

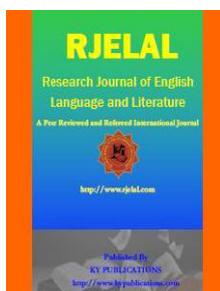


FEMINISM IN GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ'S "CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD"

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analysis of the feministic aspect of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. Feminism is a crusade, which has some aim and dogmas, where a feminist seeks equal political, economic, cultural, personal and social rights for women. The story here provides feminists a rich ground in which one can explore the codes of sexual morality that the townspeople of Columbia reluctantly uphold. The portrayal of female characters in the novel shows their submissive nature and how often they have been exploited and forced to go against their free will just for the sake of false family honour and society. It also represents how patriarchy was constituted, constructed and re-invented in Latin American society in the 20th century. The society that has been exposed in the paper has a huge distinction between male and female characters. It was the responsibility of all females to be apprehensive about the reputation of their family, unlike the males who had the liberty to do what they like. Thus, males subjugated the society where they had the free will and liberty to do what they like. Therefore, the paper analyses how the code of honour was to be carried only by the females during that period in Latin American society.

Keywords: Feminism, 20th century Latin America, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

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INTRODUCTION

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born in Antarrctica, Colombia on the 6th of March in 1927. He was an anti-colonial Latin American writer and won the coveted Nobel Prize for Literature (1982) for *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981). Colombia was a violent and politically volatile country back then and remains so today. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a version of events that actually took place within Marquez's knowledge. Apart from murder, violence and killing this story provides feminists a rich ground in which to explore the codes of sexual morality that the townspeople of Colombia reluctantly uphold. Feminism is a movement that aims to make women

the social equals of men. The term feminism usually refers in its most general sense to political activism by women on behalf of women. It seems to have originated in France in the 1880s. Feminism involves the implicit claim that the prevailing conditions under which women live are unjust and must be changed. It also assumes that a group of historical agents, e.g. women, can recognize the injustices they confront and will take action to change them. This is a simple story though not told altogether in a simple way. It was published in 1981 in simultaneous editions in Bogota. Marquez explores several modernist issues such as how we think we know reality, how dependable and accurate our memories are? As a sociological study of

small town Colombian life, it is a condemnation of the violence and machismo prevalent in Latin American Society. The writer here shows how a murder is committed in front of everyone and it allows an entire town of people to stand by and let it happen. How a woman is humiliated and violated. The focus of this paper is on the female characters, their submissive nature and how often they have been exploited and forced to go against their free will just for the sake of false family honour and society.

POSITION OF WOMEN IN *CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD*

People in Colombia contemplate feminism as a movement that aims to bestow equal place to both men and women. This comprehensive characterization popularized by the media and mainstream fragments of the movement rears problematic queries. Mostly women, belonging to lower class suffers more and do not gain anything from the society as they are repetitively reminded of their fragile position in society. The representation and characterization of women in the novel show how patriarchy was instituted and fabricated in the 20th-century Latin American society. The depiction of women characters in the novel not only renders their internalisation and illustrates to what extent they were subjugated but it also characterises their insurrection and fighting against the oppressive suppression.

Patriarchy in Latin America was unique as they were dreadfully open about sexuality and they took it as an indigenous culture. This was completely against the Catholic beliefs of chastity and purity. The society had a huge distinction between male and female characters. It was only the responsibility of females to be apprehensive about their family reputation. While on other hand, males were free to visit a brothel or have sexual relationships and no one used to question them. Thus, male subjugated the society where they had the free will and liberty to do what they like.

Just like his father Santiago Nasar used to go single-handedly, and he used to grab the blossom of any rebellious virgin which was initializing at that time, but no other connection in town ever came to be known except for the conservative one that he preserved with Flora Miguel and one with

Maria Alejandrina Cervantes which thronged him crazy for more than a decade. (Marquez. Pg. 40-41)

This novel is not just about murder, death and violence but it also broaches about the community and its reverberation. Besides, Angela Vicario, one of the central figures in this echo was the reason why Santiago Nasar was murdered though she was engaged to Bayardo San Roman. The qualities that Santiago Nasar inherited from his father Ibrahim Nasar swayed more towards male pleasure and omnipotence. Thus, this novel shows the assets that Santiago Nasar esteemed to carry was not inherited from his mother but from his father that allowed him to relish supremacy over female characters.

Nancy Chodorow appears to claim that the theory accounts for male domination itself:

We can define and articulate certain broad universal sexual asymmetries in the social organization of gender generated by women's mothering. Women's mothering determines women's primary location in the domestic sphere and thus a basic dissimilarity is created between the domestic and the public sphere. Thus ethnically and politically, the public sphere dictates the native, and hence, men dominate women (Chodorow Pg24).

Chodorow argues that in developing a masculine self-identity, boys must not only develop a sense of self-distinction from the mother, but also a sense of being a different kind of self. Since the mother provides him with his first model of what it is to be a person, the boy defines masculinity negatively, as what the mother is not. To have a positive sense of masculinity, therefore, boys must degenerate and dissociate themselves from the female. Boys develop a dread of women and desire to have power over them through this process because mother poses a threat to their separate masculine identities (Chodorow Pg 25).

There was a major resemblance in the activities of Santiago Nasar and his father Ibrahim Nasar that was male ascendancy, quite predominant in the existing

Latin American society in the 20th century. One time Ibrahim Nasar had carnal connection with Victoria Guzman who was an underprivileged woman and was underneath Ibrahim Nasar's eminence. She was subjugated and used by him and she was left with no choice but to serve him as a maid when he was gratified with her physically. The same tradition goes on in future where his lad Santiago Nasar tries to seduce and exploit Victoria Guzman's daughter, Divina Flor. Thus, the same sort of relation was about the initialize between Santiago Nasar and Divina Flor as it happened between his father and Victoria Guzman.

The same tradition was accomplished in the Vicario family where the Vicario brothers being the male member of the family had the accountability to control and protect the family honour innate by their father who currently was unable in his task because he grew old and blind. Their mother, Purisima Del Carmen expected from her son to carry forward the tradition that was sometimes done by their father, as she knew that being a female she was not suitable for this job.

The female characters in the novel have been kept at the peripheral side of the novel just the same way as they were being treated in society. Amongst the female characters, Purisimadel Carmen was one of the most persuasive characters who shows us the genuine status of women in the Latin American society at that time. Previously she used to teach in a school, which she had to leave after getting married, or in other words we see how her self -identity gets lost within the limitations of her family and home. After being ensnared in this so called religious institution(marriage)she lost her free will and liberation and devoted herself to the caring of her spouse and rearing of her children that at times everyone used to forget her self -existence and identity. Her whole life was entrapped in this double faced society where on one hand she had to follow the rules and regulations within the social structure and she had to socialize her children; whereas on the other, she was debarred from the significant and relevant decision-making power which society used to make. In other words, women were confined to the domestic sphere of the society and men that automatically placed women on the submissive category of the society while controlling the political

and decision-making system. Under all these influences, we see that Purisima Del Carmen did not forget the clear demarcation between the two sexes when she strictly reared up her children in the same custom.

From their childhood, the Vicario brothers were brought up to develop into a man. The girls had been nurtured and taught that they were meant to get married, they were taught embroidery, stitch machine, pile bone lace, rinse and iron, they were trained how to make artificial flowers and decorative things, and write engagement announcement (Marquez. Pg 18-19).

There was a remarkable difference in the manner in which boys and girls were being raised and brought up in society. Thus, an enormous difference was there between Angela, her sisters and her two Vicario brothers in the way they were being brought up. It was an ignominy for a girl to leave her town and do something useful for her and society whereas in the case of boys like when Pedro Vicario left town; no matter for what reason it was taken for granted that he might have left for some military service.

The only thing that my mother reproached them for was the custom of combing their hair before sleeping. 'Girls', she would tell them, "don't comb your hair at night; you'll slow down seafarers." Except for that, she thought there were no better-reared daughters. "They're perfect," she was frequently heard to say. "Any man will be happy with them because they've been raised to suffer."(Marquez. Pg.19)

The way Purisima Del Carme nurtured her children made a clear demarcation between the male and female characters in her own family; which gave power and authority to the male members of her family.

Women's mothering also creates gender personalities that particularly suit women and men for the domestic and public realms respectively. The relative stability of her identification with the mother gives to the girl's gender identity a personality oriented toward effective relations with others. This suits girls for the particularistic relations of

the domestic realm. Women's mothering creates in boys, on the other hand, a more bounded, instrumentally oriented, and abstract personality. This suits them particularly for the formal and instrumental character of the relations in the public realm. This presumably is the argument for Chodorow that 'women's mothering determines women's primary location in the domestic sphere' (Young. Pg 25).

That night was a shock for Angela Vicario which she could never forget, where her parents, older sisters and their husbands assembled together in the parlour; and forced her to marry a person whom she had hardly seen for them their fake dignity and family honour was everything (Marquez Pg 21).

Like other female characters in this novel Angela Vicario was also towards the peripheral side of the novel and a subordinate and submissive character. Her wedding with Bayardo San Roman was a very vital event as it was a male structured system where a woman had no choice or desire of her own. Like many other women in real life, Angela was not given a choice and she was being forced to marry by saying that love can be learned. Her family depended on her beauty to win her a husband and they were not concerned about her happiness. For them, her value was tied to her capability to fit into the idea of what a virtuous Latin American woman should be. Angela Vicario was an exception to the society where prostitution was practiced openly and one which was devoted to excessive materialism. She wanted to marry someone she loved and had been awaiting the arrival of such a person. Ironically, she had to experience a sort of vague love. When Bayardo San Roman was being asked about his prominence and eminence he was very confident and within a minute he cleared the Vicario family that he could marry whomever he will choose and that it was necessary for him to undergo all their circumstances. This power and free will which he got were inherited from his father. Again, here the male character dominates the society. The town expected a woman to value her virginity, family honour and most importantly marriage above all. Angela Vicario admits and confirms

the society that she has committed a sin and repents. However, when Angela Vicario accuses Santiago Nasar of deflowering her and she refuses to give a reason behind such heinous act she builds up a wall that separates her personality from other women in the novel who easily used to crook to other man's willpower. After she was being tortured and beaten up in a ruthless manner she seemed to recognize that she had her own control over her life and that she can make her own decisions. No one knew the reality except Angela and Santiago. Angela carries herself as a seditious feminist throughout the novel, which is encouraging or accepting of modification, especially regarding women.

Among all the female characters Clotilde Armenta was the only one who knew beforehand that the Vicario brother was very much determined to assassinate Santiago Nasar and she came forward and, at least, tried her best to avert this murder. Where on the other side the whole town people in spite of knowing everything, they did not even tried to stop the Vicario brother. It was only Clotilde Armenta who knew how much determined the Vicario brothers were and though she even tried spread the message to many other people but no one came forward. She even engaged herself physically to stop the Vicario brother where unfortunately she fails in her attempt to do so. An important thing to notice here is that her failure to do something on such a large scale emphasizes the fact that how difficult it was for a female character to come out of that submissive and underprivileged cocoon that was formed at that period in the society. Her character shows huge social problems that were piling up between male and female members of the society. In addition, the continuity of male members dominating and controlling the society.

CONCLUSION

After analysing various female characters in the novel it can be concluded that the duty of the code of honour was to be carried by the females during that period and most importantly what we see is that both in novel and in the Latin American society in the 20th century, women have always been placed in the peripheral or the marginal sides. It can be said that Marquez's classification of women gives us a unique picture of gender differentiation in Latin American

society, violence and confrontations that women adopted against the exploitation in their situation under this unsatisfactory organization.

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