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Estrangement and Reunion in Jorge Franco's *Paradise Travel*

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ABSTRACT

Human migration is not a new thing, it is an old concept deep rooted into our gene. Many myths found in all cultures are on the theme of leaving home territory. Migration is the concept and contemporary human condition that on which man is born under. There are two trends in addressing exile by individuals in general, the negative trend and the positive trend. A negative point of view describes the separation from the home space, perceived by the individual as a breaking pain or as a constructive penalty, which is a reward in the negative sense of something bad committed in the past. The positive point of view is an artistic creativity in exile. It is in the broad sense includes those works, which from a thematic and aesthetic point of view are mainly devoted to the native habitat and the norms of its culture. The fictional themes, myths and ideas proposed by writers are consequences of their change from the experiences of the native country. The novel *Paradise Travel* deals with the reunion of, the young couple who are in exile.

Keywords: Migration, Culture, Separation, Reunion, devotion.

Jorge Franco Ramos, born in Medellin in 1962, is a Colombian novelist and short story writer. He is one of the young urban writers in Colombia. He studied literature at the Universidad Javeriana in Bogota and film in London. He received a series of literary prize in Colombia and one in Spain for his writing.

Franco's first novel *Mala Noche* (Bad Night), won the national Ciudad De Pereira competition of 1997. He is best known for his novel of disaffected youth in Medellin, *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), it was made into a film in Colombia under the title *Rosario Tijeras* in 2005

and the novel won Premio de Novel adsahiehlhammett Prize in (2000) in the Spanish city and the translation by Rabassa adds Credit to it. Franco's third novel *Paraiso Travel* (2001), focus on the urban accounts of violence, death and human desperation. The novel was made into a film by Colombian director Simon Brand and was in released in January 2008 with a musical score directed by renowned Colombian singer Fonseca.

Franco's voice is wonderfully preserved in Katherine Silver's accomplished translation named *Paradise Travel*. The novel *Paradise Travel* is a fine

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urban novel that focuses on the central character Marlon who is like to enter the United States illegally, not for the promise of elusive riches, but for the love of a woman.

Katherine Silver has translated the works of many Spanish and Latin American authors, including Antonio Skarmeta, Jose Emilio Pacheco, Elena Poniatowska, Martin Adam, Pedro Lemebel, and Jorge Franco. Her translation of *Paraiso Travel* to *Paradise Travel*, best narrates the idea of Jorge Franco about the desperate love, separation and pain of missing to the readers.

In *Paradise Travel*, Franco turns his lens from his own country outward to examine the life of an illegal Colombian immigrant in New York City. The narrative unfolds in two alternating time frames, shifting back and forth between lower-middle class Colombia and immigrant New York, a storytelling technique in which stream of consciousness is handled quite aptly by Franco.

As the novel begins, Marlon Cruz, a teenager living with his parents in Medellin, is trying to gain entry into the local University. Marlon is being seduced by his obsessive girlfriend Reina, who forces him to immigrate a long with her to United States. When their request for the elusive visa is denied, Reina steals ten thousand dollar from a relative and pays a conniving travel agent from the Paradise Travel Agency to arrange illegal passage through Mexico. Finally Marlon exile for the sake of his girlfriend Reina and decides to begin a new life in New York.

The narrator addresses it as hellish journey as both are being extorted and abused on their way to Central America, through Mexico, to reach New York without any documentation. The misguidance of Reina's cousin Gloria led Marlon to face the consequences. Both Marlon and Reina were left empty handed and the greedy nature of Reina became the root cause for their separation. The following night was a hectic one they were unaware of, Marlon was being chased by the policemen and got himself lost in the streets of the Queen. The loneliness made him to regret for not lending his ear to the words of Reina.

Marlon and Reina are being set apart in the city of New York. As Marlon cannot read and understand English language, he did not get any way to go back to the motel. With this separation and pain of missing his love, the first part gets over.

The second frame time encompasses Marlon's narration during a bus trip from New York to Miami to see Reina whom he has located after a fifteen month of feverish search. During the trip Marlon observes the people travelling along with him and in particular he watches over a stout lady and starts his conversation. Gradually stream of consciousness flows, Marlon remembers his distant past life in Medellin, his initial infatuation and eventual love affair with Reina and his subsequent struggles in Queen. Marlon's journey through the underbelly of Queen and his transformation is revealing his climatic reacquaintance with Reina is saddening.

Franco's typical harsh realism is balanced by humor and a sharp but sensitive eye for the constantly shifting panorama of life in the United States and in Colombia, Cinematic and unforced; Franco's voice is wonderfully preserved in Katherine Silver's translated work.

The first time frame of the novel begins with the love between the central characters and flows through with their exile to New York City. This part ends with the suffering, separation and pain of missing. As the second time frame opens Marlon goes on migration in search of his girlfriend Reina and finally both gets reunited. Here in this novel the just with regard to the exile literature is depicted through the theme of separation and reunion, where the characters explicit the greediness towards the sophisticated life which brings a very big taboo to their life. After all these hurdles they reunited due to their inseparable love.

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