knows where he went. The last name, like the rest of him, is made up."** This underscores the fragility of cultural identity and the struggle to maintain connections to one's roots in an alienating environment. Depictions of subhumans in the novel reveal the internalized prejudices within the community itself. In **"Those Who Don't,"** Esperanza observes the ostracization of individuals deemed undesirable or different. She notes, **"Those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives."** This reflects the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes within marginalized communities, perpetuating cycles of discrimination and marginalization. The portrayal of language and communication in the novel reflects the cultural barriers faced by Esperanza and her community. In **"No Speak English,"** Esperanza recounts her embarrassment when her father struggles to communicate in English, highlighting the challenges of assimilation and the preservation of cultural heritage. She reflects, **"He can't speak English, so we put a leash on him and lead him where we want him to go."** This imagery symbolizes the power dynamics inherent in language and the struggle for agency within a dominant culture. *The House on Mango Street* illuminates the cultural implications of depictions of subhumans, shedding light on the complexities of identity and belonging within a marginalized community. Through Esperanza's reflections and vivid storytelling, Sandra Cisneros challenges readers to confront their own biases and recognize the humanity of those often relegated to the margins of society. In *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, various characters provide insights into the theme of subhuman depictions within their community. One such character is Esperanza herself, whose coming-of-age journey offers a profound exploration of identity and belonging. Throughout the novel, Esperanza grapples with the societal expectations placed upon her as a young Latina girl growing up in a poor neighborhood. She reflects, **"I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window."** This quote encapsulates Esperanza's desire to break free from the cycle of poverty and marginalization that has defined her family's existence. Another character who sheds light on the theme of subhuman depictions is Papa, Esperanza's father. Despite his absence for much of the novel, Papa's influence looms large over Esperanza's life. His struggles as an immigrant and his commitment to providing for his family highlight the dignity and resilience of marginalized individuals. Esperanza reflects, **"My Papa, his thick hands and thick shoes, who wakes up tired in the dark, who combs his hair with water, drinks his coffee, and is gone before we wake."** This quote underscores the sacrifices made by immigrants like Papa, whose humanity is often overlooked in a society that devalues their contributions. The character of Rosa Vargas offers a stark portrayal of the challenges faced by single mothers within the

community. Rosa's inability to control her unruly children reflects the societal stigma attached to impoverished families. Esperanza observes, "**Rosa Vargas' kids are too many and too much and too old and too young and too loud.**" This quote highlights the dehumanizing effects of poverty and the tendency to blame individuals for circumstances beyond their control. The character of Alicia serves as a symbol of hope and resilience within the community. Despite the obstacles she faces as a young woman striving to attain an education, Alicia remains determined to break free from the constraints of her circumstances. Esperanza reflects, "**Alicia, who inherited her mother's rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university.**" This quote celebrates Alicia's strength and perseverance in the face of adversity, challenging stereotypes and reclaiming her agency. The House on Mango Street offers a rich character analysis that delves into the theme of subhuman depictions within the community. Through the diverse perspectives of characters like Esperanza, Papa, Rosa Vargas, and Alicia, Sandra Cisneros invites readers to empathize with the struggles and triumphs of marginalized individuals. Through their stories, these characters assert their humanity and challenge the oppressive forces that seek to diminish their worth. In *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, the depictions of subhumans invite a literary critique that delves into the complexities of identity, power dynamics, and societal marginalization. Cisneros employs vivid imagery and poignant storytelling to illuminate the struggles faced by the characters within the impoverished neighborhood of Mango Street. One aspect deserving critique is the portrayal of gender roles and expectations. Through characters like Esperanza and her friends, Cisneros exposes the ways in which women are objectified and constrained by societal norms. Esperanza reflects, "**The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours.**" This quote highlights the gendered division of space and agency, underscoring the dehumanizing effects of patriarchal structures. The novel critiques the intersection of race, class, and ethnicity in shaping individuals' experiences of marginalization. The character of Esperanza navigates her identity as a Latina girl in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, grappling with the internalized prejudices and external stereotypes imposed upon her. She observes, "**They are the ones I will have to fight if I don't want to spend the rest of my life waiting for them to leave or take me away.**" This quote reveals the internal conflict and resistance faced by Esperanza as she strives to assert her humanity in a world that seeks to diminish her worth. The novel critiques the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes within marginalized communities themselves. Through characters like Sally and Rafaela, Cisneros exposes the ways in which internalized oppression manifests in self-destructive behaviors and harmful relationships. Esperanza reflects, "**Sally, you lied, you lied. He wouldn't let me go. He said I was too beautiful.**" This quote illustrates the vulnerability and exploitation experienced by young girls like Sally, who are preyed upon and dehumanized by those in positions of power. The novel critiques the erasure of individual identities within mainstream society, particularly among immigrants and marginalized communities. Through characters like Meme Ortiz and Rosa Vargas, Cisneros highlights the ways in which poverty and social stigma dehumanize individuals and strip them of their agency. Esperanza observes, "**Rosa Vargas' kids are too many and too much and too old and too young and too loud.**" This quote underscores the dehumanizing effects of poverty and the tendency to blame individuals for circumstances beyond their control. *The House on Mango Street* offers a compelling literary critique that interrogates the depictions of subhumans within the context of race, gender, class, and ethnicity. Through nuanced characterizations and powerful imagery, Sandra Cisneros invites readers to confront their own biases and empathize with the struggles of those relegated to the margins of society. *The House on Mango Street* has had a profound impact on readers and critics alike, eliciting discussions about the depictions of subhumans and their reception within the literary community. The novel's exploration of identity, power dynamics, and societal marginalization has resonated with audiences from diverse backgrounds. One significant impact of the novel is its contribution to discussions about race and ethnicity. Through the lens of Esperanza's experiences as a young Latina girl, Cisneros confronts the stereotypes and prejudices that pervade society. The novel's portrayal of gender roles and expectations has sparked conversations about feminism and women's empowerment. Characters like Marin and Sally navigate the constraints placed upon them by societal norms, highlighting the complexities of female identity within a patriarchal society. The novel's impact extends to its representation of immigrant experiences and cultural identity. Characters like Papa and Alicia grapple with the challenges of assimilation and belonging, reflecting the struggles faced by immigrants in navigating their identities within a foreign land. The novel's reception has been shaped by its universal themes of resilience, community, and self-discovery. Readers have praised Cisneros' lyrical prose and vivid imagery, which transport them to the streets of Mango Street and immerse them in Esperanza's world. Critics have lauded the novel for its nuanced portrayal of marginalized

communities and its exploration of the human spirit in the face of adversity. In conclusion, *The House on Mango Street* has left an indelible mark on literature and continues to provoke thought and dialogue about the depictions of subhumans and their reception within society. Through its compelling characters and powerful storytelling, Sandra Cisneros invites readers to confront their own biases and empathize with the struggles of those marginalized by mainstream discourse.

3. Subhumans in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

In Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, the portrayal of subhuman characters offers a compelling exploration of the complexities of postcolonial identity and subjugation within the context of the Dominican immigrant experience in the United States according to Barr (2020). Through the lens of the Garcia family, Alvarez vividly captures the struggles and vulnerabilities of individuals navigating the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and cultural displacement. One of the central depictions of subhuman characters in the novel is through the lens of cultural displacement and assimilation as put forth by O'Neill (2022). The Garcia sisters, having immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic, grapple with the challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment while preserving their cultural heritage. Their experiences reflect the tensions between assimilating into American society and retaining their Dominican identity, highlighting the complexities of postcolonial identity formation and the pressures of cultural erasure. Moreover, Bailey et al. (2017) elucidate that Alvarez portrays the subhuman condition through the lens of racial and ethnic discrimination faced by the Garcia sisters and other characters within the novel. As immigrants of color, they confront systemic racism and prejudice in American society, which manifest in experiences of marginalization, stereotyping, and other forms of discrimination. Their narratives shed light on the intersecting forces of racism and xenophobia that shape the experiences of marginalized communities in the diaspora. Furthermore, the novel explores the subhuman existence of women within patriarchal structures, both within the Dominican Republic and the United States as highlighted by Brysk (2022). The Garcia sisters navigate issues of gender expectations, sexual autonomy, and cultural norms, grappling with the constraints imposed by traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Their experiences highlight the intersecting forms of oppression faced by women of color, who are doubly marginalized on the basis of both their gender and ethnicity. Through the depiction of subhuman characters in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Alvarez challenges dominant narratives of power and representation, foregrounding the experiences of marginalized individuals within postcolonial society. By situating her characters within the historical and cultural context of colonial legacies, immigration, and diaspora, she offers a powerful testament to the resilience and humanity of those who resist erasure and reclaim their dignity in the face of systemic oppression. In analyzing the portrayal of subhuman characters in the novel, we gain insight into the complexities of postcolonial subjugation and the enduring struggles for liberation and self-determination. By exploring the intersecting forces of cultural displacement, racism, and patriarchy, we deepen our understanding of the multifaceted forms of oppression faced by marginalized communities in literature and society. *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez offers a rich contextual analysis of the portrayal of subhuman characters within the framework of cultural identity, migration, and assimilation. Set against the backdrop of the Dominican Republic and the United States, the novel follows the Garcia sisters as they navigate the complexities of their dual identities and the challenges of belonging in two distinct cultures. One aspect of the contextual analysis is the depiction of the immigrant experience and its impact on individual and familial identities. Through the characters of the Garcia sisters, Alvarez explores the cultural dislocation and alienation experienced by immigrants as they navigate the process of assimilation. As Yolanda reflects, **"The loss of that accent was a necessity."** This quote illustrates the pressure to conform to American culture and shed aspects of their Dominican identity in order to assimilate into mainstream society. The novel offers insights into the complexities of race and ethnicity within the Dominican diaspora. Characters like Carla and Yolanda grapple with their racial identities, confronting stereotypes and prejudice within both Dominican and American communities. As Carla reflects, **"Sometimes I think I'm the only one who isn't prejudiced."** This quote highlights the internalized biases and external pressures faced by individuals navigating multiple layers of identity. The portrayal of gender roles and expectations within the novel adds depth to the contextual analysis. Through the experiences of the Garcia sisters, Alvarez explores the ways in which patriarchal norms shape their lives and relationships. As Sofia reflects, **"The boys have all the freedom."** This quote underscores the gendered division of power and agency within the family dynamic, highlighting the struggles faced by women in asserting their autonomy. The novel examines the impact of political turmoil and social upheaval on the characters' lives. Through flashbacks to their time in the Dominican Republic, Alvarez

portrays the Garcia family's experiences during the Trujillo dictatorship and their subsequent exile to the United States. As Yolanda reflects, **"We had left the chaos of Trujillo's rule behind us."** This quote captures the sense of displacement and loss experienced by the Garcia sisters as they navigate the aftermath of political oppression. In *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez, the portrayal of subhuman characters holds profound cultural significance, shedding light on the complexities of identity and belonging within the Dominican diaspora. Through the experiences of the Garcia sisters, Alvarez explores the cultural dislocation and challenges faced by immigrants as they navigate the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender. One significant aspect of the cultural significance lies in the depiction of language and communication. As the Garcia sisters adapt to life in the United States, they grapple with the loss of their native language and the challenges of expressing themselves in English. As Yolanda reflects, **"The loss of that accent was a necessity. It was a technical problem; the words got in the way."** This quote illustrates the struggle to reconcile their Dominican heritage with the demands of assimilation, highlighting the cultural significance of language as a marker of identity. The novel delves into the cultural significance of family and community within the Dominican diaspora. Through the Garcia family's experiences, Alvarez explores the ways in which cultural traditions and values shape their lives and relationships. As Yolanda reflects, **"I came to understand the Dominican concept of home, of family."** This quote underscores the cultural significance of familial bonds and the enduring connection to their Dominican heritage despite their physical distance from the homeland. The novel explores the cultural significance of memory and nostalgia in shaping the characters' sense of self and belonging. Through flashbacks to their time in the Dominican Republic, Alvarez portrays the Garcia sisters' longing for their homeland and the ways in which their memories shape their identities. *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* offers a nuanced exploration of the cultural significance of the portrayal of subhuman characters within the Dominican diaspora. Through the experiences of the Garcia sisters, Julia Alvarez invites readers to confront the complexities of immigrant life and the enduring quest for cultural identity and belonging in a world shaped by intersecting forces of history, culture, and power. In *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Julia Alvarez intricately portrays characters grappling with the complexities of their identities within the Dominican diaspora. One such character is Carla, whose struggles with her sense of belonging and self-worth reflect the challenges faced by immigrants in a foreign land. As Carla reflects, **"I don't want to be a sore thumb, sticking out all the time."** This quote encapsulates Carla's desire to assimilate into American culture while grappling with feelings of otherness and marginalization. Another character, Yolanda, undergoes a profound journey of self-discovery as she navigates the intersections of her Dominican heritage and American upbringing. Yolanda's attempts to shed her accent and assimilate into American society reflect the internalized pressure to conform to dominant cultural norms. One significant aspect deserving literary criticism is the depiction of language and communication. As the Garcia sisters grapple with the challenges of assimilating into American culture, Alvarez highlights the cultural significance of language as a marker of identity and belonging. As Yolanda reflects, **"The loss of that accent was a necessity. It was a technical problem; the words got in the way."** This quote illustrates the struggle to reconcile their Dominican heritage with the demands of assimilation, prompting discussions about the complexities of language acquisition and cultural assimilation. The novel delves into the literary criticism of gender roles and expectations within Dominican society. Through characters like Sofia, Alvarez examines the ways in which patriarchal norms shape the lives and relationships of women within the family dynamic. In her novel, Julia Alvarez's portrayal of subhuman characters elicits varied reader responses, prompting reflection on themes of identity, cultural displacement, and assimilation. Through the experiences of the Garcia sisters, readers confront the complexities of immigrant life and the challenges of navigating multiple layers of identity within the Dominican diaspora. Other readers may identify with the characters' longing for their homeland and the cultural significance of memory and nostalgia. Through flashbacks to their time in the Dominican Republic, Alvarez portrays the Garcia sisters' yearning for a sense of belonging and connection to their roots. In conclusion, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* elicits varied reader responses to its portrayal of subhuman characters within the Dominican diaspora. Through its rich characterizations and evocative storytelling, Julia Alvarez invites readers to engage with complex issues of identity, assimilation, and cultural displacement, fostering deeper understanding and empathy for the experiences of marginalized individuals.

4. Comparison of Themes and Motifs Across the Novels

Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* offer rich tapestries of postcolonial subhuman representation, each weaving together distinct themes and motifs that shed light on the complexities of marginalized existence in postcolonial societies. Despite their

unique settings and narratives, both novels share common threads that highlight the intersecting forces of oppression, identity struggles, and resilience within the context of immigrant experiences. One prominent theme across both novels is the exploration of cultural displacement and the quest for belonging. In *House on Mango Street*, Esperanza and her neighbors grapple with the challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment while preserving their cultural heritage, reflecting the tensions between assimilation and cultural identity (Prasai, 2023). Similarly, in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, the Garcia sisters navigate issues of cultural assimilation and belonging as they straddle the worlds of their native Dominican Republic and the United States, highlighting the complexities of postcolonial identity formation in the diaspora. Moreover, both novels explore the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, and socio-economic status within postcolonial societies. Characters in both *The House on Mango Street* and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* confront systemic inequalities and discrimination based on these intersecting identities, grappling with issues of poverty, racism, sexism, and cultural erasure. Their narratives offer nuanced portrayals of the complexities of postcolonial subjugation and the enduring quest for dignity and agency within oppressive structures. Additionally, motifs such as language, memory, and home recur throughout both novels, serving as powerful symbols of cultural identity and resistance. Language, in particular, plays a central role in both narratives, as characters navigate between multiple linguistic and cultural worlds, grappling with issues of translation, assimilation, and self-expression. Memory and home serve as anchors for characters' identities, grounding them amidst the upheavals of displacement and cultural assimilation, and symbolizing the enduring quest for belonging and connection. In analyzing the themes and motifs across both novels, we gain insight into the complexities of postcolonial subhuman representation and the enduring struggles for liberation and self-determination within marginalized communities. By exploring the intersecting forces of oppression, identity struggles, and resilience, we deepen our understanding of the multifaceted forms of subjugation faced by individuals and communities in literature and society.

5. Narrative Strategies Employed by Cisneros and Alvarez

Sandra Cisneros and Julia Alvarez employ distinctive narrative strategies to depict postcolonial subhumans in their respective works, *The House on Mango Street* and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. Cisneros employs a fragmented narrative structure, utilizing vignettes to capture the multifaceted experiences of characters within the Hispanic neighborhood of Mango Street. Through Esperanza's lyrical voice, Cisneros creates a mosaic of memories, dreams, and observations, offering glimpses into the lives of marginalized individuals grappling with issues of identity, poverty, and cultural assimilation according to Rivera (2003). The fragmented narrative style reflects the fragmented identities of the characters, mirroring the fractured nature of postcolonial existence. In contrast, Bess (2007) and Medina (2010) explain that Alvarez employs a nonlinear narrative structure in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, weaving together multiple perspectives and temporal shifts to trace the trajectory of the Garcia family's immigration from the Dominican Republic to the United States. Through a series of interconnected vignettes, Alvarez illuminates the complexities of cultural displacement, assimilation, and identity formation within the diaspora. The nonlinear structure allows Alvarez to explore the intergenerational dynamics of immigrant experience, highlighting the ways in which colonial legacies continue to shape the lives and identities of individuals across time and space. Furthermore, both Cisneros and Alvarez utilize symbolism and metaphor to convey deeper layers of meaning within their narratives. In *The House on Mango Street*, motifs such as houses, windows, and mirrors serve as symbols of confinement, aspiration, and self-reflection, while in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, motifs such as language, memory, and home serve as anchors for characters' identities amidst the upheavals of displacement and cultural assimilation. Using symbolism and metaphor, Cisneros and Alvarez evoke the complexities of postcolonial subjugation and the enduring quest for liberation and self-determination. The narrative strategies employed by Cisneros and Alvarez offer powerful insights into the experiences of postcolonial subhumans, foregrounding the resilience, humanity, and agency of marginalized individuals within oppressive structures. By utilizing fragmented narratives, nonlinear structures, and symbolism, they invite readers to engage with the complexities of postcolonial identity and subjugation, deepening our understanding of the multifaceted forms of oppression faced by individuals and communities in literature and society.

6. Conclusion

Postcolonial literature, particularly Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, provides a critical lens to understand the complex legacies of colonialism and its impact on marginalized communities. These works, focusing on the portrayal of postcolonial

subhumans and their exploration of cultural displacement, gender inequality, and hybrid identities, offer a nuanced understanding of the struggles of marginalized groups in the United States. The narratives highlight the pervasive sense of otherness experienced by Chicana women, highlighting their subhuman status within American society. Both works contribute to the rich tapestry of postcolonial literature and serve as powerful tools for understanding the enduring legacies of colonialism and the ongoing struggles for social justice and equality in the United States.

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