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## **Journey of Men and Depiction of Severe Masculinity in the Novel The Devil's Highway**

In May of 2001 a group of men tried to cross the border into the deadly desert of southern Arizona. A place called Devil's Highway, where immigrants with hopes of a better life in America come and die trying to cross the deadliest region. The Devil's Highway is a story of astonishing courage and strength. It's about an epic battle against the deadly desert climate and fight against border patrol.

Throughout the book, Urrea shows how the different people involved in the events take certain actions in accordance with their ideas of what it means to be a man. As their backgrounds show, they have a strong belief that they must, as honorable men, provide for their families. Everything the men go through in the desert is to benefit somebody else and make their families lives better. They struggle so their loved ones won't.

As the book goes on, all the men tell their life stories and why it was important for them to get to America. Reymundo Barreda and his son decided to go north to pick oranges in Florida to make money for his family and to expand and reroof his house as a gift for his wife. The only reason his son decided to go along with his father was as a gesture of loyalty and to also help the family. Mario Castillo Fernandez was 25 year old man, married to Irma. He has two young children and made it his mission to get money to pay for them to go to school. In America he hoped to pick oranges in Florida to finance his family's dream of a better life. Enrique Landeros García was a 30 year old man, married to Octavia.

He hoped to travel north to earn money to send home to his son, Alexis, for school. Even after him and his three brothers get caught by border patrol they still persisted to make another attempt during the Wellstone 26 tragedy. Rafael Temich González was a 28 year-old man from Apixtla who worked as a corn farmer. Not only does he have to work to support his wife and daughter, but his mother, two sisters, and their four daughters. He wanted to reach the Carolinas to earn more money to support them. Reyno Bartolo Hernandez was a 37 year-old man married to Agustina. The couple decided to adopt a daughter and Reyno goes to Don Moi for money to pay for her care. Julian Ambros Malaga was a 24 year old former soldier whos married and expecting a child. He needed to get more money before the baby arrives, and so he could build cement walls for his mother's house. These sons, husbands and fathers all wanted the same thing, to help their families

In Devils Highway there is a reason why there weren't any women that walked the deadly desert. During that time, it was extremely common for women to stay home and take care of the kids and house chores, while the men went out to work and provided. This is why the men set out for America to further provide for their wives and children. This is the masculine mentality that most men have. Men are always portrayed as tough and strong while the women are weak and helpless. Due to this, society believed that women were not cut out for crossing the desert and it was more of a man's duty.

Due to there severe masculinity and common feeling of machismo that they are tough, the men in Devil's Highway didn't come prepared to walk the dessert. Consequently, this leads to the

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decline in their health and later will cost them their lives. As Urrea indicates, “ They bought candies and chocolates and wicked salted prunes called saladitos and sweet chili paste in stained plastic envelopes. They bought small water bottles and jugs. A few of them had a cold Pepsi’s for breakfast and they put bottles of Pepsi in the bags thinking a nice cool soda would be just the ticket once they got into the desert”(Urrea 101).

As the walkers began walking the hot desert they soon realized this was not the case and that they would need a lot more supplies to last the long journey. Pepsi and chips wouldn't cut it, out in the deadly Devils Highway. If the roles were reversed and women were the ones that went on the journey, they most likely would have packed better and made sure they had everything they would need to make it to their destination still in good health.

Another flaw and common trait that men possess, is the pursuit of power and money. This explains the motives of why the male coyotes decided to smuggle the walkers and eventually lead them to their deaths. Ever since the beginning of time men craved power and would do anything they needed to do to get this power. Even if this is at someone else's expense. An important theme that displays this in the book is Coyote vs. chicken. In Devil's Highway the walkers are commonly referred to as “pollos” meaning cooked chicken. Coyotes are higher up on the food chain of border gangs, just like the coyotes are in the wild. By giving them a nickname taken from an animal just shows the dehumanizing culture between the coyote and walkers. The ones who end up being the most vulnerable are the “cooked chickens” at the bottom of the food chain.

Fierce and wild coyotes prey upon the smaller, more defenseless chickens and the symbolism of these identities speaks to the ruthlessness, as well as the seeming unstoppable power dynamic along the border. Power isn't the only thing that men crave, money is also something else they strive for an example of this in the book is how the coyotes and gangs cared more about the walkers money than the walkers themselves. The walkers were robbed of their money and belongings and were basically left on their own in the desert. As long as the coyotes got their money they didn't care what happened to you out in the desert. Due to the power/money hungry man, the walkers joined the other victims that lost their lives to the Devil's Highway.

In conclusion the codes of masculinity plays a huge role in the book and in the travelers motives, beliefs, and behaviors. Being a man lead to the outcome of the journey and lead to the deaths of the Yuma 14. The walkers crossed the desert because it's in men's nature to take care of their families. Also the mens machismo made them believe that they could handle the deadly desert with very few supplies. The last thing that sealed the walkers fate was the money and power driven side of the coyotes, something every man has inside of them.