

Masculinity in the brief wondrous life of oscar wao



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, written by Junot Diaz, sex and masculinity is the vital element in being a Dominican male. Dominican males according to Yunior, the narrator of the novel, is someone who has power and pizzazz, dominates women, controls female sexuality through physical violence and verbal aggression and lastly protects their family. Oscar, a title character in the novel is struggling with his social status and being portrayed as having no game when it came to the ladies. He was described as being a “palomo” which is a dude that cannot get any girls for the life of him. On the other hand Yunior, is the definition of a Dominican man. He has every trait you could possibly think of and definitely does not have a hard time sleeping with every girl at one time. Yunior has the swagger and “G,” in comparison to Oscar, who lacks all ability to be considered a Dominican male with masculinity.

Oscar is what Dominican men would look at as being nerdy and lacking all traits of being one of them. Throughout the book he was emasculated for so many things he did differently or found interest in and because of that he was called many names, for example: a mariconcito which is a “little faggot,” Gordo asqueroso “fat slob,” and basically a loser for enjoying the fantasy anime world the way he did. His goal in life is finding a woman who will reciprocate the love he gives, but homeboy had no such luck with the ladies and when it comes down to it, never finds that love. “Fuku” which generally is a curse or doom of some kind, also called the “Fuku of the Admiral” because the admiral was both the midwife and one of the great European victims; despite “discovering” the new world the Admiral died miserable and syphilitic, hearing Devine. Oscar’s Fuku begins when he is in,

what Diaz describes as his Golden age. He loved the ladies and was always trying to kiss all the girls, this guy was even so lucky to have two girlfriends at one time. The two girls only lasted one week, when Oscar is told he must slap Maritza, one of the girls, in order to “ make the little puta respect him”, and to eliminate all that weird sci-fi crap he was interested in to avoid being known as a loser. When he doesn’t listen to the advice given to him he realizes that was the last he would have of any type of play, seven years old and he wouldn’t hold another hand or kiss another girl until he was well into his adult life. Yunior states, “ It wasn’t just that he didn’t have a father to show him the masculine ropes, he simply lacked all aggressive and martial tendencies.” By making Oscar out to be this non masculine man, Diaz still wants to show that Oscar is capable of getting ahead and making a different life for himself, other than the Dominican way that he stayed struggling in because of the choices he made for himself.

Yunior in comparison is the total opposite, he is the manliest man. He is the epitome of a Dominican man with all the masculinity one needs in order to get everything one wants. Yunior has swagger, he is muscular and is so sexual. Everything that Oscar lacks. On all accounts Yunior tries to help Oscar with all of the traits he knows the poor guy is struggling with, whether it was working out with him and trying to get him somewhat into shape, or hitting on girls, even though the poor guy had absolutely no stability or depth to him. Since Yunior already feels bad for being able to get whatever he wanted when he wanted, he decided to take Oscar in and teach him everything he could. Though Yunior has all this game and masculinity, he still finds ways to mess up every good thing going for himself and loses the one

thing that mattered the most, Lola, Oscar's sister. Oscar and Yunior are obviously opposites when it comes to Dominican masculinity and for this reason they are used in comparison to one another.

Fast forward to a few years later, when Oscar returns back to the Dominican Republic, he comes across Ybon, an older prostitute who he falls completely in love with. This woman puts him through the works and because a female had never shown him the affection that Ybon was giving him, he faced love as well as death shortly after. Ybon has a man who controls her every move who goes by the name of "the captain," and when the captain gets wind of Oscar trying to scoop on his lady, he sends his men after Oscar. Before the captain's men kill Oscar, he gives a speech, proving that after all the years of not upholding the Dominican male standard that he indeed has stayed true to his manhood and ultimately loses his life for what he wanted and believed was the most sacred thing, love. The one thing that Oscar did do for Yunior, was show him the importance and obligations of manhood and what masculinity really was. When Yunior finds out about Oscar's death, he finds a new understanding of what he needs to do so, he finally settles down, gets married and teaches creative writing.

The character of Yunior was created to contrast the differences in Oscar. Yunior is the main man, the machismo, and most important the ultimate Dominican male, who saves Oscar whenever he comes across a situation he cannot get out of. Oscar was created to show that just because you fall under a certain ethnicity or group does not mean you will attain the same traits that the others have. When Diaz shows Yunior vulnerable at the end of the story and explaining how, if he could of just been the man that Oscar

was, maybe his life would have ended up differently. Maybe he would have had the woman he truly was in love with. The fact is the difference between these two men not only shows the readers that it's okay to not have certain attributes, but also that someone will still learn something from you and will take it for the rest of their lives, whether you are alive to witness it or not.

In the novel these two characters learn from each other and also from their experiences that have brought them this far in life. Oscar witnesses first-hand how hard it is to be a Dominican man with all the masculinity that comes along with it and has to accept that he will never be that masculine Dominican male, and Yunior finds that having all the power and ladies isn't everything and finally is able to overcome the masculinity his culture believes is so important to possess. Diaz constantly shows his reader throughout the novel the contrast between these two characters, and explains that even though they are opposites, they somehow manage to be the same in many ways. The Dominican masculinity is something men of this ethnicity are born into, but in some cases, like Oscar, don't necessarily gain or understand ever.