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muerte anunciada is  
a narrative of  
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The definition of a 'crónica' is a factual account of important or historical events in the order of their occurrence. García Márquez's novel, far from being chronological, involves the chronic repetition and re-enacting of events over and over, pointing to a turning-over in the mind of the events which speaks to collective guilt. While the majority of the townsfolk seem to point to an incomprehensible fate[1] as the cause of the crime, the narrator has returned to the town several decades after the crime was committed, still disturbed by the uncanny chain of coincidences that led to Santiago Nasar's brutal murder. Key questions are left unanswered in the novel: we never know who deflowered Ángela, or who left the letter of warning under Santiago's door. However, these questions become less relevant as the culpability of the town as a collective becomes more and more apparent. It is the rigidity of social obligation, the meek acceptance of 'fate', and the horrifying practice of scapegoating that stand as the principal causes of the recorded events and the repetitive, neurotic narrative certainly points to a sort of collective neurosis brought on by this guilt.

From the opening sentence of the novel, we are aware of the inevitability of what is going to happen, 'El día en que lo iban a matar'[2]; the use of the past tense shows us that the events that are being recorded are in the past and cannot be changed. This opening introduces a strong sense of predestination, which is consistent throughout the novel. Only a few pages later, the exact same sentence as the opening one is repeated again[3], which is the first of a number of repetitions of similar sentences referring to Santiago's death. The reader cannot help but feel that these repetitions mark the steady beating of the executioner's drum, and this idea is

strengthened by their increased frequency as the novel progresses. Phrases such as, ' ya tenía cara de muerto'[4] and other indicators like the fact Santiago's hand felt like that of a dead man's to Divina Flor[5] all seem to take on a kind of incantatory nature[6] like that of a ritual re-enactment of the crime. Although the apparent intent of the narrator is to investigate the murder, the text becomes a sort of ritual replication of the events. Earlier in the novel, the narrator distinguishes between ' ellos' and ' yo', however later on he mentions, ' Durante años no pudimos hablar de otra cosa. Nuestra conducta diaria, dominada hasta entonces por tantos hábitos lineales, había empezado a girar de golpe en torno de una misma ansiedad común'[7]. Freud's theory of repetition compulsion; the re-staging of unpleasant events to allow for the possibility of gaining mastery over its horrific consequences[8], is reflected in this passage and the ritual re-enactment we see in Crónica de una muerte anunciada. By ritually repeating the events in which the townsfolk played an essentially passive part, the narrator is able to internalize the murder of Santiago on a collective level, which he achieves in this passage, and thus can escape from any individual responsibility he feels for the murder. Therefore, the actual process of the narrator returning to the town and writing this account of events is a ritual in itself. It helps absolve the narrator from individual guilt and by repeating the events like a death chant, the crime is presented as predestined by fate. Moreover, the use of the nosotros form of verbs in the passage quoted above points to a the collective effects of the crime on the town as a whole; this union of the townsfolk after the crime points towards the suggestion that Santiago was actually simply a scapegoat for the town's shortcomings, a sacrificial offering so that the town could become united under this common anxiety.

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Individual scapegoating is when feelings of hatred and hostility are concentrated on an individual (in this case, Santiago Nasar) to allow the community to unite, regardless of whether the victim is guilty. This horrific ritual dates back to Ancient Greece and is certainly evident in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*. The novel contains all the elements of the traditional scapegoat ritual: the apparent innocence of the victim, his marginalized character and the final unification of the community via the ritual. Santiago is a son of an Arab immigrant, a group which we know is marginalized from various comments referring to the Turkish community. For instance, Polo Carrillo says about Santiago, 'Creía que su plata lo hacía intocable', to which his wife comments, 'como todos los turcos'[9]. The twins also fear that the Arabs will poison them in prison. However, Santiago's suitability for sacrifice goes further: he straddles social boundaries because his mother is from the landed gentry, and he has no father or brother to avenge his death. He poses a threat to the social order and rigidity of the town and thus he is both an object of envy and a target of accusations[10], not to mention his reputation for de-flowering non-Arab girls[11]. Perhaps all this information would be irrelevant if it were not for the fact that there seems to be no evidence to prove Santiago's guilt. The narrator says about the judge that, 'lo que más le había alarmado al final de su diligencia excesiva fue no haber encontrado un solo indicio, ni siquiera el menos verosímil, de que Santiago Nasar hubiera sido en realidad el causante del agravio'[12]. In fact, the only testimony we have of Santiago's guilt is Ángela's, and this denunciation is reported not by the narrator but by an unexpected narrative voice that assumes a privileged perspective, embedding the accusation in a cloud of doubt for the rest of the novel[13]. Therefore, the circumstances are set to create the overwhelming

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sense that Santiago's death was, and had always been, 'anunciada', because he posed a challenge to the existing social order. Once the slightest cause of grievance appears, in this case Ángela's de-flowering, his death becomes a foregone conclusion.

The collective passivity demonstrated by the townsfolk during the events is further evidence of the horrifying ritual that seemed to be taking place. The sentence, 'Vamos a matar a Santiago Nasar' is repeated by the twins numerous times to various members of the community, and yet the majority fail to take preventative action. They all have their own reasons, of course, such as Indalecio who 'no se atrevió a prevenirlo'[14], however their passivity takes on a different, darker character when they all begin to gather, fuelled by the knowledge of what was about to occur. '...la gente sabía que Santiago Nasar iba a morir, y no se atrevían a tocarlo'[15] refers to the traditional rules of ritual and religious sacrifice that the one to be sacrificed must not be touched because of his sacred nature. Indeed, there are a number of parallels drawn between the Santiago and Christ. He was wearing white linen on the day of his death, which also underlines his innocence, while his full name alludes to both St James the apostle and Jesus the Nazarene[16]. Furthermore, the scene where 'la gente que regresaba del puerto, alertada por los gritos, empezó a tomar posiciones en la plaza para presenciar el crimen'[17] is actually proof of the collective guilt of the town and of this ritual sacrifice. Although they still continue to deny what is about to happen, their physical eagerness to get close to the scene of the crime and yet their lack of action to prevent it shows their a willingness to conform to this horrific ritual of social obligation and 'honour'. Although there are

certain people to try to protect Santiago, Nahir Miguel, Yamil Shaium and Clotilde Armenta, it is too late and Santiago becomes 'asustó' and 'deslumbrado'[18]. The scene where everyone is shouting at him from all sides[19] is particularly suggestive of ritual where the victim is bombarded by the chants and cries of the people, like an animal running round confused in a pen before being killed. Thus, right up until his death, the practices of ritual and sacrifice are reflected in the novel's events, and it seems as though the crime was something seen, not only as inevitable, but as something which was a necessity, part of a dark and twisted honour code which must be upheld, even if it means death. It may well be that this practice owes itself to the social rigidity of the society in which the reader is dealing.

Social rigidity is a main theme in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, and is mainly described through a lack of free will on the part of the Vicario brothers but also through Ángela. There are constant references throughout the novel towards the fact that the Vicario twins had no desire to kill Santiago, and indeed they become less and less inclined to follow through with the murder as the novel progresses. After their dispute, it becomes clear how Pedro Vicario saw the murder - 'Pero también fue él quien pareció por cumplido el compromiso cuando los desarmó el alcalde'[20]. This shows the distinct difference between what he personally feels about killing Santiago, and what social duty, 'compromiso', dictates that he should do. However, Pablo is not deterred and believes that his social duty dictates that he must actually carry out the murder, whatever the consequences- he tells the judge that he is innocent 'Ante Dios y ante los hombres... fue un asunto

de honor'[21]. This is key to understanding the extent of society's rigidity and the extremes that people will go to in order to adhere to tradition and this supposed code of honour. The brothers honestly believe that their crime simply brings justice for Santiago's supposed de-flowering of Ángela. The aforementioned constant repetition of ' vamos a matar a Santiago Nasar' not only shows the community's complicity and passive acceptance of the act of ' justice' that the twins will carry out, but also perhaps the attempt of the brothers to find someone who will prevent the murder from happening. Given that they are bound by tradition and duty to kill Santiago, they are unable to do anything else other than warn everyone in the town so that perhaps someone else could stop the horrific crime from happening.

However, it is evident from analysis earlier in this essay that the town views the traumatic events as a ritual in which all concerned should act to social expectations. This meek acceptance of the roles granted by life is something that Ángela later tries and succeeds in breaking out of. All her life she has been trained by her mother to surrender to the patriarchal values of society, including being forced into loveless marriage. However, after the murder she finds new-found strength which begins with the thousands of love letters she writes to San Román and the realization that her mother is not strong and independent but just as trapped in the patriarchal system as she is. The return of Bayardo back into Ángela's life, which also contains strong hints of Márquez's magical realism, expresses the victory of Ángela's non-conformist values over those of the society in which she lives. This stands in stark contrast to her brothers' conformism to socially rigid values and traditions; this is the same conformism that ultimately allows the murder to occur. After all, the murder seems to be something that happens to the murderers,

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rather than something in which they play an active part. Pablo said, ' esto no tiene remedio... es como si ya nos hubiera sucedido'[22], and arguably it is their unthinking conformity to society's truly entrenched values that leads to their completion of the crime.

Conclusively, the notion of ritual is evident on all levels of the narrative. It is apparent in the actions (or lack of action) of the characters, who passively allow the murder to occur, and it is also manifest in their willingness to accept Santiago as a scapegoat regardless of true guilt. On a more detached level, the text is a ritual in itself as it allows for the absolution of the narrator through repetition of events and displacement of blame onto the collective. Furthermore, the unwillingness of the twins to commit the murder shows the strength and rigidity of social values to the extent that individuals seem robbed of their free will and driven purely by the superior drive of duty and obligation. *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* shows a community at its worst, where desire for unity and unthinking faith in tradition leads to a horrific and reprehensible crime that taints the town with guilt for decades.

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