

Themes to contest a culture where work (picadors)



Themes are essential tools used by authors to convey or sometimes emphasize specific messages in novels. In the two novels that will be compared are *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *Dreaming in Cuban*, the authors have embraced their themes to reflect on the messages regarding the bigger picture of migration and adolescence. This paper will offer a comparative thematic analysis of the two texts about migration and adolescence. To achieve this, the paper will focus on two different themes which are communicated by the two texts that are the themes of work and female relationship.

Garcia and Viramontes both have incorporated the theme of work as an element expressed in the form of physical labor.

The two texts bring out similarities of life that migrants are undergoing as laborers with the sole aim of providing for their families. Garcia *Under the Feet of Jesus* focuses on work as something which Estrella and her family have to perform for their survival. To understand the effects of the work among the migrants' family (Estrella family) a mere look at the picadores' bodies communicated that. For instance, the author indicates that by picking grapes Estrella "back coiled like barbed wire" (Viramontes 53). This is similar to all the family members and the author states that Estrella's grandmother because of constant carrying of cement stooped and now "bent his back like a mangled nail" (Viramontes 20).

It is without a doubt that migrant laborers are subjected to intensive as well as brutal work such that their bodies are reshaped. Throughout the novel, the migrants are in continuous aches, hunger and tired after many working intensive working hours. Indeed, the author needed to contest a culture where work (picadors) is erased by focusing on the nature of the migrant's

labor. Theads of Raisin portray a “ woman wearing a fluffy bonnet, holding grapes with hersmiling, ruby lips” provided a glimpse of the reality of work (Viramontes 49). Moreover, this is shown in the case of Estrella who is depicted so exhaustedthat even crying is a real struggle (Viramontes 53). In this novel, the authorintention was to highlight the hard work and the real struggles that migrantsundergo to make their contributions to the American society. The realities of work of themigrant’s laborers are also similarly depicted in Dreaming in Cuban where the author also focuses work as part of afamily as seen from the novel Under theFeet of Jesus.

First, Celia’s grandmother is considered the perfect exampleof what the Cuban socialism group dreamt (Garcia 138). Her hard work and littleobsession with work are considerable. Moreover, she portrays what it was withthe Intention of other Cubans of working for common good. In this novel, the authordepicts the grandmother as one of the members of the family leading the causeof work more in more constraint manner than other members. This is similar toEstrella in the novel Under the Feet ofJesus whose dedications and work is evident even through her natural body.

As a result of work which Celia and other laborers had been subjected tosupport their families in the midst of a dictator El Lider, she starts to thinkwhether what they were subjected to was work or exploitation. However, theprimary different in between these two texts are that Viramontes’ character isnot forced by family members to work but out of each family understanding ofthe need to work. On the other hand, some of Garcia’s characters such as Pilarsare forced to work. For instance, after Lourdes discovery of the sexualpleasure Pilars had done to herself by use of <https://assignbuster.com/themes-to-contest-a-culture-where-work-picadors/>

a shower head, she had to force her work and under hard labor and poor twenty-five cents per hour (Garcia 27). Moreover, despite most of the Cubans being socialists, Lourdes is depicted as a capitalist thus her constant despise towards the revolution is evident. This provides the divides that existed in migrants working for family as opposed to "togetherness" observed in the novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*. Some of the Cuban's thought of work as the best reform that is why they had an opinion of Raul Castro as "Reform."

" Another common theme in the two texts communicates the message of adolescence is depicted through the female relationships and subjected tasks. In *Dreaming of Cuban*, the author shows the existing rift between the Felicia and her mother, Celia. Felicia constant struggle with her mother depicts her as a crazy person and in most cases her conversations with her father. Garcia indicates that at one time Felicia burned her menstrual blood out of her anger (150). Celia's struggles are evidenced even towards her siblings when the author pointed out that " How is it possible that Celia can help her neighbors and be of no use at all to her children?" (Garcia 117). Felicia's lack of commitment as seen with Estrella is considered the primary cause of family rancor (Garcia 107).

Pilar, another character in the novel proves that the novel is full of mother and daughter struggle. For instance, the author indicates that once the family moved to America, there was a loss of touch between Lourdes and Celia and rebel was part of the Pilar's life. The family is said to have been very united while they were in Cuba but their migration to America brought about the constant breakups. When Lourdes learned about her daughter's

(Pilar) behavior of sexually pleasuring herself using a head of a shower she had to punish her (27).

Pilar seemed to struggle as an adolescent whose attachment with the mother was minimal. As opposed to the mother and daughter struggle in *Dreaming in Cuban*, Viramontes provides a strong relationship between Estrella and her mother. Thus, the author of this novel focused more on the burden bequeathed to female which included young adolescent girls.

For instance, the chores of the female are laid down including the additional responsibility of cleaning, cooking as well as taking care of the children (Viramontes 60). As a young girl and despite her hard work and being extremely exhausted, Estrella is also expected to take part in the cooking (Viramontes 63). This novel is somehow different from *Dreaming in Cuban* because it shows the treatment of male children as different from that of the female. For example, there are no chores given to both Estrella and Perfecto brothers.

The responsibility of the mother in this novel is precisely laid down and more emphasis placed than in the other text. The author, in this case, compares Petra's belly growing child to a cotton sack which even in the fields must be hauled (Viramontes 51). However, in both texts, the importance of mother towards their children is reflected and considered as the ultimate responsibility for their children. In conclusion, it is doubtless that the two texts have provided similar and different aspects of the theme of work and female relationships and tasks bequeathed to them by the society.

The two texts consider work to be part of the migrant's way of life and the only survival mechanism. However, the two texts theme of work differs regarding the willingness family members to work as well as the perceptions of the characters towards work. Furthermore, the texts also change in regard to the relationship between daughters and their mothers. In *Under the Feet of Jesus*, the author depicts the strong relationship between the mother and daughter, but this reflected a constant struggle between Felicia and Celia as well as between Pilar and Lourdes. Despite sharing these two themes, the author of the two texts seems to differ on various issues about the themes.