

Depiction of american dream in love in under the feet of jesus

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In *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes, the fruit that gives the field workers life, refreshment, and hope is the peach. Peaches, although abundant, are the delicacy of the fields desired by many and savored by few. Peaches are the price you have to pay to make a better living for yourself and to appreciate the little things in life. Viramontes uses the peach to portray the immigrant worker's desire to escape field work and become citizens of the U. S. where they will be able to live a life where they don't have to work sun up to sun down just to get by and do it all over again the next day. The peach is the American dream, a luxury desired by many and savored by few and everyone is trying to obtain it and enjoy a peach of their own.

Alejo and Gumecindo risk their lives and their jobs sneaking into the fields to steal peaches and sell them in the market. Gumecindo was not worried about being caught and losing his job. Gumecindo was more afraid of the spirit of La Llorona than risking his life stealing peaches (Viramontes 39). Gumecindo also promised " he would work scrubbing the Hamburger King floor with a toothbrush before accepting another fruit-picking job again." Here, any job in America even as degrading as scrubbing a restaurant floor is better than struggling in the blazing heat of the orchards picking rows and rows of fruit. In one instance, Alejo says, " Nobody buys fruits with bruises" and Gumecindo responds, " Ask me if I care. (Viramontes 11)" This furthers the point that any dream in America is worth pursuing. The bruised peach is a tainted dream, one people normally don't have but when you're desperate, you'll eat any peach because it's better than no peach at all.

One day on the way home, Estrella makes a stop at a baseball diamond to watch a Little League game (Viramontes 58). Estrella sees the players converging on a pop fly and compares it to mouths waiting to catch a peach and she expresses her excitement with which one will catch it. Baseball is an American sport and is referred to as America's greatest pastime. Catching the ball is good to help the team win as picking the peaches is good to help support the families. Contrary to the baseball field, Estrella is a player in the fruit fields. She is one of the players along with her family, Alejo, Gumecindo, and the other Pescadores trying to catch the peach and support their family. Catching the ball is the way to secure an out. Catching the peach is the way to get out.

On the night that Alejo meets Estrella, Alejo gives her a sack of peaches as a gift (Viramontes 44). Estrella tells Alejo, " Don't let them see you take the fruit." This is reflective of America's desire to keep immigrants out and deny them the American dream. Here they are, surrounded by all of the peach trees but they aren't allowed to take any which is comparable to them being in the U. S. but living brutal lives because they are illegal citizens and are not supposed to be where there without legal documentation. There are some who sneak and take the peaches anyway just as there are those who illegally cross the border to experience the American dream.

When Alejo is poisoned by the pesticides, he came to the realization that the Lord did not want him to chase the dream and take the peaches (Viramontes 76). The plane's shadow had " crossed over him like a crucifix" and he questions if this was " his punishment for his thievery." As Alejo was

attacked by the poison, he held on as best he could so he would not fall like the peaches (Viramontes 77). As the peaches fell, so did his desire take them and Alejo and Gumecindo never take any peaches for the rest of the novel due to Alejo's illness. Here, the idea of chasing the dream in an illegitimate way and being punished is presented and emphasizes the fact that "nobody buys fruit with bruises." Alejo's peach has now been bruised and he is suffering the consequences of eating it.

While under the shade of a truck, Estrella presents the idea of them being "stuck. (Viramontes 86)" By "stuck" she is referring to being stuck in the fields, in the hot sun, working day to day and then Alejo brings up the story of the animals who were found stuck in the La

Brea Tar Pits. Estrella tells Alejo she has heard of peach pits but not tar pits. Alejo says that one time while picking peaches, he heard screams that "reminded [him] of the animals stuck in the tar pits. This exchange shows how everyone outside of America hears about the American dream and how great it is to live in America. However, once they come to America, they have to pick up low paying jobs and try to avoid deportation. The animals were lead to the pits by water for their survival but once they got what they came for they were stuck and could not leave. The Pescadores are stuck because they cannot go back to nothing and at least have a chance at living picking fruit.

The final mention of peaches come when Perfecto is paranoid about being deported and wants to pack up all of his belongings and "some peaches

(Viramontes 162).” Perfecto contemplates leaving right at that moment so that he may have a “ second chance.” His second chance is the chance at the dream again. Packing the peaches represents his last bit of hope as he had nothing left but four dollars to his name. Perfecto thought of what the nurse would say to her husband about her day and then “ imagined people who had couches and living rooms and television sets and who drank coffee even at night.” Perfecto wants a life like that but all he has for now is the peaches, the hope of obtaining that life.

The American dream is embodied in those peaches. The hope to one day live in security, health, and luxury. These Pescadores had the peaches as a taste of what they could have. The idea of a sweet, lush, meaty peach is all that it takes to get someone anxious to have it. Alejo’s “ good peach” was the one that he shared with Estrella and Petra. The lesson is that if we can learn to share the peach, all of the peaches will be good. If we share the dream with others, we will not bruise other people’s dreams of wanting a good peach of their own.