

STUDY NOTES ON “THE Magnificence” by Estrella Alfon

Character Analysis

1. Mother - at the first few parts of the story, the mother was described "with eyes that held pride...and maternal gloating she exhibited." She was negatively described in the first parts whereas on the later part, when he had drove Vicente away from their house, she was described as a protective and loving mother to her children. "When the mother reached her, the woman held her hand out to the child."
2. Vicente - there was a big contrast between the mother and Vicente in the way that they were described. Vicente was described more feminine and gentler than the mother in the first part of the story. "...his voice soft, his manners slow." He retained being "lower" or inferior than the mother throughout the story especially when she started to slap him repetitively. "He made no resistance, offered no defense."

The comparison of the two completely different characters in the story evidently shows the binary opposition - not just with their gender but also with their major characteristics. The woman seemed to be more manly and more aggressive than Vicente and even through the mere differences in their descriptions, we get a sense that the mother is more powerful than him contrary to common biases that man ought to be more powerful than women.

Symbolism

1. Light - the light plays a major role in the story and even to the characterization of Vicente. The readers first encounter with Vicente, he was "stand[ing] for a while just beyond the pool of light, his feet in the circle of illumination, the rest him in shadow." We get a picture here that Vicente is "peeping" or "spying" and seems to have some hidden agenda. Also, the light's significance was also important in the later part of the story when the mother slapped him out of the house. "...he recovered enough to turn away and run, into the shadows that ate him up." The mother, as she drove the man away seemed to be bringing him back to the "darkness", to the "shadows" where he really came from.
2. Pencils - it was said that during those times colorful pencils were a "hit." And so giving the kids these pencils are forms of bribe so that Vicente could get along with the kids well and they would not doubt him. The jumbo pencil could mean that he has already a hidden agenda for the little girl and he was in a way investing for the child's friendliness through bigger pencil.
3. Mother-woman - Note that at the first few paragraphs of the story, the mother was addressed as the "woman" and not until she defended her daughter against Vicente that she was addressed as the "mother." Well, perhaps merely because her being a mother was greatly emphasized and projected when she slapped a man for her daughter. Thus, the "woman" changed to "mother." She was not just a mere woman but a mother that went through all the bravery to defend her daughter.

Theme of the story

The theme of the story is the MAGNIFICENCE of the mother in defending her child. She went against the "misconception" that men are more powerful than women and the mother here was not afraid instead she gathered all her strength, slapped Vicente repeatedly and drove him away from their house. She did not only prove her greatness as a mother but also as a woman. The story might be "celebrating" womanhood but not enough to say that it is a feminist story.