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Identity Crisis Through Intergenerational Trauma in The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

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Abstract

With racial harmony being the zeitgeist of many political rhetoric across the world, discourses on understanding ethnicities and nations that go through troubled history are as important as ever. Intergenerational trauma is ubiquitous in discussing fictional works that involve themes tantamount to significant events like World War II, racial segregation, gender discrimination in family institutions, and political strife, which is the core of the narrative in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. The objective of this research is to fill in the gap left in previous research on the presence of trauma, where most of the focus is only on intergenerational trauma aspect of the plot that contributes to the trauma, not on Oscar's struggles with Dominican identity crisis which resulted from said trauma. The methodology that the research will be using is on exploring Mervyn Bendle's four modern problems of identity crisis, with the first being that the self is seen as an inner place that can to be examined by the narrator, the second is the idea of human potential, the third being crumbling idea of hierarchy, and lastly, the change of self-definition. The research concludes that the main character's identity crisis, where he struggles as both an American and a Dominican, is a result of an intergenerational fear towards the long deceased Dominican Republic's infamous dictator, Rafael Trujillo. The trauma was reinforced in the protagonist's upbringing, causing him to bear consistent resentment towards society in his brief lifetime. It is suggested that future research examine other ethnicities or communities affected by similar intergenerational traumas in other works of fiction, so a much greater case can be built in gaining better insight on how such external tormentor can be a burden on generations to come.

Keywords: Bendle, Identity Crisis, Intergenerational Trauma, Junot Diaz, PTSD

Introduction

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Literary Works

The American Psychiatric Association defines trauma as the direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, with the response involving symptoms of fear, helplessness, or horror (2000). Roger Luckhurst explains these symptoms and divides them into three sets of clusters. The first set is the usual re-experiencing of the traumatic events, via flashbacks that are highly invasive, repetition of the

same dreams and of course, situations that appear eerily similar to the event. This is used extensively by psychiatrists to dive into the minds of the troubled clients, applying psychoanalytic methods to understand the images that constantly unsettle the victims. (Luckhurst, 2007) The second set represents an avoidance of any thoughts or feelings that may relate to the event, to the extent of a manifestation of emotional numbing towards the event.

Countless works of fiction are no strangers to these experiences. Cathy Caruth, one of the pioneering voices within the trauma theory, owes a lot to her work of deconstructing of Freud's long established but consistently controversial Psychoanalysis theory, where Caruth claims trauma's invisibility and disconnection for the patient oversimplifies our prior understanding towards experiences that are traumatic (1995), and that the inability to understand what causes the fear (despite the need to understand it) creates the paradox that torments the victims (Caruth, 1995). Caruth's focus discusses much of the limits of the human languages in perceiving the traumatic experience.

Throughout the years there have been constant rethreads of the theory, some built upon Caruth's work but there is also criticism from other scholars. For example, Kali Tal wrote about how trauma cannot be simply replicated, and it should only occur "beyond the bounds of normal" (2004), which itself invited criticism, including from Caruth herself. In her work, *The Unclaimed Experience*, which she reaffirms her stance that traumatic responses stem from the state of not knowing to "encode" the said event, continuing to haunt the survivor (1991).

In literary works, it is easy to look at Duong Thu Huong's *The Novel Without a Name* (1996), where the main character experiences morbid dreams of his late mother, his darker memories of the Vietnam war and even a ghostly appearance of his ancestors. Such warped or disfigured manifestations usually arises from the relationship of phenomenological experience, specific to the trauma of the victim, according to (Hamilton, 2020). It is also mentioned that these pervasive appearances to the victims are cultural or individually driven monsters (Diaz, 2007), similar to the faceless figure that ubiquitously appears in visions for different characters in Diaz's work.

Trauma victims may also demonstrate explosive temper and exaggerated startle response. This is an aftermath of the second set, where the avoidances create an aggressive self within the individual, resulting in the symptoms of being agitated. It should be noted that trauma is inflicted not exactly by the event, as Kai Erikson puts it: "In classical medical usage, 'trauma' refers not to the *injury* inflicted but to the *blow* that inflicted it, not to the *state of mind* that ensues, but to the *event* that provoked it" (Erikson, 1976). In a simpler way of putting it, the wounds may not necessarily be the idea that haunts the victim, but rather the object (be it a person or event) that caused the pain and feelings of trauma. The troubled state of mind and the mind's injury is the result of the experience.

In a simpler way of putting it, the wounds may not necessarily be the idea that haunts the victim, but rather the object (be it a person or event) that caused the pain and feelings of trauma. The troubled state of mind and the mind's injury is the result of the experience. Similar sentiment can be put towards how we perceive trauma in works of fiction as well. The trauma novel can be described as notable works that demonstrate great fear and death in the sufferer's part, and this experience can encapsulate the individual or even through "collective levels" (Balaev, 2014).

Not long after the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder's acceptance in the medical and psychology fields, a surge of trauma themed novels rose within the literary ranks. One of the

most notable works are Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), a novel about the struggles of an African American slave, set after the American Civil War, where traces of extreme trauma are found in a post American Civil War setting, rife with the struggles of the African American slaves. Huda al-Massani describes *Beloved* as Morrison's way of to reviving the trauma that the African American community went through, narrating their stories of tortures, sufferings, dehumanization, and humiliation to heal these irreversible wounds that have been caused by (Slavery, 2018).

Another novel that has proven to be an important work is Margaret Atwood's *Cat Eye* (1988) a novel about a painter reliving a troubled childhood. Where Morrison focuses on deeply rooted racism, Atwood's feminist work focuses on terrors of patriarchy to women where the novel discusses a buried trauma of an abusive bond between the two main female characters. The *Cat's Eye* presents the idea where the oppressor (which is Cordelia) is in fact, is a similarly weak and oppressed character like the protagonist, Elaine, both victims in conforming to expectations of the patriarchal laws set by men, (Vukelic, 2020) taking place in the 1940s before feminism was discussed more academically involved in American politics.

Presence of Intergenerational Trauma in Notable Works of Fiction

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao takes place in 1970s, depicting individuals in a Dominican community. The traumas that are discussed relate with a generational fear towards the identity of the people of diaspora, all rippled from the Dominican Republic's heinous dictator, Rafael Trujillo. Trujillo, (made infamous through the 1930s *el-corte* or the Parsley Massacre) was notorious for the imprisonment and assassinations of high-profile dissenters, resistance members and activists, most notably the Mirabal sisters. Lastly, his deceptive recruitment of women in his ranks to disillusion Dominicans with signs of progressive movements, led to even more violence in his years in power (Manley, 2012). The author uses an interesting line that was brought up in the novel by one of the characters which is Lola, Oscar's sister, who said in the novel, "*Ten million Trujillos is all we are,*" (Diaz, 2007). This warrants a comparison on how the Dominicans associate Rafael Trujillo as part of being a Dominican, showing a transmitted fear, one that is generationally inherited among the community, even when they are not in the Dominican Republic itself, and Trujillo himself has passed for almost a decade.

This is a testament of a trauma that transcends a generation, outlasting an individual's lifetime due to it being passed on to their children. Dominick LaCapra defines this as the intergenerational trauma, which is in his own words: "The way those not directly living through an event may nonetheless experience and manifest its posttraumatic symptoms, something especially prominent in the children or intimates of survivors or perpetrators who are possessed of and even by, the past and tend to relive what others have lived. (2004)"

It may seem preposterous to claim that trauma could be passed down to children like a genetic trait, but the scientific explanation behind this is sound. Research into the "epigenetics", (a term used to describe the biological control of the DNA) shows that traumatic situations leave a chemical mark on a individual's genes, which is then possibly passed inherited by the individual's offspring, according to a New York Times article by (Benedict Carey, 2018). This further validates the fears that the characters in the novel constantly exhibit, towards a traumatizing historical figure like Rafael Trujillo, even if it is their parents who lived the nightmare under his administration. Caruth herself also suggested a possibility of a collective trauma, one that is contagious, and passed through generations (1995). Her argument is that such fears and experiences are inherited through verbal or

written acts of remembering. Other critics have jumped on this theory, one of them claiming that this reduces trauma into a less significant condition, since how it can be experienced by everyone through Caruth's perspective (Farell, 1998).

This transgenerational trauma is not necessarily a literal transmission of fear to the younger generation, but instead the children inherit the symptoms related to the wound or trauma, gaining the unconscious wound without the need to understand it according to Melinda Gustavson, 2021). Gustavson also uses an example from *There There* (2018) a novel about the native Americans who went through a harrowing time integrating themselves in a community with negative perception towards their community. These behaviours, such as the younger characters' distancing themselves from their connections to the tribe they belong to, are signs of behavioural responses towards the violence of colonisation, a possible case of identity crisis, in order to disassociate themselves from an identity that has brought so much trauma (Gustavson, 2021).

Similar arguments can be made for Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) where the main character grapples between the Bengali identity that was brought by the Indian parents (his mother specifically) and his American upbringing, symbolized through his pet name, Gogol. Though it may be debatable to say that Gogol is afraid of his Indian identity, his initial avoidance towards anything Bengali (relationships, lifestyle) suggests an innate disdain from being identified as Bengali and not an American, reflected in Nikhil or Nick, being his name of choice.

Identity Crisis

We can understand identity crisis better through Erik Erikson's psychosocial Stages of Development, which is still considered to relevant in today's sea of thousands of theoretical and empirical publications (Cote, 2018). The Stages of Development theory houses eight stages, and James E. Cote wrote about important events in an individual's life can shape their identities throughout these stages, for better or worse (2018), which is in line with Erikson's idea of using soldiers affected by their experiences from World War II. These individuals went through trauma that robbed their sense of self, having a past and future as a temporally continuous entity, leading to the impairment of their ego identity, which is described in the fifth stage of his development theory, Identity vs. Role Confusion (Erikson, 1968)

However, Erikson's theory on human development is no stranger to criticism. The Identity vs. Role Confusion stage mentioned above is criticized for it being limited to teenage individuals from 12 to 18, when some critics argue that crises of identity can happen to individuals far into their 20s (Archer, 1982). There is also the inevitable outlook from a more modern perspective. Factors like attending college, or middle-aged crisis faced by people can determine the age when such phase will occur (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

There have been numerous writings that have built up on Erikson's work, one of them being Mervyn F. Bendle, a Senior Lecturer in History and Communications in the School of Humanities at James Cook University. Bendle wrote a piece called *The Crisis of 'identity' in High Modernity* (2002) discussing on changing identities through sociological factors (2002). In it Bendle theorized the idea of four modern problems that constitutes the issue of identity crisis, which are the problematizing of self-knowledge, the valorization of human potential, the breakdown of hierarchies, and finally a new flexibility of self-definition. These four modern problems will help us dissect Oscar de Leon and provide much needed perspective towards our tormented protagonist.

The objective of this research is to fill in the gap left in previous researches the presence of trauma, where most of the focus is on intergenerational trauma or the magical realism aspect that contributes to the trauma, not on Oscar's struggles with Dominican identity crisis, which will be the research's focus.

Methodology

The analysis of this research will be on the identity crisis and will focus on specific fears exhibited by the characters inside the novel. According to Bendle: "Predictably under high modernity, a major area where there are dual crises of identity and 'identity' is mental health, both in its institutional form and its cultural representations. Increasingly, identities are seen as stalled, with society's 'rites of passage' failing and crucial transitions not being made. (Bendle, 2002) The statement above discusses the presence of identity crisis, with dual identities being the main idea. As Kluft and Foote describes it, their identities collapse to produce 'dissociative identity disorder'. Identity is seen as underdeveloped, and the individuals don't go through their supposed transitions in growth, all the result of heightened symptoms of depression, anxiety, and an increase of stress. Mervin Bendle stresses that the sense of uncertainty detected in the external world is directed inwards to create a sense of an unstable and untrustworthy self. This is consistent with the characters in the novels as the uncertainties faced externally in the society promotes feelings of uncertainty as well, with the self, facing the crisis of identity, in which traumatic feelings such as instability and a lack of trust towards the individual's own self.

Bendle also mentioned the four modern problems regarding identity crisis with the first being that the self is like an inner place that can only be analyzed by expert, or the narrator who tells the story. The second problem is the idea of human potential, where the society places importance on self-realization, rather than the idea of conforming to society's benchmarks. The third problem is crumbling idea of hierarchy, with individualism being the emphasis. The fourth problem is how self-definition has changed, where the lessening influence of rigid and highly predictable social construct means that defining identity is something that is not absolute, and the meaning shifts (2002). These problems will be used to assess the issues of identity experienced by the characters, though not all of them exist in the novel, so the problems will be used individually instead of using them all at once. Identity crisis also comes from detraditionalization, as mentioned by Baumeister, who argued that: "The new problem reflects the struggle with the modern tasks of identity formation, including the need to find a basis for making choices that will define the adult identity." (Baumeister, 1996)

The new problem here is defined by an external factor that hinders the construction of identity, and if such an event exists, the individual has a problem to project his identity as an adult, much like our main character Oscar, which we will be the main focus of analysis.

This research follows Caruth's pioneering definition on trauma, which frames it as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.", but will focus on the traumas of the protagonist, Oscar by evaluating his crises of identity that may have manifested the traumas of identity. This is done via Bendle's problems mentioned by Mervyn Bendle's work described above. Characters present in the novel suffer similar symptoms of trauma, where there are actual hallucinations, and these characters respond to these events in an often- delayed fashion.

Analysis

The protagonist, Oscar de Leon, spends most of his time in the novel isolated and alienated by the American society in the 1970s. He thus spends most of his childhood at home, with only his family, Yuniór and a few other friends who later will play integral roles in shaping his narrative. This failure to fit in any societies before him can be attributed to his disassociation with neither Dominican nor American, which are the supposed identities Oscar should identify as, at least on paper. Mervyn Bendle wrote an interesting insight on meeting the society's expectations on looks, which is also one of the problems regarding identity crisis: "Whereas identity had previously been defined in terms of rigid and predictable social structures and processes, their decline meant that identity and its definition must be based on shifting and non-absolute foundations." (2002) What Bendle meant in this statement is that identity used to be defined through severely limited social structures and processes, and that today this rigidity is hardly relevant, as defining identities is a lot more complex, and it progressively changes through time.

The context of the story however is in the late 1970s, where racism was still a social problem in the United States, proven in the number of residential segregation that remain unchanged (Fly and Reinhart, 1980) and though much less than it was decades before, they nonetheless remained quite high and continued to be unaffected by socioeconomic status (Intrator et al, 2016), so it does not really matter that Oscar is Dominican or American, his skin color points to him as being part of the black community and that is enough reason to be persecuted by his community. The excerpt below is an example the novel's description of Oscar's appearance: "That alas didn't happen. The white kids looked at his black skin and his afro and treated him with inhuman cheeriness." (Diaz, 2007) Oscar then mulls over this need for a sense of belonging the character was headed to college: "There was the initial euphoria of finding himself alone at college, free of everything, completely on his fucking own, and with it an optimism that here among these thousands of young people he would find someone like him." (Diaz, 2007) The excerpts above proves that Oscar has been suffering for quite some time from a trauma of identity, caused by his inability to fit in. He chose not to fit in and would rather take on the quest of finding another who resembles him. If not, the thought of being completely left alone, is at least, already a feeling of "euphoria" to Oscar.

This is a case of 'uncertainty' of the individual, as according to Bendle, this insecurity of the self is Oscar's doubt on himself that has manifested for such a long period of his life after all the alienation, found in the external world which is from his upbringing. This uncertainty is directed inwards towards the individual, creating an "unstable and untrustworthy self" (2002). This reflects Oscar's lack of trust towards himself and his confidence in making acquaintances with the people of any new environment, as he desperately looks for the possibility of finding someone like him instead of choosing to blend, which explains his 'excitement' to be alone.

His expectations went off-tangent from his reality, as the next few lines after the excerpt would indicate failure on his part to identify with a person like himself. If anything, this identity crisis that he reacquaints with, repeatedly, is echoed several times in the novel: "The kids of color, upon hearing him speak and move his body, shook their heads. You're not Dominican. And he said, over and over again, But I am. Soy Dominicano. Dominicano soy." (Diaz, 2007) In this excerpt, Oscar was clearly ostracized by both communities, both his Dominican origin and the Americans, the whites at least. No matter how many times he continues to reaffirm his identity as a Dominican, the Dominican society themselves don't see him as part of them. While in the modern society a black, overweight nerd may seem ordinary,

the book takes place in the 70s and 80s, and in this era, Oscar's skin color obviously sticks out among the crowd, while his size only adds insult to his predicament. This coincides with Bendle's fourth problem of the crisis of identity, where its definition must be based on its "shifting and non-absolute foundations." Unfortunately, the story represented a less liberal view on identity, and hence, Oscar's unfortunate difficulty finding the self, as at the time the United States were still plagued with massive issues of racism.

Littered throughout Oscar's narrative, Junot Diaz included important cultural pop references that aren't just hollow or cheeky references, as they are profound comparisons next to Oscar's plight. One example is in one of the footnotes within the story, is where Diaz mentions about *the X-Men*, a fictional comic book about the titular group of troubled mutants with superpowers. Diaz likens the X-Men to Oscar, as he wrote: "You really want to know what being an X-Man feels like? Just be a smart bookish boy of color in a contemporary U.S. Ghetto. Mamma mia! Like having bat wings or a pair of tentacles growing out of your chest." (Diaz, 2007)

While "having wings" or "tentacles growing out of your chest" aren't exactly what Oscar experienced, they do make for credible allegories to Oscar's plight. His appearance makes him an easy target, like the X-Men, in which their conditions provide impetus to be reviled by humanity for their inhuman external appearances, preventing assimilation and alienation inevitable. It is simply fitting that the X-Men is used here, as mentioned by Parks and Hughey (2017) the books and its enigmatic characters have always provided as an avenue for provocative racial allegory that have always been a fascination with those reading intently into each different generation of writers of the comics, addressing issues of assimilation and nationalism. In a way, Oscar is a 'mutant' to the societies that continuously push him into a self that seems to be void of any relatable identities, a result of fear towards identifying to both.

Within Yuniors narration, the X-Men was mentioned, not just because Oscar is obsessed with them, but also because they represent a more preferable versions of Oscar, albeit a wishful sense of escapism from his unfortunate reality, as these characters possess abilities that he might have wished he had, to address his personal vendetta on the society that have persecuted him. This can be linked to Bendle's first problem of the identity crisis where "the self was viewed as a vast inner continent that could only be explored with considerable difficulty and possibly with expert help" (2002). Oscar's lack of voice means that his "inner content" or his life story has to narrated with the help of an "expert" or a therapist, which in this context does not literally mean a therapist, but rather, the narrator, Yuniors. Through Yuniors help, Oscar can voice out the traumatic experiences that he felt, and along the way he relates them with these fictional characters and stories.

Oscar's time as an English and History teacher does not seem work out as well, as it never seemed to bode well with his timid personality, which never really changed throughout the course of the novel. During his tenure as an educator, Oscar suffered another form of bullying, sadly this time by students who are much younger than him. The reasons remain the same, as he was abused by students because of his looks, his large appearance, and his skin color, as can be seen from this excerpt: "Students laughed when they spotted him in the halls. Pretended to hide their sandwiches. Asked in the middle of lectures if he ever got laid, and no matter how he responded they guffawed mercilessly." (Diaz, 2007) The main reason why he is seen continuously ridiculed by his society can be attributed to the lack of rites of passage in Oscar's lifetime prior to this event. According to Kluft and Foote, identities are stalled when there is a lack of significant transition that changes a person's life, as Oscar's luck remains the

same in the novel (1999) Without this rite of passage, Oscar's identity remains the same, there is no reconciliation nor respect towards the much-maligned self, very little growth, making him an easy target to be abused by his society just as it was when he was younger.

Oscar also relives his memories of being an outcast by witnessing the bullying that happens to his more unfortunate students, where he sees the bullies torment those who aren't white. "the fat, the ugly, the smart, the poor, the dark, the black, the unpopular, the African, the Indian, the Arab, the immigrant, the strange, the feminino, the gay-and in every one of these clashes he saw himself." (Diaz, 2007) Here, Oscar is being reminded of his memories of his younger self, akin to a sudden experience of reliving the horrors of his older memories, constant with Caruth's definition of trauma, where Caruth proposed that "the response to the event occurs in the often-delayed fashion. Where it is a delayed response to hardships suffered when he was younger, through a similar situation that the excerpt depicts. We know he is reliving his own memories because Yunior mentioned that Oscar "saw himself" in every one of these victims.

This identity crisis also extends to another of Oscar's troubles, which is his luck with the opposite sex. While this issue may seem to have nothing to do with identity, Junot Diaz's depiction of the men, specifically of the stereotypical Dominican sort, as untamed 'Don Juans'. This idea of *Tíguerismo*, embodies a certain type of masculinity that Dominican men are expected to live up to. VanWormer discusses this in a dissertation, where *Tíguerismo* is defined as the ideal "hypermasculinity", a long-upheld machismo (2020), with criterion that are unmistakably sexist and propagates toxic masculinity. To put it simply, the man must be heterosexual, a womanizer, commands very masculine physical appearance and must deride those who aren't, which are weak and gay men, and of course, women. (VanWormer, 2020)

We only need to look at some of the real-life political characters mentioned in both the narrative and the footnotes to find examples of this stereotype. While it is unsurprising for dictators to have mistresses, Trujillo's carnivorous appetite for women is ridiculous, considering the fact that a record number of female employees were hired in his regime, even if at the time it was seen as a progressive move by the prolific dictator (Manley, 2012). Diaz also mentioned Porfirio Rubirosa, (described by Diaz as the original Dominican Player), who was a well-known Dominican playboy and an avid supporter of Rafael Trujillo in the 1940s. More importantly, Rubirosa was rather famous for his high-profile relationships with Hollywood celebrities such as Barbara Hutton and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

Unfortunately, Oscar did not fit into this stereotype of the Dominican swagger that attracts women, and Oscar is aware of him being an anomaly inside his own community of Dominicans. In the novel's fourth chapter, *Sentimental Education*, a conversation took place between Yunior and Oscar, with Oscar asking the question, "I have heard from a reliable source that no Dominican male has ever died a virgin. You who have experience in these matters-do you think this is true?" (Diaz, 2007). Again, this instils instability of his emotions as mentioned by Bendle (2002) as these feelings of uncertainty is directed inwards to create a sense of an unstable and untrustworthy self. We can also use Kluft and Foote's idea for the lack of rite of passage or a significant change. Oscar's lack of sexual experience makes him question his sense of worth, and him asking Yunior about this Dominican stereotype indicates that he is resigned to the fate of being a disappointment.

Throughout the novel, there are recurrences of the faceless man, almost bringing a tone of horror with each appearance. Here is an excerpt with his final appearance in the novel: "...but there was only a lone man sitting in his rocking chair out in front of his ruined house and for a moment Oscar swore the dude had no face" (Diaz, 2007)." It is possible to assume

that these occurrences may have just been a symptom of trauma. Caruth mentioned "uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations" and it is one of the invasive phenomena within trauma. These appearances are possibly hallucinations, as they coincide with the unpleasant experiences suffered by Oscar, and it happens late in the novel before Oscar's death, indicating that this could be a delayed response to the fears regarding identity crisis Oscar suffers from, a fear of never belonging as a faceless wraith in his life.

However, despite the tumultuous journey that took place in Oscar's tragic story, there is actual healing that took place with with Yuniior retelling Oscar's story. As mentioned by Rogers: "survivors express the necessity to use narrative to order the incomprehensibility of their traumatic experiences into a coherent narrative to facilitate a healing form of closure the narrative builds up all the recurring traumas suffered by Oscar, to a closure in order to achieve healing." (Rogers, 2004) Oscar's sexual, but surprisingly intimate rendezvous with Ybon, provides a sense of finality for the long-suffering character as he finally loses his virginity, a fear that was continuously harmful to his self-belief. With it, his suffering ends and Oscar finds peace despite his eventual demise. His death deprives the reader of a proper send-off, but Yuniior's much needed narrative provides a sense of closure, at the very least.

Conclusion

If we put aside Junot Diaz's penchant for crass humour within the narrative, the crises that Oscar suffers become a heart wrenching journey that lasted too long for such an unfortunate character. As the reader we are compelled to root for Oscar, seeing his bullishly embarrassing towards being a Dominican J.R.R Tolkien as an admirable trait, Unfortunately, Oscar lives a lifetime of ostracization in surrounding that does not understand him, traumatizing the character into thinking he could never belong until the end. Though Oscar surprisingly found solace in the end, we're left to wonder if such character would have suffered as well in this day and age, where superheroes rule the cinemas, and writers of color have written masterpieces worth comparing to the great J.R.R Tolkien. It is suggested that future research examine other ethnicities or communities affected by similar intergenerational traumas in other works of fiction, so a much greater case can be built in gaining better insight on how such external tormentors can be a burden on generations to come.

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