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Religious People in Achebe, Hawthorne and Marquez's Short Stories

Dead Men's Path, *The Minister's Black Veil* and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* are written by different authors and in different time, but readers are able to find a lot of similarities in them. All three stories deal with many various issues, such as acceptance, attitude, faith and worship. A very interesting common matter for these works is the way people, who are regarded as religious due to their regular presence at masses and following the traditions, are depicted. In these short stories, the writers managed to show the reality of people.

The Minister's Black Veil is characterized by a rather tolerant implication about the real nature of people who claim to be religious. Though they attend masses and listen to priest's sermon, they do not act like true Christians. For instance, when their minister starts wearing veil, they forget about anything but their curiosity and discontent. Hawthorne indicated that they were able to get into the essence of the sermon only since Mr. Hooper started covering his face. The protagonist, who is the only true believer in the story, says that his parishioners only pretend to be religious, while in fact, he sees "on every visage a Black Veil" (Hawthorne). Being full of sins, they behave as if they are crystal-pure and consider the only sinless person to be a monster. Achebe's short story has a bit different mood. Religious people there are depicted as victims of old superstitions. The priest insists on preserving the path as it is used by citizens' late ancestors and by children that will be born. The writer ironically speaks about the beliefs these people have, though true Christians should avoid being superstitious. As the path was closed, the ancestors got

mad and because of their anger a woman died in childbirth. The third story seems to be the most impressive. With a bitter irony, Marquez shows the callousness and cruelty of people who claim to be religious, but in fact, are only pretending. The following phrases describe their true piety and religiousness: “a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive” and “they did not have the heart to club him to death”. Even the priest is merciless and allows people to treat an angel like an animal.

All in all, the authors of these short stories manage to show the real nature of people who only pretend to be religious. Most characters are depicted as cruel, pitiless and selfish creatures that have nothing in common with true faith and kindness. The writers express their negative view on such people, presenting the situations in which ‘believers’ can do anything to satisfy their curiosity, treat an angel like a chicken and ruin the fence because of their superstition.

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. *Dead Men's Path*. Web. 9 Feb. 2014.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Minister's Black Veil*. Web. 9 Feb. 2014.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*. Web. 9 Feb. 2014.