

## ¡Yo!

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Families and friends of story-tellers face a major hazard: details of their lives that the story-tellers know will likely turn up eventually as part of their published work. Such is the fate of Yolanda Garcia's parents, three sisters, assorted aunts, uncles, cousins, countless friends, and assorted associates.

Sixteen of these people, each in a separate vignette, reveal Yolanda as they know her. Each vignette can stand alone, but the sum of them constitutes a tightly-constructed novel in which Julia Alvarez, with consummate skill, in writing that frequently dazzles, creates a protagonist who never tells her own story, yet one who comes to life vibrantly through the miscellany of impressions and observations that people make about her.

Alvarez's narrative technique, reminiscent of that used effectively by Rolando Hinojosa in *DEAR RAFAEL* (1985) and *BECKY AND HER FRIENDS* (1990), is a model of expertly presented point-of-view. From the combination of sixteen vignettes, which average about twenty pages in length, emerges a carefully constructed well-rounded protagonist.

The major appeared in Alvarez's first novel, *HOW THE GARCIA—GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENTS* (1991), will be familiar to readers of her work. The political memories of her more recent novel, *IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES* (1995), a stinging commentary on the despotic regime of the Dominican Republic's strongman dictator, Rafael Trujillo than novelist Yolanda Garcia. It is a novel about the pitfalls of being creative, the effects of tyrannical political bureaucracies upon citizens, differences in human perception of people, family interactions, immigration, homosexuality, AIDS, marriage, divorce, and the life and career of Julia Alvarez herself, as is suggested by the author's choice of title, a shortened form of Yolanda and the Spanish word for "I."

## Sources for Further Study

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¡Yo! ¡Yo!

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