

Chronicle of a death foretold: cultural analysis essay sample

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In America, there is a judicial system that helps justice prevail, to punish criminals, and let the innocent walk. The judicial system allows for there to be a trial where evidence is presented. Through the evidence presented, the jury then decides if the person on trial is innocent or guilty. Never in any trial, in any courthouse, under any judge would it be allowed for a murder to be justified so that one could restore a relative's honor. However, this is not true in the location of Chronicle of a Death Foretold, as the Vicario twins were found innocent due to "legitimate case of honor, which was by the court upheld in good faith" (Marquez 48). The reason that this honor is upheld is because the Vicario twins live in a different culture. The story Chronicle of a Death Foretold allows a reader to look in on a different society and compare and contrast the cultures. There are many cultural related themes that are developed throughout the story. Some of the themes are stronger than others.

These themes help show the book's character and flavor. The goal of this paper is to thoroughly investigate various cultural aspects of Marquez's Chronicle of a Death Foretold. To achieve this goal I have organized this paper into four different themes relating to culture that was noticed throughout the book. The first idea that will be examined in the paper is the concept of magic realism. After magic realism, the paper will investigate how honor affect the society of the story. Following honor, the succeeding theme will be the roles and obligations that the two genders play in the Vicario brother's culture. Afterwards I will conclude with a wrap-up of the essay. Lastly, there will be a works cited page for all of my sited resources. A chief theme throughout the entire book is the concept of magical realism. The

unordinary use of detail to describe normal, ordinary events or things into a fantastic super natural event on thing. Maria Alejandrina Cervantes is a prostitute; however, her house is described as a glorious, beautiful, elegant house.

Her house is described as “ a house with open doors, with several rooms for rent and an enormous courtyard for dancing lit by lantern gourds bought in the Chinese bazaars of Paramaribo” (64). Another instance is when Angela was being beat by her mother and said Santiago’s name. Marquez bends reality with fantasy when Angela starts to say Santiago’s name: She only took the time necessary to say the name. She looked in the shadows, she found it at first sight among many, many easily confused names from this world and the other, and she named it to the wall with a well-aimed dart, like a butterfly with no will whose sentence has already been written. (47).

This quote is pulls one into a fantasy, regarding different worlds, and giving human-like qualities to animals. The lack of chronicle logical order contributes to the magic realism effect. By twisting around the order of the narrative this allows for a sense of inconsistency. This inconsistency followed by the sense of fantasy that is thrown into the story, throws the reader into different conceptual areas that he or she has to unravel. This magical realism that is found throughout the book also relates to the culture of the people. Santiago’s mother had a “ well-earned reputation as an accurate interpreter of other people’s dreams.” Not is Santiago’s mother the only the only citizen to have a sense of magic realism but the whole town experiences magic realism.

“ No matter how much I scrubbed with soap and rags, I couldn’t get rid of the smell” (78). This smell is the smell of Santiago Nasar. It was said that the whole town smelled like Santiago Nasar by Pablo. This means that the whole town smelled Santiago Nasar. Most people don’t find the dreams important as it is not reality; also entire communities do not smell the same dead man the day after he dies, but because the people do shows that the people value magic realism and truly find magic realism to be real. Magic Realism found scattered all across the book as magic realism is true to the Vicario brother’s culture. Following the concept of magic realism, is the strong sense of honor in the novel. First and foremost, the Vicario brothers killed Santiago to the restore their sister’s honor. The brothers were then found innocent for the crime of murder because the two killed Santiago to restore their sister’s honor.

Honor is incorporated throughout the entire novel in every character. “ I knew what they were up to, and I didn’t only agree, I never would have married him if he hadn’t done what a man should do” (62). This was said by Prudencia Cotes, at this time she was the fiancé of Pablo. Although this woman is his fiancé, and clearly loves him she couldn’t marry a man who didn’t reclaim the honor of a relative. In the culture of the Vicario brother’s defending their family honor is not an option but a necessity of a man. This concept of necessity will be explored later on. Also the town accepted this murder of Santiago Nasar. When the peoples of the town learned of the situation that was happening. They avoided Santiago and the Vicario brothers. The people did not step in because it is understandable to kill a man for he dishonored their family. In the town’s perspective killing Santiago

was the only way to reclaim the families honor. Honor is a strong cultural theme projected throughout the novel.

Secondly, the roles of men and woman vary intensely in the Vicario brother's culture. The book shows the roles of all women in the culture: " The brothers were brought up to be men. The girls were brought up to be married. They knew how to do screen embroidery, sew by machine, weave bone lace, wash and iron, make artificial flowers and fancy candy, and write engagement announcements"(31). Woman are expected in this culture to be the stereotypical housewife: a woman that is unemployed, cleans, the house, cooks, pleasures her husband, and bears his babies. In the Vicario brother's culture it is also important for a woman to stay pure until marriage; this of course means that she has to stay a virgin. This is a double standard men go to brothels and pleasure themselves to the services of the promiscuous mulatto women, these women are prostitutes. The women of the Vicario brother's culture are held to much higher standards of purity.

It is apparent as in the book that if a wife is not a virgin then there is a possibility for that woman to be returned. This can be seen by the circumstance of Angela being returned. It seems as though it is custom for the woman to hold many responsibilities in the Vicario brother's culture, however, the men also have responsibilities. To prove that one is manly enough to marry a woman, it seems as though a man must ensure the family that the daughter's well- being is ensured. Bayardo did this by showing off all of his money and buying her expensive things. Bayardo bought an entire set of raffle tickets so that he may win a music box; he then presented that

music box to Angela as it was her birthday. Bayardo also bought the widower Xius's house for Angela. Because Bayardo proved his worth as a man he was able to marry Angela.

Bayardo proved his worth as a man by showing he could maintain a very luxurious lifestyle, this lifestyle also shows that he can fulfill his responsibilities as a man. The Vicario family is a great example of the value of both honor and gender. Angela dishonored Bayardo and her family. She dishonored Bayardo by not being a virgin, and she dishonored her family by being returned by Bayardo. Being a virgin is a credential of the bride and it is socially unacceptable for the bride not to be a virgin. The Vicario brothers had to restore their sister's honor because if they didn't, they themselves would be shamed. Also the Vicario twins proved their manliness by killing Santiago.

If the brothers did not kill Santiago the brother's would seem like cowards and shameful. By killing Santiago they proved their worth. I am an International Baccalaureate student; part of IB's goal is to have their students develop a better understanding of different cultures. The novel that Marquez has written has taught many cultural lessons. The features of magic realism, honor, and gender roles only touch the surface of the various cultural themes that are seen in the novel. Overall, in reading the book Chronicle of a Death Foretold I have expanded my cultural understanding, by exploring different themes throughout the novel.

Works Cited

García, Márquez Gabriel. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. New York: Knopf, 1983. Print.