



The Master of Fate

Gonzalo Munevar

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When a young man is given everything at once—a good family, good luck, happiness and good standing among his peers—there often can only be room for misfortune to join the “everything” that man has been given. Oscar Moreira is a charming, intelligent boy of fourteen at the Colombian Calasanz School for Men. He is universally loved at the school, even by the institution’s lone outcast. With his hilariously developing atheistic attitude, Oscar is even celebrated by the priests in charge.

Munevar creates the perfect boy, an Escolapian “Adam” in the lush garden of his own youth, safe and protected in the womb of self love and self satisfaction. Oscar is the consummate narrator, full of interest and humor, unknowingly waiting for ... the big fall.

Yet this is not a story, as Oscar reflectively relates “in which the character finds himself,” but instead of one’s “slow erosion.” A noted philosophy studies author and lecturer, Munevar chooses the form of the novel to explore these coming-of-age years, reminiscent of Knowles’ *A Separate Peace*. The result is great tenderness and poetic grace for the human journey, which, unfortunately for young Oscar is a slow realization that life really has no meaning and will kick you every time you “daydream.”

What makes you alive? What is the purpose of living? Oscar withers with the death of his father, a life interrupted that parallels his own. “My great passion had been to discover the nature of the universe,” Oscar explains as the final things he owned rust out from under him. “Life had gone one way, and I another.”

This book is recommended for not only being a fine first novel, but also for being a rude awakening to pay attention to the good fortune one has, for it can wither without respect.

BRANDON M. STICKNEY (January / February 2000)

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