**Volar Judith Ortiz Cofer Summary**

"Volar," authored by Judith Ortiz Cofer, is a short story narrated first by a twelve-year-old girl in a poverty-stricken neighborhood. The protagonist is grappling with emotional and self-image issues common to girls her age. She is an enthusiastic reader and collector of comic books, particularly those featuring female superheroes like Supergirl. However, she feels she differs from these characters, and her family's financial situation limits her experiences. Ortiz Cofer uses symbolism to enhance the story's setting, emphasizing the impact of poverty, confinement, and media stereotypes on young girls' daily struggles. The story highlights how these girls yearn to be self-assured and carefree like the idealized female figures they see in books and magazines but can only imagine."

In this short narrative, the word "Volar," meaning "to fly," is a powerful symbol that illustrates the desire to escape from the small barrio where the story is set. The protagonist mentions this urge to flee at least twice, highlighting the social setting and its limitations on individuals. For instance, the young girl has a recurring dream where she transforms into a superhero who can fly over the city and observe the lives of others, indicating her desire to escape her own life and compare it to that of others.

Similarly, the protagonist's mother also wants to escape the dismal alleyway view from their apartment, wishing she could fly away. This shows that the young girl and her mother share the same aspiration to escape poverty and their current living situation. In this way, the concept of flight symbolizes their desire for a better life.

Through this powerful symbol, the author Judith Ortiz Cofer effectively conveys the complex themes of identity, escapism, and the search for freedom in the story. The symbol of flight represents the characters' yearning for a life beyond their current circumstances and underscores the emotional and psychological impact of their social setting on their lives.

The young girl's dreams also reflect the impact of media stereotypes on girls who don't fit the idealized images portrayed in publications. The protagonist admires a female superhero who possesses qualities such as strength, power, and beautiful hair, which the girl desires for herself. She believes long blond hair symbolizes beauty and power, as seen in her fantasies.

However, when the girl wakes up from her dreams, she realizes her physical appearance is unlike the idealized female models she sees in books and periodicals. She describes her disappointment in her appearance, saying that her hair is still tightly curled, her limbs and legs are skinny, and she is flat-chested.

The media influences children, and societal pressures young girls face to conform to idealized beauty standards are evident here. The girl's admiration for the female superhero in the comic book reflects the impact of media stereotypes on her aspirations and self-esteem.

In summary, the story depicts the media's harmful influence on children's self-image and aspirations. It highlights young girls' societal pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards.

Throughout the novel, the setting conveys a sense of imprisonment and the protagonist's yearning to escape from her surroundings. Judith Ortiz Cofer skillfully employs symbolism to connect the dots and emphasize this theme. For example, the girl's prized comic books are piled up in her closet, suggesting that her bedroom is too small to accommodate them. This symbolizes the protagonist's desire for space and freedom.

Likewise, the girl feels physically restricted in her small apartment when she transforms into Supergirl on the rooftop. This represents the protagonist's feelings of being trapped in her impoverished barrio and wanting to escape to a better life.

The girl's dreams of flying above the barrio suggest she has had limited opportunities to experience life outside her neighborhood, a common issue in impoverished households. Through her descriptions, Cofer emphasizes the protagonist's feelings of being trapped in her existing circumstances and her belief that escaping her surroundings will require superpowers.

In summary, the novel uses symbolism and vivid descriptions of the setting to convey the protagonist's sense of imprisonment and her desire to escape from her surroundings. The novel highlights the struggles of impoverished households and the limited opportunities available to individuals living in such circumstances.

As a young girl escapes her difficult reality through her dreams and imagination, "Volar" is rich with symbolism. She lives in a small apartment with her impoverished family and has limited experience in the world. The main character has poor self-esteem and longs to flee reality by becoming Supergirl from her favorite comic book. The author, Judith Ortiz Cofer, enhances the atmosphere of the narrative by using symbolism to portray poverty, imprisonment, and the influence of the media on a girl's self-image.

**Reference**

Cofer*, Judith O. 'Volar.' The Norton Introduction to Literature. Ed. Kelly Mayes. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016. 203-205. Print.*