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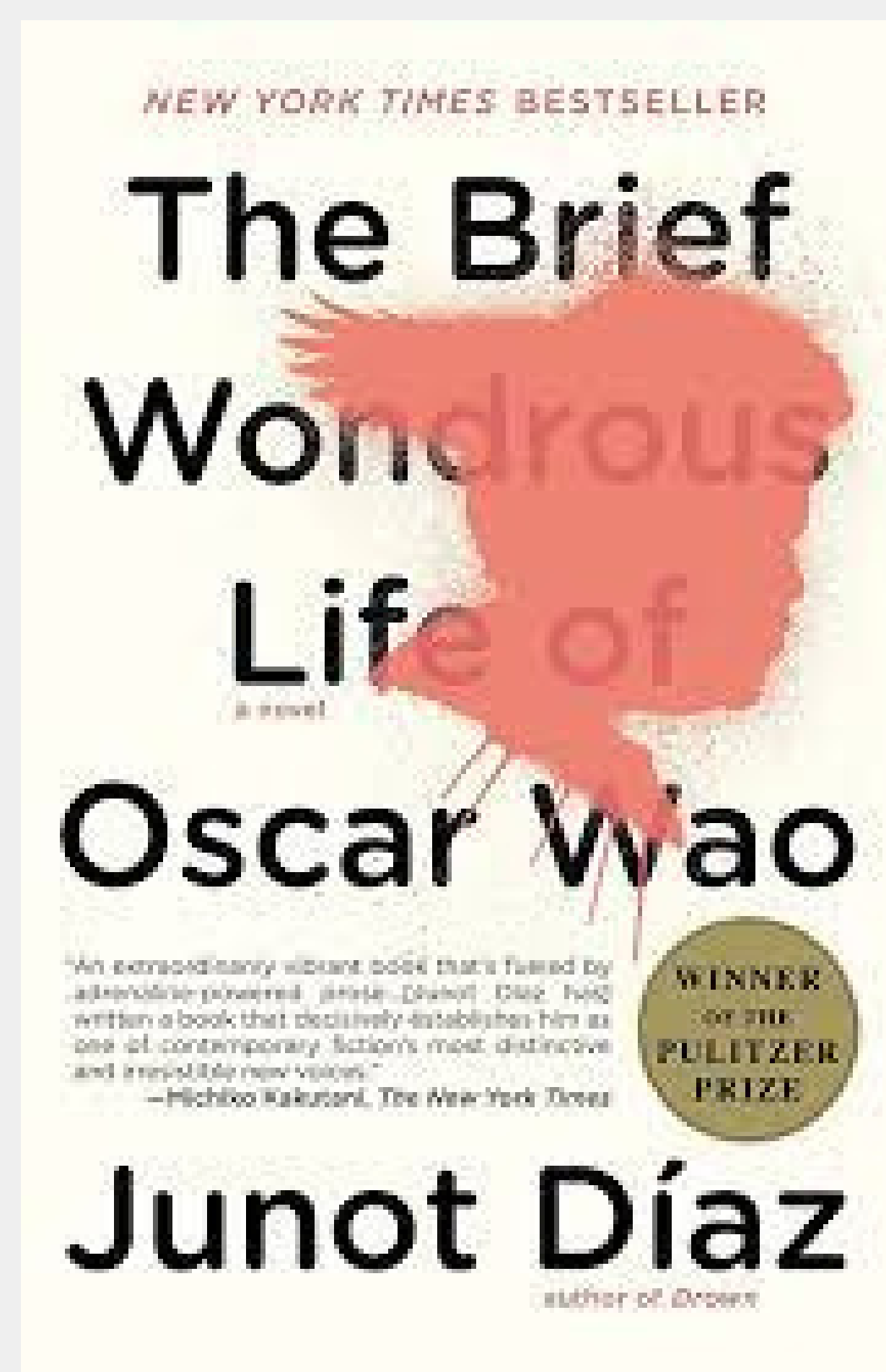
# FRACTURED IDENTITIES: THE CULTURE OF MACHISMO IN OSCAR WAO

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## ABSTRACT

This poster examines how the novel “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao” by Junot Díaz engages with patriarchy during the time of Trujillo, a Dominican Republic dictator, from the mid to late 20th century. Patriarchy is a system of male dominance which places men at the top of the hierarchy in society, which establishes a gender inequality between men and women, valuing masculine traits and undervaluing femininity. This poster explores how the damaging and sometimes toxic patriarchal culture of machismo affects gender identity within the Dominican Society through a feminist and cultural lens. Specifically, this study examines how characters such as Oscar, Yunior, Lola, and Belicia conform to or challenge traditional gender roles and family dynamics.



## PATRIARCHY

- System in which establishes men at head of household and leaders in society with women as caretaker roles
- Creates a power structure of masculinity alongside the hierarchy of, men with more masculine traits are higher in status than those lacking in masculinity, with women at the bottom
- Establishes gender identity and gender roles, forcing conformity or ostracization from society

### Oscar & Yunior

#### Gender Identity in Men

##### Oscar

- Cowardly
- Emotional
- Soft
- Introverted
- Nerdy

##### Yunior

- Aggressive
- Independent
- Unemotional
- Sexually Driven
- Charismatic

Both of these characters were restricted under the pressure to uphold their masculinity as it is discouraged to show emotion. Yunior, known as the epitome of masculinity, conforming to masculinity made him unable to help Oscar as it would be seen weak. Oscar fell into a deep depression with his inability to conform to the expectations of men as he was ostracized and ridiculed.

### Belicia & Lola

#### Gender Roles in Women

##### Belicia

- Working Mother
- Strict

##### Lola

- Daughter
- Rebellious
- Punk style
- Independent

Belicia is a strict and harsh mother of Lola and Oscar, upholding values of traditional femininity. By not reaching the feminine ideals of subservience and physical attractiveness, women are taught they are not valuable as they will not attract men. Furthermore, this will prevent them from creating a family, which women are objectified for as they're main goal in life. By not conforming to the standards of gender roles later in her life, Lola is able to be in a relationship and a family that is fulfilling as she has a voice of her own.

## NOVEL'S SETTING

This novel takes place in the Dominican Republic under the Dictator Trujillo and in New Jersey. Covering three generations, each character take the center of the story: 1944-1946(Abelard), 1955-1962(Belicia), and 1974-1995(Oscar). Rafael Leonidas Trujillo's dictatorship (1930-1961) is a time of extreme censorship, brutality, and intimidation which allowed for complete control of the country.



## CONCLUSION

Within this novel, through the contrast of Yunior and Oscar, Belicia and Lola along with the many peeks into the different lives and perspectives of the characters, a power structure is established under the effect of patriarchy and with that how the lives are affected by it. As the tragic story unfolds, identities are questioned by characters as they are figuring out who they are and their place within the system or their desire to be away from the system and as themselves. The gender roles and expectations of abiding the traits of masculinity and femininity are seen within this novel as the members of the family and the characters throughout reject these roles or comply with them. These themes offer a deep commentary of a society that is heavily affected by the culture of machismo and the reliance of the structure of patriarchy, which affects the lives of the characters throughout.