

Brazilian Dream, an analysis of textual structure

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Abstract

Among the literature theories the issue of migration has been extensively debated due to the movements resultant of both globalization advancements and, to some extent, post-colonial experience. Known as The Melting Pot, the United States has been the set of many stories about cultural assimilation or rejection. With this in mind, the story *Brazilian Dream* depicts the aspiration the main character whose plans of emigrating from EUA to Brazil as an escape from the social problems of Detroit fits structurally into the immigrant narrative discourse. This paper, then, intends to analyze textual evidence – such as cultural displacement and generation perspective change – as proof that this story is representative of immigrant literature (IL).

Introduction

The story is divided in three parts. The first part presents the narrator as a “Brazilian born in the US”. His father and mother moved to Detroit probably due to the expansion of automotive industries. The concept of work migration is clearly referred to in this first part of the text. Also, it is possible to notice that the father tries to forget his Brazilian cultural background while the mother is depicted as reminiscent of it. In the middle of these two cultural standpoints, the narrator seems to be inclined to his father’s point of view because it “is always in consonance with what [he] heard from everybody else”.

By presenting Brazil as a corrupt jungle through a narrow and stereotypical point of view, the author gives the reader an opportunity to believe it or not. The narrator, for instance, probably has no knowledge of his parents’ home country reality and, therefore, his father’s stereotypical view largely influences and shapes his thoughts of Brazil. Still, the narrator’s desire to travel back to Brazil remains strong. The narrator’s eagerness of escaping from Detroit characterizes a sort of cultural displacement; it is not only the social issues of the city that prompt him to move back to Brazil and learn about his cultural background.

The second part of the story portrays a series of unconnected events that corroborates for the narrator's migration movement. The social issues of Detroit are once again central allusions in the story. The narrator, for example, is "lucky enough to have a job" referring to the lack of job offer. Another example is the decay of the population and the city with its "seventy-eight thousand abandoned constructions". These aspects contribute to the comparison between the social status of immigrants in EUA and strengthen their intention of coming back to Brazil. It is important to notice that the same motives that caused the primary migration from Brazil to Detroit – urban violence, job opportunities, and the American Dream – were also responsible for the secondary migration of the next generation back to Brazil.

The third and final part is set in Brazil. Here, the character's displacement is aggravated. If he didn't feel part of the cultural environment in the United States, he is also not seen as a Brazilian in this new environment. Hence, he fails to establish both his American and his Brazilian identity. The narrator is then placed in between cultures and incapable of forming an identity in order to find a place where he belongs to. Both, the return of second generation due to lack of job offer and the struggle to belong to a specific culture are similarly depicted in immigrant texts that deal with the Japanese descendants who either went to Japan or returned from there to Brazil.

The final scene reveals what the text had already foreshadowed; the whole story happened in a dream. Being set in a dream justifies instances such as the narrator's lack of knowledge of his parents' home country, and the influence of his father's exaggerated stereotypical point of view. The dream also means that such point of view might not be real, only a bad dream.

In conclusion, various aspects of Immigrant Literature can be found in the short story. For example, the search for an identity in a mixed cultural environment; the work migration of different generations and the discussion about stereotypical points of view of the other's nation. The fact that these and other features of IL can be found in the text support the idea that *Brazilian Dream* is structurally representative of texts that compose migrant literatures.

Analysis

Theorists might argue that more than textual structure is needed in order to situate a text into a specific category. Therefore, this analysis will adapt five factors used to analyze Afro-Brazilian texts and apply them to the short story *Brazilian Dream* in order to evaluate its correspondence to other immigrant literature texts. These factors were put forward by Duarte (2008) regarding Afro-Brazilian Literature and consist of theme, authorship, point of view, language and public.

The **theme** of the story is clearly coherent with the ones addressed by immigrant writers such as search for identity and dislocated culture. In general, the textual analysis presented in the previous introduction shows that the text is thematically and structurally representative of IL. The **language** of the text is also built in order to portray the discourse of IL texts bringing up cultural, social, and identity issues. According to the author, for example, it is necessary to talk about food and the untranslatable synesthetic reminiscence they bring up so that the text depicts the immigrant experience. By debating such issues, the author also addresses an implied reader, the migrant or those interested in migrant literature.

The **authorship** factor must consider biographic and phenotypic features as well as social background of the author. In this case, the preface of the text states very well that the author does not come from a migrant descent. The author affirms that he would like to move to Detroit in order to have the immigrant experience; still, moving would be enough to be immersed in the struggle of immigrants. In this case, even though the theme, language, and implied reader addressed support the text as being immigrant literature, the **public** (the real reader) reception must be considered. There are several cases where the public does not accept that a certain author militate in favor of their cause because he or she did not experience the immigrant struggles firsthand. In the same way, the author's **point of view**, his moral and ideological values, might not be endorsed by the real reader as opposed to the implied reader envisioned by the author if he or she is not an actual participant of their community.

In conclusion, *Brazilian Dream* is representative of immigrant literature in several aspects such as structure, theme, and language. Other aspects could only be analyzed through research of the text's reception and; therefore, cannot be considered as an obstacle to say that this text is indeed immigrant in its core.

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