

The role of honor in the chronicle of a death foretold

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In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez illustrates a recap story of the death of Santiago Nasar, showcasing each of the characters' point of views. The novel is written based off of Columbian culture, by this the role of honor becomes even more prominent as it shares aspects of their religious views in chastity until marriage. Marquez centers the main reason for Santiago's death to be around this concept, through this we are able to see to what extent these characters' value honor. Marquez's essential message through using honor to such a high level is to show how much it is able to control a person's actions, through the novel, this ideology distinctly unveils that honor is essentially vital in this society and extreme measures are taken to uphold it. Furthermore, this influential force proves to have an immoderate grasp over the people, leading to fatalistic effects. For Marquez to effectively convey the importance of honor, instances in showcasing the moral imperative of men and women in this society, in how driven these characters strive to obtain honor, and the extreme amounts of what can be justified being equivalent to honor are used.

Marquez introduces the main obligations that the men in this society are bound to own up to when preserving honor, through descriptions of the Vicario family. Whenever the father is introduced the narrator goes onto say " Her father, Poncio Vicario, was a poor man's goldsmith, and he'd lost his sight from doing so much fine work in gold in order to maintain the honor of the house" (33). Marquez sets up this family to have a reputation to take honor to the utmost importance, having insight to the Vicario family allows readers to understand how the Vicario brothers and Angela were raised. We are given the idea that honor centers around an entire household. This

shows the obligations that a family has in keeping honor. Whenever an honorable action is being spoken of it surrounds the idea of a sacrifice.

Marquez uses extensive amounts of vivid imagery to display the amount of anger that is present within Angela's mother once her lack of innocence is discovered. Whenever everyone was asleep, Pura beat Angela as a form of punishment, Angela tells the narrator " The only thing I can remember is that she was holding me by the hair with one hand and beating me with the other with such rage that I thought she was going to kill me" (52). Marquez, providing this visual shows how much the characters' value honor, that if someone were to break it, they would witness extreme amounts of punishment. The visual given, is amplified especially whenever Angela mentions that she was under the impression that Pura would kill her, and for her to start off saying " the only thing I can remember" shows that the beating she received was so intense that she lost some of her memory. Her mother's beating doesn't serve to be seen as a crime, however, Angela's impurity does. She has committed a social crime and a sin against God, Angela's obligation to society is shown through the standard that women are supposed to remain pure until marriage.

In the end, the Vicario brothers appear to become successful in killing Santiago, fulfilling their duties. The narrator is currently speaking on the events that happened after Santiago's death. The narrator goes on in saying, "... the brothers Vicario had proved their status as men, and the seduced sister was in possession of her honor once more" (96). The characters' view honor to such an extreme, seeing as the brothers are being given a high title

of being “ true men” for restoring honor to Angela. This is ironic because, despite Santiago being dead, Angela is still not a virgin. This opens up the idea that if the brothers failed, them too would have been looked down upon. As men, they are entitled to insure honor is maintained, like Poncio in his sacrificial action, the brothers gave one as well in giving up some of their lives to be in prison.

Within the novel it becomes apparent that the initial start of Bayardo and Angela’s romance was simply due to society’s expectations. Bayardo is said to be a man full of resources, due to societal presumptions he is expected to marry a woman that fulfills her expectations of being pure and beautiful. When the narrator discusses the arrangements of Bayardo and Angela’s wedding it is said, “ Angela Vicario was the prettiest of the four..” (34). Earlier it was established that the choice of marrying each other was more of an abrupt decision. Once Bayardo was informed of Angela’s spotless reputation his decision was prompt in marrying this woman. Within this society, these characters don’t base their actions off of emotion, but rather what can be brought to the table. With Bayardo’s prodigious reputation along with Angela’s looks, honor would be given to them. Relating to the sacrificial idea, this way of living gives up an individual’s opportunity to have genuine love.

Bayardo and Angela’s “ love” was based entirely through the demands of needing to be married off to a person with the same caliber. The narrator discusses the circumstances between Bayardo and Angela’s outlooks towards the wedding. “ Bayardo San Roman, for his part, must have got

married with the illusion of buying happiness with the huge weight of his power and fortune..." (42). It's clear that the intentions Bayardo had when marrying Angela was for the amount of high class status that would come from marrying her. Marquez uses the term "illusion" to portray that the way Bayardo was perceiving this marriage was out of sheer misconceptions.

Bayardo's decision in marrying Angela was based partially on her honorable actions in her consistency in sending him letters. Angela informs the narrator of all the letters she would constantly send to him, "She wrote a weekly letter for over half of a life time" (109). The characters in this novel appear to see each other purely based off of their status level. Love doesn't seem to be of any importance to the characters as they base their pairings off of how they are seen to the public and to how they conspire to you. Due to Angela's efforts in writing her letters, she was deemed to be seen as worthy of marrying.

It becomes evident that the towns people are aware at this point of what exactly the Vicario brothers did, however, there is still failure to completely correct their behavior. Within the starting sentence of a new chapter, showcasing the trial. "...in legitimate defense of honor, which was upheld by the court in good faith, and the twins declared at the end of the trial that they would have done it again..." (55). This displays how comfortable the twins are in their reasoning in killing Santiago. The Vicario brothers are aware of their duties and due to Santiago dishonoring their family and this society's culture it becomes compulsory to punish the accuser by default.

In the brothers' eyes death is a valid punishment for stealing honor away from a household. The trial of the murder of Santiago Nasar began, and the verdict is that the brothers are guilty. In the parish house they tell Father Amador "It was a matter of honor" (56). Pablo is essentially stating that in both God's eyes and the eyes of men murder can be justified by honor, therefore they are innocent. Honor has an overwhelming amount of influence of the brothers' decision in killing Santiago. The nonchalant diction in their dialog showcases their commitment in their responsibility for their actions. It wasn't fully known if Santiago was the man who deflowered Angela, despite there being some sort of doubt the brothers still committed the action of killing him in case of the slim chance that he was.

Marquez further goes onto showcase the irony present within the novel, essentially on how twisted this society is when showing any respect for Santiago. The Vicario brothers went to the bin in the pigsty, multiple butchers were around in that area including, Faustino Santos. Pablo Vicario tells Santos that they just came to sharpen their knives, it is then said that "Their reputation as good people was so well founded that no one paid any attention to them" (60). It becomes ironic that they are seen to be good people, despite their threats of killing Santiago. The reputation of Santiago and the brothers are greatly contrasted, through the twisted ideology that a woman's virginity is worth more than a life. The brothers weren't the only ones to kill Santiago, failed attempts to warn or help him was aided by the town.

In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* the central motif of honor plays a role in essentially controlling the characters' actions, this idea centers around the main climax of the novel. The characters are heavily effected by this force, which often leads to a negative impact. Honor shapes their mindsets entirely, as they lose sight of actuality, seen through the obligations the citizens have, their perception of honor in forms of love, and through the extreme amounts of what can be justified being equivalent to honor. The reoccurring idea that these characters are insanely driven showcase aspects of Columbian culture, while techniques of diction, irony, and imagery aid in this portrayal.