

## Building Coherence--Magical Realism in: "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"

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Does the story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," by Gabriel Garcia Marquez similarly add meaning to his story through magical realism? Without question, core elements of magical realism are clearly used for unique effects within the story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings."

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Second, by being inconsistent and contradictory, Marquez influences the reader's point of view: another characteristic seen in magical realism. In the beginning of the story the old man is described as a, "nightmare," and a "rag-picker" (220). Descriptions such as these are not usually associated with how people imagine angels. These words influence the reader's ideas of angels to make the story's outlandishness acceptable. In the book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Wendy Faris echoes this idea: "The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory events—and hence experience some unsettling doubts" (171). She believes confusion arises when the reader encounters contradicting events. Likewise, another example of inconsistency can be seen when Pelayo and Elisenda examine the old man, "They looked at him so long and so closely that [they] very soon overcame their surprise and in the end found him familiar" (Marquez 220). Pelayo and Elisenda studied the old man for such a long time that they quickly conceded he was not astonishing but rather normal. "So long," "very soon," and "in the end" all are contradictory statements that don't belong together, and cause confusion in the mind of the reader. I believe Marquez used these statements to deemphasize the relevance of time, so later he can signal the reader when time *is* relevant to the story. Oprah's website substantiates this characteristic of magical realism by stating: "Contradictions, inconsistencies and ambiguities color the point of view" (Oprah). Similarly, the wise neighbor character is a contradiction herself. She's attributed for being wise, but her advice throughout the story suggest otherwise. The narrator concedes, "[she] knew everything about life and death," but after recognizing the old man as an angel, the wise neighbor advises, "[angels] were the fugitive survivors of a celestial conspiracy" and should be clubbed to death (Marquez 220). The neighbor also proclaims, "[mothballs] were the food prescribed for angels" although he doesn't eat them (221). The neighbor is accredited for being wise but her suggestions of killing the angel, and feeding him mothballs reveals she is rather stupid. I believe these examples show how Marquez utilized contradiction and inconsistency, a characteristic of magical realism, to cloud the reader's perception.