

A study of a very old man with enormous wings



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Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a master of magical realism, twist our minds eye in the story A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS. Our perspectives are disoriented as we are enchanted with beautiful prose and appaled by people's actions.

Through the use of percpective and magical realism Marquez conveys mob mentality and people's reactions to something unusual.

Through the use of magical realism, Marquez shows us the absurdity of people's actions. The large man with enormous wings conveyys people's misunderstanding of the unknown. Although the large man is thought to be an angel, because of his grotesque looks and awkward nature the townspeople treat him poorly. They shame the creature in various ways. This shows people's inability to look past something's cover and into what it really is. Upon the entrance of the angel, the one expects some type of epiphany to occur. Early in the story, the people of town along with pilgrims from afar try to find miracles in the angel. The angels novelty soon wears off and the angel actually ends up a spectacle to the townspeople. They treat it like a circus freak throwing scraps of food to it and housing it in a chicken coup. Thoughts even cross their mind such as "clubbing him to death (Sic)". (Marquez) Through magical realism he separates the angel from the rest of the world in a way which could not be shown without the angel being such an outlandish being. The use of the unique creature makes the absurd actions and mistreatment of the angel exaggerated.

Because of the angel's appearance the reader is put into the same position as the characters in the story. The angel's wings are said to be " huge

buzzard wings, dirty and halfplucked forever tangled in mud". Marquez puts the reader into the same position as the townspeople. We, as readers, question the same things the people of the town. Once again, the absurdity of the character presented exaggerates the situation.

A circus coming to town shows the reader the mentality of the mob. Upon hearing of a tarantula woman coming with the circus, the townspeople lose interest in the angel. The mob has gone elsewhere. The once ridiculed angel becomes nothing to them. The people acted as a whole instead of individuals when one decided to forget the angel, the whole forget the angel. They move on to the tarantula woman as the spectacle to now admire. The angel lives a solitary life inside of the chicken coup. Some still come to gawk at the spectacle, but only to throw stones or brand the poor angel to see it's reaction.

Through the perspectives of several different people Marquez shows us varying views on what the old man actually is. The " wise neighbor woman who knew everything about life and death" decided the man was an angel. Papayo and his wife, ignoring the angel's wings, declare him to be " a lonely castaway from some foreign ship. The priest decides it cannot be an angel since it does not speak the holy language of latin. The doctor in the story seems to decide the old man to be human and that his wings were so logical he wondered why no other man had them. By offering these different perspectives of the angel, the reader wonders what the angel actually is. The angel remains anonymous and ambiguous. Throughout the entire story Marquez refers to it as the angel but he never tells us anything of its origin or purpose. Using the angel completely as a device and nothing else, he

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leaves the reader to wonder if this character actually is an angel or just a dirty old man. When the angel decides to leave, Papayo and his wife are relieved. They took the angel into their house as a guest but felt it was intrusive towards them. Saying the angel got in the way and scared their new child they looked at it as a nuisance. He makes it very hard for us to determine the goodness of the angel. Even the people who take in the angel condemn it. The people who ridiculed the angel have moved past it. The angel makes no effort to establish itself to the people of the community in any way. We are left unknowing the state of the angel.(Mcfarland)

The angel set itself apart from the community. The angel never made any attempt at communication with Papayo, the doctor, or anyone else in the town. When fed, it simply did not eat what it did not want. When examined, the angel ignored the examiners. When the priest tried to speak with the angel, it ignored him. Therefore, the community in shunning the angel actually gave the angel its wishes. The angel removed itself from the community so the community treated it as an outcast. This is another use of perspective in the story. Although not as noticeable as the others, the perspective of the angel should be taken. The angel never responds to any of the bystanders mistreatments except when they brand the angel, thinking it is dead, it stand up and tears swell in its eyes. The tears swelling may convey the sadness of the angel but could also convey pain. The limited perspective of the angel makes us wonder why it even enters the town. The question rises of whether or not the angel would accept the town if the town accepted it? From the onset of the angel introduction into the story everyone pushes the angel away. Could the story tell itself completely different if the

angel's arrival was seen as a grand event? Would then it show its powers?
Was the disgusting form of the body merely a test to the townspeople?
(Mcfarland)

The whole occurrence of the angel could be Marquez's clever way to make us learn an invaluable lesson of understanding. The story, subtitled a Tale for Children, stands as an adult piece. The confusing nature of the story definitely does not lend itself to being read by a young audience. Marquez is telling the reader that even as adults, we sometimes act like children. We gawk at the bizarre and push it away from us. We mistreat what we do not understand. Marquez calls us all children and reminds us of the lessons we learned at a young age and how we need to remember them.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's story A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings makes the reader think about people's reactions and natural tendencies by distorting our views through magical realism and awkward perspective. The wonder prose and outlandish characters are just a small part of the wonderful story told by the great author. Through the use of perspective and magical realism Marquez conveys mob mentality and people's reactions to something unusual.

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