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SUBVERTING TRANSNATIONALIZED LATIN-AMERICAN *MACHISMO*: JUNOT DIAZ'S SHORT STORIES

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Abstract: This paper attempts to analyse the transformations that the Latin-American *macho* figure undergoes when caught up in migratory movements, taking as case study the two short story collections of Dominican-born author Junot Diaz (*Drown*, 1996 and *This is How You Lose Her*, 2012). Discussions on the consequences of migration on gender constitution have appeared relatively late and less frequently in migration studies when compared to the analyses of socio-economic factors influenced by migrations. Thus, after some preliminary reflections on this link between gender and migration, the paper will focus on different meanings of the term *macho*, with a particular focus on the Latin-American geo-cultural space. Several stories will then be analysed through the lens of the dislocation of classical *machismo* and its representation through the narrator's life. For a better understanding of the formative years of his narrator, the last section of the paper will briefly consider Diaz's only novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 2007.

Keywords: transnationalism, migration, gender, *machismo*, Latin-America.

Gender and Migration

One of the main issues raised by recent authors who deal with transnationalism and migration studies is the lack of interest shown in these fields in the past towards gender formation from the point of view of migration (Pessar & Mahler; Jay; Sørensen; White).

There have been discussions about quantifying the number of migrants according to their sex and emphasizes on the greater number of male over female migrants, but these studies mainly took into considering migrants from the perspective of labour force. Thinking of gender as a construct that could potentially undergo changes in migratory movements is being made possible, on one hand, thanks to studies of social constructivism which include gender and recognise the great importance of performativity in understanding masculinities and femininities. Moving away from a naturalized frame was imperative as it considered each gender's characteristics as something predefined. This leads in the direction of performative theories, which propose that gender is constructed through a "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 519) taking place in certain socio-cultural contexts which legitimize these performative acts. In this theoretical context, gender is a symbolic construct, culturally relative and, most importantly, subject to change (Sørensen 105).

On the other hand, migration studies come to the aid of gender studies by highlighting the importance of different cognitive processes taking place when a person leaves their home country for an indefinite period of time: "crossing boundaries implies a crossing of mental or moral boundaries as much as geographic borders" (Sørensen 108). In certain cases, crossing borders could have ambivalent consequences. Migrants have the possibility of attaining a certain economic freedom, leaving behind very unfavourable material situations, but this could come at the cost of some mental and behavioural instabilities (Sørensen 105). Such cases of migration, where people want to escape the poverty of their homeland and eventually encounter some psychological problems, can also be detected in Junot Diaz's prose.

Having considered these two theoretical directions, the effects of border crossing on gender construction becomes clearer. Even though migration cannot be separated as the single most important factor influencing gender modification, relocating to a new country can function as a catalyst for such changes. This catalytic role can be explained when analysing the mental and moral transformations affecting the identity of the migrant. Many of them come to see a geographic transition as one "from tradition to modernity, from rigidity to flexibility" (Gonzalez-Lopez qtd. in Decena & Gray 36). Migration helps widen preconceptions on gender and can lead to a reconfiguration of performative acts.

The Ambivalence of *Macho*

The negative appeal surrounding the term *macho* in popular culture is the result of a distortion of its original meaning. The *macho* typology is an import with Mexican origins which has made its way into American culture, especially from the second half of the 20th century onward. Due to its global influence, the United States has spread the term among various other cultures, making it widely known around the world. This popularization is problematic in that it has mainly brought forward the negative aspects of men designated as *macho*, neglecting almost entirely the fact that the term encompasses traits seen as positive in Latin American society. There have been many studies over the years dealing with the two major dimensions of a Latin American *macho*, without discarding its supposed positive aspects (Cornwall & Lindisfarne; Gutmann; Alcalde; Saez, Casado & Wade; Arciniega). I will briefly discuss some of the key concepts of these studies below. The attributes of a *macho* gathered under the terms *caballerismo* or *familismo* (Arciniega 20; Alcalde 540) have been presented as a counterpart to the negative portrayal which *machismo* has attained in public consciousness. Nevertheless, most of the elements I will touch upon are still products of a patriarchal, misogynistic society and seek to establish a toxic masculinity.

There are various characteristics ascribed to a man who is seen as being a *macho* from the traditional, “positive” point of view, among which, some of the most important are: loyalty towards one’s own family, adopting the role of “chief” of the family who unites its members and brings money to the household, and working to every extent possible for the wellbeing of the other members and the good functioning of the family (Alcalde 540). Moreover, such a man has a strong moral code, which includes honour, dignity, responsibility, intelligence and spirituality (Arciniega 20). In some areas of Mexico, only a man who embodies the traits above is considered a “true” *macho*, while the others, who take pride in the negative traits, are “fake” *machos*, sometimes marginalized by other men (Gutmann 223). These characteristics are rightfully considered obsolete in today’s society, especially after numerous feminist critiques, yet it is important to take them into account when dealing with Latin American culture, given that they offer a broader and more complex insight into this culture.

On the other side of the spectrum, the attributes of a *macho* directly referred to as negative come from the same patriarchal views of the world but are explicitly indebted to

violence and negative actions. Authors make use of different terms to conceptualize them, such as “warrior ideology” (Mosher & Tomkins 64), “traditional masculine ideology” (Saez, Casado & Wade 117) or “hyper-masculinity” (Arciniega 20). No matter what terminology is chosen, this second dimension is determined by excessive violence towards both men and women, sexual promiscuity, regular substance abuse, a continuous state of anger and contempt, and an inflated interest in the look of one’s body (this can include an obsession for weightlifting and use of steroids). Even though some researchers believe the most important characteristic is the obsession for one’s body, mostly because this can be correlated with attracting women through a certain type of physique (Gutmann 237), it is important to also keep in mind the volcanic attitude of a *macho*.

In its original Latin American context, *macho* is closer to its literal translation, “man”, and it is primarily linked to the positive side of the elements discussed above, increased care for one’s family and honour, with the possibility of violent outbursts in certain scenarios. However, the profile of such a man is inherent to a patriarchal context, no matter what supposedly positive values it has. I have not brought up this ambivalence of *machismo* to make an apology of its “positive” traits, but rather to have a more nuanced perspective on the phenomena. The assimilation of this term into American culture has stripped it of its positive side, keeping only the negative aspects, with men (Hispanic or not) called *macho* being seen as unilateral, aggressive and egocentric persons (Alcalde 537). The difference can be summed up as follows: “while macho ennobles Latin males in Spanish, it devalues them in English” (Sørensen 110). Junot Diaz, as I will argue in the next sections, manages to dislocate both meanings of the word *macho* as discussed above.

Initial Shock: *Drown*

The stories collected in Diaz’s first volume, *Drown*, although mainly centred around the differences between the narrator’s home country and the country where his family emigrates, range thematically in their depiction of the various struggles of migration and assimilation. There are stories dealing with the financial and mental difficulties of leaving one’s own country (“Negocios”), the living conditions in both countries (“No Face”, “Aurora”) and the state of the family left behind by one emigrant member (“Aguantando”). My paper will focus on some of the stories that directly engage Yuniors’ perception of his own sexuality and his gender construction while in the Dominican

Republic and after migrating to the US: “Ysrael”, “Fiesta 1980”, “How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie”, “Drown”.

“Ysrael”, the opening story of the collection, takes place entirely in the Dominican Republic, Yuniór’s home country, and introduces some important inter- and intrapersonal dynamics which will shape the narrator’s relationships with other people in the future. Some of the most important are Yuniór’s relationship with his older brother, Rafa, the brothers’ relationship with their emigrant father and the image of the United States as a “land of all possibilities”. Sent to live in the countryside over summer, the two brothers decide to go and see one of the few “attractions” found in that area, Ysrael, a boy whose face has been bitten by a wild boar when he was a child and now wears a mask at all times. During this trip to meet Ysrael some influences on Yuniór’s sexuality that Rafa imposes on him are revealed. After their father’s emigration, Rafa attributes to himself a dominant position towards his younger brother by assuming an aggressive masculinity, both physically and verbally. The older brother is also the one who fully plans their journey, without paying for the bus tickets and threatening to leave Yuniór eight or nine miles away from home when the younger brother does not want to comply – all while continuously calling him names. Finally arriving at their destination, they start talking with Ysrael. Finding out that Ysrael’s father also emigrated to the US, Yuniór starts empathizing with the masked boy, but Rafa only sees this discussion as a pretence. Observing that Ysrael stops paying attention to his movements, Rafa starts beating him up just to take down his mask and see what is underneath.

It seems that Yuniór’s gender coordinates are different compared to his brother’s quite early on in his life, which is representative of negative *machismo*. In this story, as well as in others from Diaz’s prose, it is visible that Rafa is a typical *macho* character (Mosher & Tomkins 61): he perceives violence as something manly, believes danger is something exciting and considers his immoral actions justifiable (even sexual ones). In the Latin American cultural background of the brothers, gender codification is mostly constructed using Rafa’s pattern while Yuniór’s attitude and behavior are seen as weak, a sign of femininity (Riofrio 28).

Departure from a classical *macho* attitude in Yuniór’s case can also be discerned during his stay in the Dominican Republic, but becomes fully manifest after immigrating to the USA. “Fiesta 1980” takes place in the United States, once the whole family has

successfully emigrated. The “fiesta” from the story’s title is thrown by Yuniór’s uncles when both they and the boy’s family seem to have reached financial stability, fulfilling the so-called “Dominican Dream”, the Dominican version of the “American Dream”. In their case, however, it’s not about having accumulated wealth as the classical “American Dream” would have them do, but simply being able to lead an average (or slightly below average) life after immigration (Moreno 13).

In this short story, Yuniór’s masculinity is contrasted with other two: that of his brother, Rafa (as was the case in “Ysrael”), and most importantly, that of his father, Ramon. Ramon’s attitude is one that most closely resembles a “warrior ideology”: he treats his children and wife as properties and they have to be respectful towards him and obey him at all times (Mosher & Tomkins 64). The effects of this type of behaviour on the family are explicitly visible in Yuniór’s fear of his father, present under all circumstances. However, the boy’s fear is at its peak when they share the same car. Yuniór is very car sick and every time he travels by car, sooner or later, he ends up vomiting. Ramon neglects the physiological aspects that lead to this situation and blames Yuniór’s mother for not educating the boy in a manly manner, assimilating his son’s behavior to that of a woman.

In an attempt to offer the boy a “proper” education, Ramon occasionally takes him for drives around the city, hoping Yuniór learns to control himself. During one of these drives, the men stop at a woman’s house and Yuniór finds out that his father is having an affair with her. Worried about the actions of his father, his first intention is to tell his mother what happened the moment they arrive home. However, the great fear he feels for his father takes control and he cannot say anything about the affair. The father’s image, therefore, dominates Yuniór’s life, becoming a negative influence on the boy’s sexuality. Ramon has an important part to play in Yuniór’s development not only through his absence from the boy’s early life, as some critics believe (Riofrio 29), but also through a form of *machismo* Yuniór feels compelled to mimic, without any results in the end.

Probably the most obvious attempt at constructing the masculinity his father expects of Yuniór happens in the story “How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie”. Written in the style of a guide book, the story has been read by some critics as a parody of personal development literature and “How-To” guides through which Yuniór tries to mask his own ethnicity (Moreno 12; Bautista 83). From another perspective, this story can be read as an effort of the narrator to perform his masculinity in a different

manner, by adapting his ethnical characteristics based on the type of girl he wants to attract. Yunior writes for himself a step-by-step guide on how to correctly behave on a date. He takes into consideration everything he could possibly control, from object placement in the house, to what and how he will say certain things when meeting the girl, as well as any expectations she might have about him due to her own ethnicity.

In all of the imagined scenarios inside his head, Yunior is in complete control of the situation and his plans go accordingly, but the actual fact that he needs such a guide is proof of his insecurity and lack of knowledge when it comes to sentimental affairs. More than this, what leads to think that he does not embody a classical negative *macho* not even in his phantasies is his repulsive attitude towards conflict. If another man were searching to pick a fight with him when he walked in the neighborhood with a girl, Yunior wouldn't pay any attention to that person and would simply walk past him. This type of behavior does not comply with the usual expectations others would have of a Dominican *macho*, who should always show a form of "valentia". This term implies active defense, without any sign of fear, of an attacked person and sees an aggressive act born out of self-defense as something "beautiful" (Krohn-Hanse qtd. in Moreno 20). Yunior's incapacity to align with such acts in his dream-like scenarios is another one of the subtle hits Diaz strikes towards Latin-American *machismo* and its oppressive features.

One of the biggest failures of a man, from a *macho* perspective, is engaging in homosexual activities. Engraved deep inside the *macho* ideology is disgust and hatred towards homosexuality (Pompper 683). The story which also lends its title to the volume, "Drown", narrates the sexual relationship between Yunior and one of his male friends. The title indicates the narrator's feelings towards his own actions, as well as hinting to the place where the two friends used to spend most of their time, the pool. A certain ambiguity comes from the fact that Yunior is aware of how wrong these tendencies might be seen by his fellow Dominicans, yet cannot help but miss his friend, when the latter decides to leave the city to go to college. This ambiguity, paired with other elements discussed above about Yunior's emerging sexuality as a child, points to the different masculinity Yunior comes to identify himself with after the emigration, one deviant from the stricter patriarchal context of the Dominican Republic.

Drown depicts the initial shock felt by the narrator after crossing borders to "the new world" represented by the United States. Even though his sexuality seemed to be

questioned in the Dominican Republic (“Ysrael”), the real changes appear after relocating to the USA. His new home has different socio-cultural requirements which Yunior has to adapt to. If slightly older persons (his brother and father) choose without any difficulties to embody the traditional *machismo* they were used to in the Dominican Republic, for Yunior the choice is not that simple.

This Is How You Lose Her

Junot Diaz’s second short story collection, *This is How You Lose Her*, moves almost completely beyond Yunior’s childhood in the Dominican Republic and his assimilation into the new country, focusing on the narrator’s love life and on various relationships he has across several years. Given the fact that it pays more attention to his relationship with women, several of the stories can help with mapping the direction Yunior’s masculinity takes in his adult life. Surpassing the sexual ambiguity of the story “Drown”, Yunior goes back to his plans of becoming a *macho*, starts to go to the gym and uses steroids in order to attain a physical aspect which could come close to hyper-masculine standards. Weightlifting seems to show some results, Yunior ironically calling himself a “circus freak”, but training is also what brings along his first relationship with a woman called Miss Lora. Their love story is narrated in “Miss Lora”.

Instead of bringing him joy, the relationship with Miss Lora makes Yunior question his behavior and stirs fear in his heart, thinking he is similar to the other men in his family and their ladies’ men attitude, “[y]ou had hoped the gene missed you, skipped a generation, but clearly you were kidding yourself” (Diaz 2012, 161). He continues the relationship with Miss Lora out of inertia, but finally the shame that she was his high school teacher makes Yunior quit. Lora, already considered strange by some people because she had reached somewhat of an old age without having children, wants to keep seeing him and starts following Yunior. The position Yunior finds himself in throughout the story “Miss Lora”, that of a ladies’ man who wants to deny his own condition, is not singular in this collection.

His take on the *macho* “gene” seems to guide most of the stories. Yunior, the narrator, after becoming physically attractive and borrowing some *macho* tactics, is able to pick up women without actually wanting to do so sometimes. Thus, if *Drown* presented a critique of *machismo* by making use of several transnational experiences in one’s youth

that are deviating from a hyper-masculine standard, in *This is How You Lose Her*, the critique is continued through the narrator's negation of *macho* customs he ends up "inheriting", seeing these customs as negative in the context of his new country. There are two other stories which I consider to be representative for Yuniór's dismissal of *machismo*, "The Sun, the Moon, the Stars" and "The Cheater's Guide to Love".

The first of these stories, "The Sun, the Moon, the Stars", presents Yuniór's conflicted thoughts when faced with his own infidelity. After his girlfriend finds out about him cheating on her, Yuniór does everything he could think of so that she forgives him, and when this happens, their roles seem to radically change places. The woman is no longer loving and affectionate, as she previously was, but instead becomes cold and distant, while Yuniór becomes increasingly more dependent of her attention. Yuniór employs various methods of bringing their relationship to the point it was before she found out about his infidelity, but all of the plans eventually fail. The last of these attempts is a trip to the Dominican Republic.

Initially planning to introduce the girlfriend to his family, she doesn't want to spend time with them and Yuniór is forced to take her on another trip, to the seaside. There, his failure is certain once she starts flirting with some of the men present at their resort. The change in Yuniór's attitude towards his girlfriend after she finds out about the infidelity is intolerable from a classical *macho* standpoint. He exchanges gender roles with her, the humility and weakness he harbors being assimilated to a woman in the hyper-masculine ideology of a *macho*, not to a man who would be, keeping in mind the same *macho* line of thought, entitled to cheating. Empathy and femininity, negatively perceived in the traditional patriarchal Dominican culture (Riofrio 28), are Yuniór's gender coordinates until the end of the story, "I sat down next to her. Took her hand. This can work, I said. All we have to do is try" (Diaz 2012, 25).

Similar in structure to "How to Date..." from *Drown*, "The Cheater's Guide to Love" is another parody of self-help literature which continues the deconstruction of the *macho* figure. In this story, Yuniór is in a position reminiscing of the previously mentioned short story. He is hurt after breaking up with his fiancée, although the separation was caused, once again, by his infidelity. This time, however, he is in a worse state of mind, suffering a mental breakdown. Yuniór does not even have the opportunity to exchange gender roles with her, because she would not give him a second chance. Due to this whole situation, he

enters a deep depression, not being able to overcome the intense feelings of loss. Yuniór's friends try to help overcome his depression by setting up dates with women unknown to him or spontaneous trips to other cities. However, Yuniór refuses to truly get involved in any of these plans and, instead, he keeps calling and sending emails to the former fiancée. Besides desperately wanting to get in touch with her, Yuniór also does little sentimental things, like sticking to his desk a small piece of paper which has written on it the words "The half-life of love is forever" (Diaz 2012, 213).

In this short story, more than in "How to Date...", a guide structure is used as an irony towards Yuniór's character. Conscious of the ironic position he finds himself in, the narrator writes this "guide" in an attempt to "purify" himself of the toxic masculinity that has (in part subconsciously) also reached him. The "gene" Yuniór "inherits" appears to be so hardly engraved in his performative code that the only thing left for him to do is rewrite his own behavior in order to take action in a different manner and construct a different type of masculinity.

This is How You Lose Her shows another of Yuniór's sides. The narrator is mature in almost all of the stories from this collection, but the gender maturity he has reached seems to unsettle him. Yuniór could not escape his socio-cultural inheritance and is unhappy at the thought of him becoming similar to the *machos* he despised so much as a child, his father Ramon and his brother Rafa. Yuniór does not take up the so-called "good" parts of Latin-American *machismo*, only the negative ones, related to promiscuity. This short story collection further deconstructs the *macho* figure present in Yuniór's childhood by making the narrator personally aware of its emotional inconveniences. For a better understanding of the new sentimental direction Yuniór wants to set himself on, I will briefly discuss the ending of Diaz's only novel.

Up to this point, Yuniór has been presented from two different angles, at two stages of his life. In *Drown*, he is a child trying to cope with all the novel elements brought about by the immigration to the United States. One of these elements is an alternative to the strict, toxic masculinity enacted by his father and his brother. Ramon and Rafa's *machismo* has not suffered great changes after moving to the USA, but rather, it has worked towards creating a transnationalized *machismo*, which covers various countries of the world. Yuniór's attitude regarding *machismo* is an ambivalent one throughout the stories. He is sometimes directly opposing it ("Drown", "Ysrael") and other times

desperately trying to adhere to it (“How to Date...”), yet even these latter attempts seem forced. In this first instance, Yunior subverts *machismo* from a young age, by acting in manners revolting for *machos*, like having homosexual relationships (“Drown”) or empathizing too much with other persons (“Ysrael”).

After surpassing the difficulties, he had as a child and teenager of becoming a *macho*, in *This is How You Lose Her* Yunior is presented as a disillusioned *macho*. He has taken up almost unconsciously elements of the transnationalized *machismo* he tried to reject. In most of the stories he is subverting his *macho* elements by engaging in a reflexive masculinity. Yunior is constantly thinking about the toxic masculinity he has “inherited” from his brother and father and is looking for methods of arriving at a new conception of masculinity. The subversion is more subtle in these stories, as Yunior does not partake in direct activities that oppose *machismo* (like homosexuality in the first volume), but he is carefully thinking about the direction he wants his masculinity to follow. In the end, he decides intimacy is more important than other elements his *macho* traits conducted him to praise prior to this change of mind. For a better image of how Yunior has come to praise intimacy, I believe it is important to shortly analyse Diaz’s only novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

The Missing Link: *Oscar Wao*

Even though he is not the main character of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Yunior is the narrator of most of Oscar’s story and the boy’s confidant. The latter is an overweight adolescent, incapable of talking to girls, but very in love with a lot of different girls. Yunior is the person who advises Oscar in his love life and gives the boy certain tips on how to talk to the girls he likes, all of these because the narrator feels empathy for Oscar. At the end of the novel, Oscar manages to finally have a relationship with a more mature woman and they spend a weekend in the Dominican Republic. This woman, however, had another lover, a gangster who goes after them after finding out about their affair and kills both Oscar and his girlfriend. The last letter Oscar sends to Yunior unsettles the narrator’s then very well-defined masculinity: “What really got him was not the bam-bam-bam of sex - it was the little intimacies that he'd never in his whole life anticipated, like combing her hair or getting her underwear off a line or watching her walk naked to the bathroom or the way she would suddenly sit on his lap and put her face into

his neck [...] So this is what everybody's always talking about! Diablo! If only I'd known. The beauty! The beauty!" (Diaz 2007, 334-35). The discovery of intimacy is the element which points to the attitude of dismissal towards *machismo*, encountered also in the two short story collections, „the capacity for intimacy requires a capacity for vulnerability that is repressed in the exercise of power in which sexual brutality becomes the dominant metaphor" (Jay 192).

Connecting the missing link of Diaz's bibliography, his only novel, the three books can be approached as a triptych through which the author attacks and deconstructs the archetypal Dominican hyper-masculinity. Thus, *Drown* is the foundation of this critique, presenting Yunior's atypical childhood and youth and his attempts to set himself apart from the *macho* figures in his life. Shyness, lack of physical strength, plus his attraction towards things considered childish by other men (comic books and Sci-Fi novels, for example) and Yunior's homosexual experience point, already, to the fact that the boy does not have "natural" *macho* tendencies.

Keeping Yunior as narrator, but not as main focus of the book, *Oscar Wao* depicts him much savvier in attracting girls, wanting to share some of his newly found tactics with Oscar. Although Yunior may seem a true *macho* in this novel, at least in the beginning, he feels real empathy and sympathy for Oscar, a character hated by most of the other characters in the book. This empathy can be linked to Yunior's condition in *Drown*, the narrator being reminded of his own childhood and adolescence when he sees Oscar. The time spent with Oscar and some of the boy's actions will help in destroying Yunior's artificial construction as a *macho*, the narrator arriving at the conclusion that intimacy is more important than a sexual act.

Intimacy is the decisive factor in *This is How You Lose Her* as well, where Yunior is again main character in most of the stories. Here the majority of Yunior's love affairs are presented as failed ones, the narrator arriving to a point where he despises his own *macho* attitude. The last story, "The Cheater's Guide to Love", tries to solve his behavioural problems. After truly falling in love and not being able to be faithful, Yunior cannot readjust to his previous *macho* behaviour, suffering from this breakup for several years and deciding to completely concentrate on writing as a solution for depression.

The subversion of transnationalized *machismo* represented by Yunior is a process involving a big part of his life. It starts in the narrator's childhood and is greatly influenced

by his immigration to the United States, but it does not come to an ending when he settles in the USA. In the new country, he has to continue acting in ways that could dismantle the toxic masculinity put forth by the men in his life. Finally, having arrived at a more mature age, Yuniór has clearer coordinates he could follow for establishing other masculinities for himself.

Conclusion

Questioning some already established cultural elements can sometimes be a difficult endeavour, especially when it involves sensitive issues, such as ethnicity, race or gender. Junot Díaz manages, however, to attack the famous typology of *macho* by making use of his own double nationality and the possibility of seeing cultures from different points of view that this double consciousness brings with itself. Although the status of migrant writers themselves could be problematic, some critics claiming they are “historically good at creating new positions in the literary field” (Thomsen 71), position which I do not endorse in all cases, these writers and their use of plural perspectives can be of interest when it comes to a number of problems. Namely, in the present case, these plural perspectives help with contrasting different conceptions regarding gender and cultural imports, specifically the term *machismo* and how it was distorted upon entering American popular culture.

The deconstruction Díaz operates does not only include the negative side of *machismo*, mostly familiarized by its American import, but also the side deemed positive by the Latin-American patriarchal context which gave birth to the concept. Through his knowledge of the ethnical context influencing Latin-American *machismo*, the author dislocates both the negative, as well as the “positive” meanings of the term. The narrator’s relocation to a new place offers a background for contrasting masculinities and dismantling Latin-American patriarchal constructions, like that of a *macho*, Yuniór finally coming to a point where he hates dominant, aggressive types of masculinity and pleads for alternative ways of constructing one’s sexuality.

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