

# PRIDE AND PREJUDICE CHRONICLED

**An interpretation of Gabriel García Márquez'**

***Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada***

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1981 novel by world-renowned and Nobel prize winning author Gabriel García Márquez, *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada*<sup>1</sup>, is an easy read, yet somehow with each page turned the reader's toes curl some more. One could say that the story is a murder mystery being unraveled but facts seem to be wrapped in literary fiction and fictional elements seem to resemble reality<sup>2</sup>.

"Nunca hubo una muerte más anunciada" (Crónica 55). From the very first page onward it is clear to the reader that Santiago Nasar is (going to be) killed. Knowing this, the author has the reader's instant attention but at the same time the reader is immediately gripped by an uneasy feeling. Adding to this uneasiness is an anonymous narrator that presents the story in a reporter's journalistic style, however, he is not jotting down all the pieces of this murder tale puzzle as an objective outsider. "[U]n narrador – que por primera vez soy yo mismo..." (García Márquez in Mendoza 38), is a narrator who also happens to be a good friend of Santiago Nasar's, which instantly makes him biased and (should make) the reader aware; his real strategy and purpose is possibly concealed and camouflaged.

The story tells us about the day after an elaborate wedding celebration that coincides with the anticipated arrival of the bishop in a small-town community in Colombia's Caribbean coastal region that involves its entire community. The story goes that Santiago Nasar, a young hacendado<sup>3</sup>, supposedly deflowered Ángela Vicario before her pompous wedding to Bayardo San Román, the latter being a rather unusual newcomer in town. Ángela's twin brothers, Pedro and Pablo, butchers by profession, feel the need to restore the family honor and set out to and brutally kill Santiago Nasar with the townspeople witnessing the public slaughter.

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<sup>1</sup> An abbreviation of the original title will be used from here onwards, namely *Crónica*.

<sup>2</sup> The *Crónica* is said to have its source in an honor killing that occurred on January 22<sup>nd</sup> in 1951 in Sucre, a small town in the northern Caribbean region of Colombia, in which a friend of García Márquez was involved. (See also Gonzalo Diaz-Migoyo p.425 and Randolph D. Pope p.187)

<sup>3</sup> 'Hacendado' means farmer. In Santiago's case it is cattle that he farms.

This is not simply a murder tale, it is more than that but its meaning is hidden and camouflaged. For one, it is remarkable that nowhere in the novel the question is raised why Ángela Vicario pointed out Santiago Nasar as the one who is guilty of her shame, neither is any proof given that he is in fact the one who deflowered her. One cannot help but wonder if Ángela Vicario, the bride returned, is telling the truth when she names Santiago as the guilty person. Fact is, that by pointing out Santiago as being responsible for her loss of virginity that is revealed at her wedding, she seals his fate. And somehow, even though the whole town knows about Santiago's killing way before the killing takes place, no one does anything in their power to prevent this gruesome act from taking place. Then there are the twin brothers who loudly announce they are going to kill Santiago Nasar, yet no one hears them or tries to stop them nor informs Santiago himself of this honor killing about to happen.

This is just one of several unfortunate sets of circumstances in the *Crónica* that keeps the reader constantly on his toes as he is trying to keep up with the narrator's account of his interviews with the townspeople a good 27 years after the date. The story the narrator presents to us is him trying to make sense of and shed light on what happened on that day and why. But all his search for answers does – a search in the townspeople's faded memories and in their fingernails scratching assumptions and imaginations of that day - is maintain and continue the confusion and curl the reader's toes more. The collective memories of that fatal day are clouded by the fact that the events happened so long ago at the end of inebriated wedding celebrations. It is, moreover, clouded by the people's reliance on gossip and rumor as well as by the chaos and excitement of the anticipation of the bishop's arrival early that same day. Answers to the most general and essential questions of whodunit and what for are eventually not given. These omissions in the narrator's account are a cause for wonder to the reader, if not frustration, mounting mistrust and disbelief. So, thirty years after the novel's initial publication and many interpretations later, understanding of the *Crónica* in many ways is still unsatisfactory and makes a closer look at some key elements in this novel a plausible motivation for further exploring.

## THESIS

It is remarkable that such a violent event –a brutal and public killing- and its dramatic ending –a young man slaughtered- does not involve any questions raised or explanations given in the novel of who or what is actually to blame. Of course, there is absolutely no doubt that Pedro and Pablo Vicario are the ones who brutally slaughter Santiago Nasar. This is, in fact, explicitly and in great detail presented to us. But one could argue that the whole village is to blame for what happens on that early morning because the town collectively knows what is going to happen to Santiago yet no one acts to prevent it. And Santiago, a good-natured young man, but with a promiscuous adolescent lifestyle, possibly did not help himself in avoiding his fate. Likewise, Ángela Vicario, by revealing Santiago's name and by accusing him of having deflowered her (whether she is telling the truth or not), is of course to blame for sealing Santiago's fate.

As in any society, just like in this small Caribbean coastal town, safeguarding the community's unity is important. In this particular community we see that it is rooted in traditional Christian values (Catholicism) and exposed to recent immigrant influence (Arabs). The killing of Santiago Nasar cannot be but a result of the people's notions of love, passion and honor, notions that are formed on the basis and in light of the town's traditions as historically developed. Especially in a close-knit community like the town of Santiago Nasar, nothing and no one goes unnoticed for long because people talk and keep a close watch on each other. Any disruption to this closed circuit gossip system quickly becomes a danger to the community, hence the killing. Interesting, then, is to see what exactly motivates, instigates and condones this honor killing. Likewise interesting is to find out if and how Santiago Nasar's killing is a result of his own behavior and beliefs, or of his Arab decent. Since the narrator omits providing answers to such essential questions, finding out what prompts and motivates the townspeople to allow this honor killing to happen is justified. The question to be asked, then, should be: Was the killing of Santiago Nasar religiously, racially, economically or culturally motivated?

## OUTLINE

In the following chapters possible answers to the question of motivations will be constructed by way of a close reading of the original text and by comparing notes on a selected list<sup>4</sup> of earlier exposés on the novel. On the basis of what we come to know in the text about Ángela Vicario, about Santiago Nasar himself, about the deceived husband Bayardo San Román, and about the townspeople, this paper will attempt to find answers:

In the first chapter, religious aspects that ignite the murder on Santiago Nasar will be discussed and how the Church and its traditional Christian values (do not) function in this small town community. Focussing on how Santiago's role as a figure of Christ plays an important part, including concepts of sacrifice, crucifixion and fatality. The townspeople allowing a public murder to take place will be discussed, as will safeguarding the community, introducing the idea of 'el Otro'. Reliance on gossip, rumor and assumptions, rather than on action will be taken into account since Santiago's position in the community seems paradoxical: It is precisely this friendly, well-respected and successful young man in the community that is so brutally murdered without sufficient proof that he is guilty. Santiago's Arab descent, and his own actions and behavior will be addressed, again linked to how gossip, rumor and prejudice play into this. Santiago Nasar is set against newcomer Bayardo San Román to give further insight into possible discriminatory forces at work in the story.

Chapter two will go deeper into the aspect of love: Love and promiscuity, love and money, and how they relate, including the function of the local house of prostitution and marriages of convenience. Ángela's role is deepened, and so are Bayardo's and Santiago's actions held against the light. The many different (love) letters that we read about in the *Crónica* will be discussed.

The last part of this interpretation will include a recapitulation on the findings and final concluding notes.

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<sup>4</sup> See the list of Works Cited and Works Consulted

## CHAPTER 1: THE FACADE AND THE FEAR

The murder mystery of which we come to know by reading *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* ends with quite a gruesome attack on Santiago Nasar, the protagonist of the novel. Not only because he is pinned to his own front door<sup>5</sup> and brutally slaughtered but also because the whole town is looking on as spectators to a theatre. This very public and dramatic display instantly reminds the reader of another very public murder, namely that of the crucifixion of Christ. Considering this, first of all Santiago Nasar's very name seems of great importance. Is there a link between Christ and Santiago Nasar, and can Santiago's murder be likened to a crucifixion?

### CHRIST, SACRIFICE & CRUCIFIXION

The belief that Santiago Nasar can be compared to a sacrificial figure of Christ in the *Crónica* is plausible. Similarities can be seen and the name 'Santiago' links to the patron saint of Spain, Saint James<sup>6</sup>. At the same time it is suggested that the name Nasar links to *Nazarín*, the man from Nazareth, meaning Jesus Christ. Furthermore it is suggested that Cristo Bedoya, Santiago Nasar's close companion, is his alter ego, for the way Cristo Bedoya accompanies Santiago to the square and how the townspeople – by now all aware of Santiago's fate – stare at them symbolizes the circumstances under which Christ was crucified (Penuel 758). Thus we see not only Santiago Nasar's name linked to Christ but his death too.

Other features of Santiago as a figure of Christ are reflected in the novel as well, as we read that "la cara había quedado intacta, con la misma expresión que tenía cuando cantaba" (*Crónica* 76). In death, Santiago's facial expression is also corresponding to the name of his very own hacienda, namely *El Divino Rostro*, the divine face. The word 'divine' here is key of

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<sup>5</sup> The door is one made of wood, just like Christ was pinned to the cross, which was made of wood.

<sup>6</sup> 'Saint James' in Spanish is 'Santiago' and here makes reference to Santiago Matamoros. The name 'Santiago' is a construct of 'Santo' and 'Jacob/Jaime'; 'Matamoros' means Moor slayer. Katie Maclean in "The Mystic and the Moor-Slayer: Saint Teresa, Santiago and the Struggle for Spanish Identity" (pp. 905-906) states that "Santiago Matamoros was a Liberador during the Reconquest [...] an invincible warrior and tireless Moor slayer [...] Christ's envoy to bring the Gospel to this outpost of the Roman Empire [...] Centuries later, Spanish missionaries in the Americas could draw inspiration and legitimacy from the figure of the apostle as they attempted to bring the same 'good news' to the idolatrous inhabitants there" (pp. 905-906). Eventually Matamoros was beheaded a martyr and his remains can be found in the place of pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela.

course. Moreover, after the twin brothers Pedro and Pablo are done murdering Santiago right at his front door, the judge's remarks on the autopsy report read: "Tenía una punzada profunda en la palma de la mano derecha. El informe dice: «Parecía un estigma del Crucificado» (Crónica 78). Penuel states that "[i]t should be noted that both Christ's and Santiago's deaths are foretold, albeit in different ways" (Penuel 758). All are indications that Santiago Nasar does indeed represent a figure of Christ, a martyr, and that there is no escaping his fate.

With Santiago's imminent and sacrificial death fatality comes into play: Santiago Nasar decides to stay in town for the bishop's arrival that same morning and does not leave for his hacienda to go quarter calves at his hacienda *El Divino Rostro* like he usually does on Monday mornings. And so he fails to prevent himself from being quartered that morning (Crónica 25). Herein too Santiago's fate of a martyr is announced. Moreover, that morning:

"Santiago se puso un pantalón y una camisa de lino blanco [...] iguales como el día anterior para la boda. Era un atuendo de ocasión. De no haber sido por la llegada del obispo se habría puesto el vestido de caqui y las botas de montar" (Crónica 12).

To his mother "él le explicó que se había vestido de pontifical por si tenía ocasión de besarle el anillo al obispo" (Crónica 15). So Santiago postpones his usual visit to his hacienda and "dons a sacrificial suit of unstarched white linen, believing he is putting it on to honour the visit of a bishop" (Gass 44). Santiago puts on his suit of death. The fact that the clothes are white entirely makes him look virginal and pure, like Christ; not in a sexual understanding, but in a sense that he will die most likely not guilty of the crime he is accused of. This is one of the reasons why the reader's toes curl reading the *Crónica*.

Millington remarks that Santiago is preoccupied to calculate and discover the precise sum spent on the wedding and that he seems to enjoy doing so as much as Bayardo enjoyed spending the money (Millington 76). Wondering about the costs of the elaborate (and disastrous) wedding of the night before, making constant calculations about the expenses, it

seems there is fatality reflected in this as well. It may not be overly clear but Penuel, too, makes note on the financial sacrifice that is made in order to make the wedding celebrations happen and links them to Santiago's own fatal and sacrificial role in the story (Penuel 765/note 22). It is at least a valuable comparison to the price Santiago Nasar has to pay in order to restore peace in the Vicario's family and to the townspeople as a community.

The public display of Santiago's murder can also be linked to the sacrificial role he plays in the story. At first, the townspeople, including Santiago Nasar himself, await the bishop's arrival with great excitement. In passing, Plácida Linera, Santiago's mother, warns him that she does not expect the bishop to even set foot in town. It is a warning born out of disillusion with the Church and becomes a reality, for the bishop indeed does not stop and only halfheartedly gives his blessings from the boat to the people at the quay. The townspeople too, instilled with a sense of religious values, seem excited about meeting the bishop, however, they don't seem to be too disillusioned when the bishop does not set foot in their town. They do not seem to be too surprised, indicating their religious experience only goes so far. They go about their business as usual without too much disappointment after his boat passes by. They, in fact, go on to the next best exciting event that is taking place in town, namely the attack on Santiago Nasar, of which by that time everybody knows. "The crucifixion of Jesus [Christ] is the kind of spectacle that has been the flash point for social gathering since culture began" (Bailie 126) and so "[l]a gente se había situada en la plaza como en los días de desfiles" (Crónica 113). Apparently excitement exercises a strong force on the townspeople, more so than the spiritual side of religious matters. In a significant way it shows the priorities of the townspeople. As for Santiago Nasar "tenía motivos para sentirse defraudado" (Crónica 23). He seems to have a genuine interest in welcoming the bishop to town but is betrayed, like everybody else, when the bishop in return does not stop or set foot in town, just like his mother had warned him. But Santiago is more so betrayed because soon after he will die a victim of an honor killing, without understanding why.

## THE CHURCH, VIRGINITY & HONOR

It brings up the question of the Church's attitude to and responsibility in this murder tale. The bishop's visit, or rather his passing by, is a rather odd display of a Church representative. "There is no explanation of why the bishop hates the town, but if he does – and his passing by reveals at least indifference – such an attitude is at odds with the Christian doctrine of love and forgiveness" (Penuel 757). The fact that there is no clear explanation as to why the bishop should hate this small Caribbean coastal community and skips his visit altogether at the least points to decay of and disinterest in the Church's values. Key people in town further demonstrate this decay in how they prioritize and in how they weigh their knowledge about Santiago's imminent killing. Father Amador, for instance - clearly a Church representative devoted to traditional Christian beliefs and values - distances himself from the disturbing news by determining it to be a matter for the civil authorities to resolve, not one for the Church:

"Sin embargo, el padre Amador me confesó muchos años después [...] que en efecto había recibido el mensaje [...] mientras se preparaba para ir al puerto. «La verdad es que no supe qué hacer –me dijo-. Lo primero que pensé fue que no era asunto mío sino de la autoridad civil, pero después resolví decirle algo de pasada a Plácida Linero». Sin embargo, cuando atrevesó la plaza lo había olvidado por completo. «Usted tiene que entenderlo –me dijo-: aquel día desgraciado llegaba el obispo»" (Crónica 72).

Father Amador refers to that day - the day on which his superior the bishop is coming to town - as a wretched day, which in itself seems a paradoxical statement of a Church representative who is about to meet another Church representative. His reaction and reasoning concerning the honor killing of Santiago Nasar indirectly and conveniently dismisses every good Christian's obligation to honor the Ten Commandments, in this case the one that states 'Thou Shall Not Kill/Murder'. Instead of acting on his knowledge about the twin brothers' intent to kill Santiago Nasar, Father Amador decides to leave it to others to deal with, whereas he could have/ should have made sure himself that the local authorities be informed. Worse, only minutes after he learns about the imminent ill, he forgets about it. He is more preoccupied

with (how he looks when) welcoming the bishop to town than he is with acting upon his Christian belief of brotherly love, thus is not doing anything to prevent a crime in the making. Father Amador only has eye for outward appearances (his dress and the theatre around the arrival of the bishop). It is not surprising that “[e]n el momento del crimen se sintió tan desesperado, y tan indigno de sí mismo, que no se le ocurrió nada más que ordenar que tocaran a fuego” (Crónica 72).

Similarly, Colonel Lázaro Aponte, the town’s mayor – not a Church representative, yet an important city representative indeed – is neither pressed to act immediately on hearing the news about Santiago’s imminent killing.

“Se vistió con calma, se hizo varias veces hasta que le quedó perfecto el corbatín de mariposa, y se colgó en el cuello el escapulario de la Congregación de María para recibir al obispo. Mientras desayunaba [...] su esposa le contó muy excitada que Bayardo San Román había devuelto a Ángela Vicario, pero él no lo tomó con igual dramatismo. -¡Dios mío! –se burló- ¿qué va a pensar el obispo?” (Crónica 59).

Like Father Amador, the Colonel is more preoccupied with his dress, with outward appearance. Not only that, in passing he sarcastically mocks the church and its function in society by rhetorically wondering what the bishop would think about it all. This is at least a sign of mockery and disrespect, if not proof of decay in his traditionally Christian beliefs. It is also a sign that he too leaves judgement of the imminent ill up to someone else, instead of acting upon it. Ironically, not much later in the story he appeals to the twin brothers’ conscience when he takes away their knives and sends them home, by exclaiming “imagínense [...] qué va a decir el obispo si los encuentra en ese estado!” (Crónica 60). The same rhetoric is used here, yet in an opposite meaning. Outwardly and in front of the twin brothers he pretends to be a good Christian citizen, yet inwardly he does not demonstrate so much respect for Christian values.

Like the Church and town representatives, the townspeople themselves show a similar attitude. “[L]a gente estaba demasiado excitada con la visita del obispo para ocuparse de otras novedades” (Crónica 27). It is only after the bishop passes by that the suppressed news [of Santiago’s imminent death] gets a chance to evolve to a “tamaño de escándalo” (Crónica 27). The use of the word ‘scandalous’ sums up quite accurately the disinterest, decay and erosion of the Church’s values in this community. It is scandalous because “[t]he final ritual of a town full of people watching a murder like spectators at a bullfight is the gruesome extension of a small community’s obsession with public honor and social codes” (Christie 23). It is scandalous that everybody knows about his imminent killing yet no one has the guts to prevent it from happening or tell Santiago about it, a fellow citizen the whole town knows so well.

Santiago’s death foretold is clearly at the center of the *Crónica’s* events. This young hacendado is accused of deflowering a young girl, Ángela Vicario, who is returned home hours after she has wed. Early on in the *Crónica* it becomes clear that it may well have been Ángela’s twin brothers, Pedro and Pablo Vicario, who brutally kill Santiago Nasar, but that it is in fact the so called cult of virginity and its subsequent code of honor that dictate them to perform the killing.

“The novel presents the Church as the author of the doctrine of instinctual renunciation, the root of all trouble in the town. In its insistence on this doctrine the Church has set up an impossible ideal of conduct for humanity and has therefore undermined and betrayed the mission of love and fulfillment preached by Christianity’s founder. The centerpiece of this doctrine is the cult of virginity, which in turn occupies a central place in the town’s code of honor” (Penuel 756).

The Church requires strict following to its codes concerning virginity and honor, but even the Church representative in this town himself has a hard time putting any traditionally Christian codes first and so oftentimes ignores his exemplary role in the community. Only outwardly the

community is “embracing a primitive code of honor” (Penuel 754), but in the meantime is far from following through with the codes themselves as is demonstrated.

Love itself does not know restrictions, but rules of virginity and honor do so all the more. Experiencing love can hardly be restricted to virginity and honor. Pedro and Pablo Vicario - also instilled with traditional Christian values - upon learning of their sister’s loss of virginity, feel the need to restore and repair their sister’s and their family’s honor. They find there is no other way than to kill Santiago Nasar, the person whom Ángela accuses of the offense. But the twin brothers seem shaky in their belief to act out this honor killing. Being the young and responsible men that they are in their family - Millington notes that “the twins assume responsibility for the family since their father is old and blind and can no longer fulfill the role of head of the family” (Millington 74) - they instinctively feel the need to, be it dutifully, act upon their family’s loss of honor caused by the loss of their sister’s virginity. Yet, as they clearly know that killing the (alleged) perpetrator, Santiago Nasar, will help them achieve this, they do not go about this convincingly. In fact, they do everything in their power to postpone the task, hoping they may be stopped along the way and not have to go through with it. Announcing their intent and almost drinking themselves to death first - “estaban pasmados” (Crónica 58) by drinking “candela pura” (Crónica 71) - are just a few signs of their shaky belief and hollowed out values. But, in the early morning, disregarding their doubt, the first thing the twin brothers do is selecting knives from their collection and head to the meat market to sharpen them. There they let the townspeople present know about their intent to kill Santiago Nasar. “Los primeros clientes eran escasos, pero veintidós personas declararon haber oído cuánto dijeron, y todas coincidían en la impresión de que lo habían dicho con el único propósito de que los oyeran” (Crónica 55). However, “tenían tan bien fundada reputación de gente buena, que nadie les hizo caso” (Crónica 56). Not only the people at the meat market hear about the brothers’ intent to kill but the whole town hears about it soon after. However, the townspeople do not (wish to) pay attention to the news nor to how reluctant the brothers in effect are to perform the task they have set for themselves. They all talk about it yet no one acts upon the disturbing information. Shopkeeper Clotilde Armenta is the only person who really seems to grasp and understand what is going on in the brothers’

hearts and minds. When the town's mayor, Colonel Lázaro Aponte, takes away the brothers' first set of killer knives, she says: "Es para liberar a esos pobres muchachos del horrible compromiso que les ha caído encima" (Crónica 61). It is true that no one else forces the twin brothers to perform this honor killing but they themselves. They dutifully take up this heavy task. But they do not necessarily intentionally do so but do more so out of a (irrational) belief or tradition that it is the right thing to do in the given situation, all the while wondering if it in fact is. This reinforces Penuel's observation that "[t]he most obvious evidence is the Vicario brothers' announcement of their intention to all comers, in hope that they will be stopped. [...] In their tacit hope that a symbolic gesture will suffice, they miscalculate their neighbors' reactions" (754). By repeatedly announcing their intent to kill Santiago Nasar, it becomes more and more of an unavoidable reality, one that has the brothers convinced to go ahead with it. Or, as John Christie puts it: "Once the word is spoken, the facts become secondary; the telling creates the reality" (Christie 22). Repeating their intent over and over again, the brothers convince themselves that it is the righteous thing to do, that this honor killing is what will make things right again. Ironically and unfortunately, Ángela Vicario in the same way miscalculates her brothers' reaction: "[H]abía escogido el nombre de Santiago Nasar porque nunca pensó que sus hermanos se atreverían contra él" (Crónica 91). From the beginning, from when she first comes up with and utters Santiago's name, Ángela too hopes that her brothers will be stopped. Santiago's killing from the onset is a sad, wrongful and unjustified murder.

As indicated before, whether or not Santiago is at all guilty of the crime he is accused of is not a question raised in the novel, not by the narrator, nor in the minds of the townspeople. Gonzalo Diaz-Migoyo, too, recognizes that Santiago Nasar seems to have fallen victim to a sacrificial offer for the community and as such his death to be an erroneous mistake (Gonzalo Diaz-Migoyo 432). Penuel notes that the narrator's perceptions and the town's traditional Christian values are left unexamined and they are therefore nothing other than prejudices (Penuel 763). It is true that Pedro and Pablo Vicario do not thoroughly examine or consider their traditional values either and, as if in autopilot mode, set out to perform the task of an honor killing.

## EL OTRO & THE ARAB

The examples of several key figures in town have shown that this community is subject to decay of values and preoccupied with appearance. Like so often in real life too, it is the cult of virginity that does not necessarily promote genuine love but instead creates fear of what others might think. Outward appearances and keeping them up become more important than (beginning) to show understanding and compassion for any 'victims' involved when virginity is lost before marriage. In fact, the fear of others, of 'el Otro'<sup>7</sup>, is a strong force the town reckons with, albeit carefully spirited away under a layer of exemplary behavior. We look at Ángela's father for instance: "Poncio Vicario era orfebre de pobres, y la vista se le acabó de tanto hacer primores de oro para mantener el honor de la casa" (Crónica 35). Indicated here is that the Vicario family, or at least father Poncio, suffers from or feels shame for being impecunious (and/or what else?). It simultaneously indicates that honor and what people may think is important to them, or at least to Poncio Vicario. Just like Pedro and Pablo Vicario somehow feel forced to set out and perform an honor killing for the sake of keeping up appearance, while they have doubts about the rightfulness of it, so does Poncio Vicario feel he has to keep up the family's honor. But what exactly is meant here by honor? Most of all it seems that what is meant is how the people in the community perceive one another. It is exactly the notion of fear that paralyzes and distorts their very behavior.

Angela's mother, Purísima Vicario for instance, has an appearance that seems tranquil yet somewhat serious. "Parecía una monja" (Crónica 36). But behind this façade she hides a strong and stern character. She dedicates herself to the care for her blind husband and the upbringing of her children, raising the boys to become real men and the girls for marriage. Pura often remarks that her girls "[s]on perfectas [...] Cualquier hombre será feliz con ellas, porque han sido criadas para sufrir" (Crónica 36). The Vicario family seems a family that

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<sup>7</sup> In this paper the concept of 'el Otro' is used as explained by Jorge Larraín who distinguishes three component parts of identity that are all more or less applicable to the story of the *Crónica*, namely: 1) Individuals define themselves by sharing allegiance to a group, an ethnicity or a religion, forming a collective context that is culturally determined. 2) Projection of self in body and material possessions, creating access to imagined groups represented in those goods. 3) Self-image is a reflection of the existence and of their opinions about us in which we materialize. (In: *Identity and Modernity in Latin America*, chapter 1, pp. 24-27). Especially point no.3 is applicable here.

values Christian tradition but in the meantime does not seem a loving family. Looking perfect on the outside is the goal. Scratching away the pious veneer, what appears underneath is stress and keeping up appearances. When the Vicario family leaves town after the crime (temporarily at first but eventually for good) it is Pura Vicario who “le envolvió la cara con un trapo a la hija devuelta para que nadie la viera los golpes, y la vistió de rojo encendido para que no se imaginaran que la iba guardando luto al amante secreto” (Crónica 84). It turns out that Ángela suffered serious physical abuse by the hands of her own, seemingly pious, mother after being sent home, which is hardly a display of tender loving Christian family care and attention. Pura is mainly preoccupied with what people might think of them.

As we saw earlier, Santiago Nasar’s name is suggestive of his sacrificial fate, but it is just as much suggestive of his Arab/middle-eastern origin. Heba El Attar specifically points out the oriental influence in the *Crónica*, describing how historically there is a significant Turkish/Arab influx of immigrants into Latin America, particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Colombia especially these immigrants establish themselves in the coastal regions, just like Ibrahim Nasar, Santiago’s father, does. Here, they quickly begin to form part of the cattle-raising industry, just like Ibrahim Nasar does. After his father’s death Santiago continues the business having inherited the cattle ranch from his father. El Attar furthermore states that the immigrants in Colombia especially, were of Palestinian origin (El Attar 916). For the storyline of the novel this certainly is a significant detail because it links to the figure-of-Christ theme as discussed earlier:

“[N]o sólo se sugiere la [...] árabidad de Santiago Nasar [...] sino también su sub-  
etnicidad palestina. La palestinidad de Santiago [...] se sugiere sobre todo mediante su  
apellido<sup>8</sup>, [...] el apellido [que] lleva conotaciones más hondas si consideramos que los  
Nasar y los Naser figuran entre las ramas familiares palestinas que habían inmigrado a  
América Latina, y si notamos la patente semejanza entre el apellido Nasar y la ciudad

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<sup>8</sup> El Attar here rephrases Stephen Hart who has remarked that Santiago’s last name, Nasar, is taken from Lydia Nasar, the name of the victim’s girlfriend in the actual crime that happened in Sucre in 1951, in which this novel finds its base. (p.916)

palestina de Nazaret [...] una analogía entre la victimidad de Santiago y la muerte de Cristo" (El Attar 916).

So once more Santiago's name and person are linked to the crucifixion of Christ but this time it includes his Arab origin too. In the novel the Arab origin of father and son Nasar is expressed, for instance, in that they "[h]ablaban en árabe entre ellos, pero no delante de Plácida Linero para que no se sintiera excluida" (Crónica 15).

It is not unusual that with the foreign immigrants coming to Latin America along comes xenophobe sentiments. Can xenophobia also be detected in the Caribbean coastal town of the *Crónica*? El Attar, having studied and critiqued this particular question in the novel, says that socio-political aspects of the immigrant influx are a cause for rumor and trigger prejudice in multi-ethnic societies. They become hostilities, especially in times of conflict. The dialectic opposition El Attar sees is a "yo/sujeto latinoamericano" opposed to a "Otro-objeto/emigrante medio-oriental" (El Attar 916). If this is true in the *Crónica* then it would 'logically' follow that xenophobia, the sense of fear of 'el Otro' - here the fear of Santiago Nasar and other Arab townspeople - can be traced in the community's attitude. And indeed:

"No todos querían tanto a Santiago Nasar, por supuesto. Polo Carillo, el dueño de la planta eléctrica, pensaba que su serenidad no era inocencia sino cinismo. «Creía que la plata lo hacía intocable», me dijo. Fausta Lopez, su mujer, comentó: «Como todos los turcos» (Crónica 101).

Santiago Nasar, a quiet person of Arab origin in the community, is cause for a lot of rumor and 'turcofobia'. When Santiago "muere destripado, [...] se afirma que la eliminación del Otro, origen de esa disonancia, es el desenlace idóneo que acabará con tal conflictividad [...] cuyo absurdo queda perfectamente de la talla de la intransigencia *vis á vis* el Otro" (El Attar 917).

El Attar's demonstration of a socio-political fear of 'el Otro'<sup>9</sup> at work in the novel is a fear which Santiago has to pay for with his life. Somehow the town resents Santiago Nasar for being an Arab immigrant as well as for being relatively rich. The Arab immigrants in Santiago's Caribbean town are a (marginalized) minority, but they too are upset and shocked over Santiago's death yet they remain non-aggressive, decent and keep to themselves, not forming any threat to their community. Saddened and frustrated to see one of theirs be falsely accused and murdered, they keep to themselves. This can be marked as very much an attitude of people who have come to understand how and when to make themselves sparse in times of difficulties. The Arab immigrants in this small town community must have experienced socio-political difficulties before and learned that keeping a low profile is the best answer in times of conflict.

Quick and easy to blame Santiago - son of an Arab immigrant whom they have known forever as a friendly and harmless fellow citizen, relatively rich due to working hard making a decent hacendado living - the autochthonous townspeople, on the other hand, are just as quick and easy to accept Bayardo San Román, a foreign 'invader' of whose background and motivations they do not know anything at all. Whereas Santiago, a friendly fellow citizen, is condemned and attacked, Bayardo San Román, an unknown foreigner, is hailed by the townspeople. On top, Ángela "pins the blame on a man with a reputation as a rich playboy [...] resorts to the stereotype that all Turks are alike" (Christie 27). And El Attar states:

"Véase que Santiago no era el único adinerado por allí, lo era también ese hijo del coronel conservador, Bayardo, quien penetró el escenario novelístico con su perfil de magnate gracias al negocio de trenes. Pero [...] Bayardo poco amenazaba la consonancia cognitiva de la gente del pueblo que, pese a saber poco sobre su origen, ya estaba dispuesta a aceptarlo" (El Attar 920).

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<sup>9</sup> See footnote 7: Again, the meaning of 'el Otro' here refers to point 3 in the sense of inclusion/exclusion - the Other seen as not belonging to the same (imagined) group and therefore as an enemy, an invader, a threat to the group, one that needs to be eliminated.

The difference in the townspeople's attitude towards Santiago on the one hand, and towards Bayardo San Román on the other, make it look like there is a xenophobe, racist undercurrent present in this community, which is directed against 'los turcos' especially at times of difficulty. Including Bayardo and excluding Santiago is a clear display of prejudice and racial discrimination in this community and Ángela's loss of virginity reveals this racial undercurrent. Ironically, it is not her or her part in this matter that reveals the fear and danger of 'el Otro', it is the man who (allegedly) took her virginity that forms a clear and present danger to this town. Going after him - he who deflowered her, he who is rich and of Arab descent - is the actual way the town deals with this threat while there is no proof of Santiago's guilt in what he is accused of. Powerfully put into words by Millington:

"The absence of virginity, the piercing of the hymen, creates a lack in the social fabric, and it is a lack that must be sewn up. The precise mechanism for this is to find a name, a named guilty party, and then eliminate the bearer of the name. In other words, a second absence will fill in the first - that is the paradoxical logic of the code. The spilling of one blood - the piercing of the hymen - is rectified by the spilling of some more - the killing of the guilty male" (Millington 80).

The accusation that Santiago has taken away Ángela's virginity is a result of the wish for a sacrificial<sup>10</sup> scapegoat<sup>11</sup> that surfaces from the innards of the townspeople who appear to harbor resentment, racial discrimination and fear of 'el Otro'. Santiago has become the enemy, 'el Otro', and must die to appease the conflict in town. He is thus a mere scapegoat and it is his Arab origin that is used for justification to eliminate him.

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<sup>10</sup> The meaning of the word 'sacrifice' here is taken from Giuseppe Fornari's description of the word which says: "Sacrifice is the basis of every organized community; around the sacrificial victim all the violence of the group can be released and become its opposite: the reconciliation that makes communal life possible. This comes about through the mechanism of substitution—the victim dying for all the community" (Fornari 165).

<sup>11</sup> The word 'scapegoat' is based on Byron Bland's statement of the word which says that "the sacrifice of a scapegoat, and the peace that results is the product of [...] expulsion and death. In protracted, intractable conflicts, the scapegoat expelled is, of course, the enemy. Therefore [...] peace emerges from the negation of the enemy" (Bland 114).

"[Al instructor del sumario] lo que más le había alarmado al final de su diligencia excesiva fue no haber encontrado un sólo indicio, ni siquiera el menos verosímil, de que Santiago Nasar hubiera sido en realidad el causante del agravio [...] Para él, como para los amigos más cercanos de Santiago Nasar, el propio comportamiento de éste en las últimas horas fue una prueba terminante de su inocencia" (Crónica 100-101).

Even though it is highly doubtful that Santiago is guilty of the crime he is accused of, including his friend and narrator of the story does not put any effort in finding out whether or not he is guilty and whether or not his killing is justified.

In all examples thus far cited we have seen that that which people might think and say about each other is at least as powerful a force in this community as are its traditional but hollowed out Christian values: Pura Vicario seems pious as a monk but doesn't want the town to see the bruises she inflicted on Angela; Her husband Poncio seems an honest and hardworking man yet he shows to feel the need to keep up appearances and the family's honor; The loss of her virginity is not questioned or scrutinized and Ángela doesn't want to admit that she could have/ should have prevented the honor killing from happening by providing the name of the man she has been with; The twin brothers do not wish to admit that they have doubts about Santiago being responsible for the drama or question the righteousness of the honor killing they commit; Church and town representatives are disinterested in what goes on in their town; And the townspeople, for the first time seeing Santiago's Arab-ness, try and convince each other and the narrator/reporter that they were incapable of doing anything to prevent the killing from taking place, insisting they could not believe the killing was actually going to take place, pretending they believed Santiago was safe, relying on presumptions of what they saw and when they saw it. The whole town seems trapped in eroded Christian values and in fear of each other, in which setting "honor becomes little more than an institutionalization of the fear of "el qué dirán" (Penuel 762). Does the notion and experience of love show similar patterns of decay and pretences?

## CHAPTER 2: THE BUSINESS OF LOVE AND LETTERS

Love (or rather the lack of it) plays an important role in the *Crónica*; it is the implication of love that crucifies Santiago Nasar to his front door first of all. But the story is not as simple as that. Many more implications underline an erosion of matters of love in this town, just as we saw an erosion in Christian values, in social cohesion and in racial harmony before. A closer look on the workings of love and passion follows.

### LOVE AND MONEY

When asked the question as to why he came to town Bayardo San Román answers: “Andaba de pueblo en pueblo buscando con quién casarme” (*Crónica* 32). Quite a notable remark, making him come across as a calculated man, one that plans his steps carefully, a man on the prowl. But Bayardo does not raise any suspicion or reticence in the townspeople at all, as was pointed out earlier. Several examples in the text demonstrate his carefully calculated moves. One such example is when he sees Ángela for the first time. Without knowing who Ángela is, Bayardo comments to his landlady who tells him the girl’s name: “Tiene el nombre bien puesto” (*Crónica* 34). She is an angel. But at the same time he asks the landlady to remind him, after his afternoon siesta, that he will marry this young girl (*Crónica* 34). This certainly does not show that there is any sign of love interest for Ángela involved; it is almost as if he is scheduling in a business appointment. This attitude has nothing to do with love and everything with calculation of course. Then Bayardo and Ángela actually meet for the first time at the bazar and he asks her the price of the gramophone, which he, unbeknownst to her, plans to buy for Ángela to impress her with. Ángela explains it is not for sale but part of a raffle and Bayardo comments: “Mejor –dijo él-, así será más fácil, y además, más barata” (*Crónica* 35). He not only wishes to impress her with his material wealth this way, but he is in fact demonstrating his belief that he can buy anything (cheap), including her love. “Esa imposición la ejerce respecto a Ángela Vicario: no busca seducirla sino someterla” (Rama 13). Ángela maybe impressed by Bayardo’s forcefulness – in itself a disturbing given – but is not attracted and later admitting that “yo detestaba a los hombres altaneros” (*Crónica* 35). It means that the elaborate wedding between Ángela Vicario and Bayardo San Román shortly after is a marriage of convenience where love does not come into the equation.

Of Ángela - the prettiest of the Vicario family, however, from an impecunious family as we know - it is said that her spiritual poverty<sup>12</sup> forms an obstacle to provide her a promising future and, as the years go by, her situation will not improve either. On the contrary, it is no more than logical that when Bayardo San Román, the wealthy new man showing up in town, starts courting Ángela, her parents delight. He is her ticket to a (economically) favorable future. However, by marrying off their youngest daughter to Bayardo they also seal her fate to martyrdom, because Ángela does not love him. When Penuel describes the Vicario family as epitomizing Church and family values stressing the importance of the word 'vicario' (meaning 'church official' and 'indirect') (Penuel 756), it would make the Vicario family members indirect representatives of the Church. Penuel then relates the name Poncio Vicario, Ángela's father, to that of the Roman Pontius Pilate, the historic person responsible for the execution of Jesus of Nazareth. It can then be deducted that Ángela's father handed his daughter over to a San Román, not for crucifixion but for long martyrdom since she doesn't love Bayardo San Román (Penuel 756). Ángela's mother too condemns her daughter to martyrdom by trying to lock her forever inside and bury her alive, after she is returned home as damaged goods. Ironically remarkable in the story is when we read that Purísima Vicario had been a teacher "hasta que se casó para siempre" (Crónica 36). Putting it like this it seems that Pura Vicario feels more a condemned prisoner than a happy wife loving the man she is with. Another such unfortunate remark we read where it says that Santiago Nasar "era el hijo único de un matrimonio de conveniencia que no tuvo un solo instante de felicidad" (Crónica 14). Love in this town apparently has nothing to do with 'pure', 'genuine' (passionate) love, but much more with calculation and convenience, money being the major common denominator.

#### LOVE AND PROMISCUITY

The fact that María Alejandrina Cervantes' house of prostitution is so popular in town "provides additional evidence of the halfhearted devotion to the cult of virginity" and shows "a double standard for men and women in sexual matters" (Penuel 754). This phrasing well holds true in

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<sup>12</sup> It is not clear why exactly she is regarded as spiritually poor. After all, in the end she knows how to survive and transform many obstacles in her life - loss of virginity, rejection by husband, honor killing on her conscience, expulsion from town - which demonstrates she is quite the opposite of spiritually poor (regardless whether it makes her a 'good' or a 'bad' person).

the *Crónica*: Ángela Vicario's honor has been damaged by the loss of her virginity before marriage, and an honor killing to restore and repair this loss is therefore approved of. She herself is not questioned or attacked (apart from by her mother), only he who did this to her is. Take Santiago Nasar and we see his situation is completely different. We find he is not (yet) married and far from a virgin, but it seems that his situation forms no problem and is more or less accepted by the community. "[M]ale characters pay frequent visits to the local brothel, visits which seem in no way censured by the community" (Millington 73). Santiago Nasar is one such regular at María Alejandrina's which makes him promiscuous, and far from a 'saint'.

We also read that when Santiago Nasar wakes up that fateful morning and goes down to take his breakfast in the kitchen, he meets their two servants, Victoria Guzmán and her young daughter Divina Flor<sup>13</sup>. While enjoying a cup of coffee and some aspirins to recover from the night before, he grabs Divina Flor by the wrist and says to her: "Ya estás en tiempo de desbravar" (Crónica 16), to which her mother sternly tells him off: "Suéltala, blanco [...] De esa agua no beberás mientras que yo esté viva" (Crónica 16). It was Victoria Guzmán herself who was seduced by Ibrahim Nasar, Santiago's father, when she was young. Secretly the two had loved each other for a while at the hacienda before Ibrahim Nasar took Victoria in as the family's servant when his affection for her was over (Crónica 16-17). Just like his father before him, Santiago fools around with young women "como decíamos entonces, él era un gavilán pollero. Andaba solo, igual que su padre, cortándole el cogollo a cuanta doncella sin rumbo" (Crónica 91). "It is almost as if both Nasars were exercising their 'droits de seigneur'" (Millington 74). Thus it comes to no surprise to reader when the story reveals that "Divina Flor [...] se sabía destinada a la cama furtiva de Santiago Nasar, y esa idea le causaba una ansiedad prematura" (Crónica 17). But Victoria Guzmán knows to keep a close watch on Santiago Nasar. At all times she tries to protect her daughter, Divina Flor, from being in a room alone together with him, knowing all too well what could happen to her. On that fatal

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<sup>13</sup> The name Divina Flor translates into 'divine flower', meaning she is still a virgin. It is no coincidence that Santiago Nasar is, again, connected to the 'divine' (Divina Flor, El Divino Rostro) since his role, as was established before, is that of a sacrificial Christ figure.

morning, for instance, Santiago asks Divina Flor to wake him up at 5:30 AM, however, Victoria Guzmán is the one who does so instead. “[N]o mandó a Divina Flor sino que subió ella misma al dormitorio con el vestido de lino, pues no perdía ninguna ocasión de preservar a la hija contra las garras del boyardo<sup>14</sup>” (Crónica 70). A little later that morning it is Divina Flor who sees Santiago Nasar out when he leaves the house to attend the bishop’s arrival. Santiago takes his chance to grab the young girl again with “la mano de gavilán carnicero” (Crónica 20). It leaves the impression that “Santiago may not have taken the virginity of [...] Ángela Vicario, but had he lived he would certainly have taken Divina Flor’s” (Callen King 318). Divina Flor’s and Victoria Guzmán’s attitude towards him clearly show that Santiago Nasar is a lustful young man who seems to enjoy passionate love (making) before he, just like his parents did before him, will enter into a marriage of convenience, an arranged marriage with Flora Miguel<sup>15</sup>. Apart from his lust for sleeping with young virgins, Santiago also holds relations with María Alejandrina Cervantes, the local prostitute who “arrasó con la virginidad de mi generación”, the narrator reveals (Crónica 67). We read:

“Santiago Nasar perdió el sentido desde que la vió por primera vez. Yo lo previne: *Halcón que se atreve con garza guerrera, peligros espera*. Pero el no me oyó, aturdido por los silbos quiméricos de María Alejandrina Cervantes. Ella fue su pasión desquiciada, su maestra de lágrimas a los 15 años, hasta que Ibrahim Nasar se lo quitó de la cama a correazos y lo encerró más de un año en *El Divino Rostro*. Desde entonces siguieron vinculados por un afecto serio, pero sin el desorden del amor, y ella tenía tanto respeto que no volvió a acostarse con nadie si él estaba presente.” (Crónica 68, italics in original).

Calling it ‘el desorden del amor’ points out that real love apparently messes things up. Therefore, in this town love is sealed not with a kiss, but with convenience. Relationships are not based on disorderly passionate love but on orderly calculated love. María Alejandrina

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<sup>14</sup> Strikingly the word ‘boyardo’ is used here when the newcomer in town who is looking for a wife to marry is called Bayardo. Both men, Santiago as well as Bayardo, are in fact on the prowl.

<sup>15</sup> Flora Miguel is yet another name referring to the ‘flower of virginity’ so to speak, however, not so clearly as the name of Divina Flor does.

Cervantes seems to be Santiago's real love, yet he obeys his parents and agrees to marrying Flora Miguel. The consequences of his promiscuity do not help Santiago at the crucial moment, the moment when Ángela Vicario decides to name him as the one who deflowered her. In this way, Santiago Nasar, albeit a friendly and hard working young man, does not help himself to avoid his fatal death.

#### LOVE IN LETTERS

Letters, too, play an important role in the *Crónica*, and there are many of them. First we see Luisa Santiago's letters to her son the narrator. They are not so many in number but their content interesting enough. She writes him that when Bayardo San Román comes to this small river town, six months before the eventual wedding, he makes quite a stir. Luisa Santiago, the narrator's mother, writes him in a letter: "Ha venido un hombre muy raro" (Crónica 32). He is an unusual sight being all dolled up in expensive clothes and accessories. One of the townspeople remembers thinking that "[p]arecía marica" [...] Y era una lástima, porque estaba como para embadurnarlo de mantequilla y comérselo vivo" (Crónica 31). Bayardo San Román is a little strange maybe but good eye candy nevertheless. "Nadie supo nunca a qué vino [...] pues tenía una manera de hablar que más bien le servía para ocultar que para decir" (Crónica 32). So even though there is something suspicious about the man, it is Bayardo's looks, first and foremost, that gain him the town's acceptance nevertheless. Not too much later it is his money that earns him respect. His looks and money again provoke clear indications that principles are easily put overboard. Luisa Santiago, too, gives him her blessing when she writes her son that "[l]a gente lo quiere mucho [...] porque es honrado y de buen corazón, y el domingo pasado comulgó de rodillas y ayudó a la misa en latín" (Crónica 33). Hers and the town's approval of him comes shockingly easily and has no base really, it is a hollow judgement, a book judged by its cover. Again, it demonstrates that the townspeople are more concerned with looks and (keeping up) appearances than that it actually tells us something meaningful and insightful about Bayardo San Román's personality nor that it shows genuine love is a highly rated good.

Another example of (love) letters are the ones from Santiago Nasar to his bride-to-be Flora Miguel. Just minutes before his attack, Santiago visits the Miguel family and finds Flora Miguel in their sitting room waiting for him, very upset over finding out that he slept with Ángela Vicario. She demonstratively shows her rejection of him by throwing all the letters she received from him on the floor.

“Aquel lunes [Flora Miguel] lo estaba esperando con el cofre de cartas en el regazo. Lo esperaba en la sala, verde de cólera, con uno de los vestidos de arandelas infortunadas que solía llevar en las manos. Aquí tienes –le dijo-. ¡Y ojalá te matan! Santiago Nasar quedó tan perplejo, que el cofre se le cayó de las manos, y sus cartas sin amor se regaron por el suelo” (Crónica 111-112).

Santiago slowly picking up the letters “parecía una penitencia” (Crónica 112). It is apparent that Santiago wrote these letters to his bride-to-be and that none of them contained any love at all. The letters merely serve to consolidate their agreement on marriage.

Then there are Angela’s letters to Bayardo San Román that compare to messages in a bottle. “Me parecía demasiado hombre para mí” (Crónica 39), Ángela remembers years later. And so her letters to him are in clear contrast to, what she so explicitly expresses about Bayardo at first. They seem even more out of place considering she is rejected by him and sent home at their wedding night, yet Ángela writes thousands of love letters to Bayardo San Román regardless of that fateful night. What is going on here? The answer would be that Ángela turns out to be as calculated as Bayardo is. We also know that her mother is overly controlling and that, especially after the disastrous wedding night, she tries to bury her daughter alive. “Había hecho más que lo possible para que Ángela Vicario se muriera en vida, pero la misma hija le malogró los propósitos, porque nunca hizo ningún misterio de su desventura (Crónica 90). We know that Ángela does not have a promising future, especially not after being rejected by her husband. It leaves her with two options only: Either she chooses to remain stuck at home with her overly controlling mother who buries her alive and without any further prospect of ever finding another man that she may actually love and be with (or the man trusting and loving

her, for that matter); or she chooses to be freed from the suffocation at home and live with a wealthy man that provides well for her. Ángela chooses the second and most calculated option. Her insight into this being her only real option begins to take shape the moment when she is returned home and her mother beats her up for the disgrace:

“ «De pronto, cuando mamá empezó a pegarme, empecé a acordarme de él» me dijo. Los puñetazos le dolían menos porque sabía que eran por él [...] Siguíó pensando en él con un cierto asombro de sí misma cuando sollozaba tumbada en el sofá del comedor «No lloraba por los golpes [...] lloraba por él.» [...] Llevaba mucho tiempo pensando en él sin ninguna ilusión cuando tuve que acompañar a su madre a un examen de la vista en el hospital de Riohacha. [...] Entraron de pasado en el Hotel del Puerto [...] y Pura Vicario pidió un vaso de agua en la cantina. Se lo estaba tomando, de espaldas a la hija, cuando ésta vio su propio pensamiento reflejado en los espejos repetidos de la sala. Ángela Vicario volvió la cabeza con el último aliento, y lo vio pasar a su lado sin verla, y lo vio salir del hotel. Luego miró otra vez a su madre con el corazón hecho trizas. Pura Vicario [...] le sonrió desde el mostrador con los lentes nuevos. En esa sonrisa, por primera vez desde su nacimiento, Ángela Vicario la vio tal como era: una pobre mujer consagrada al culto de sus defectos. [...] [Ángela] [n]ació de nuevo. «Me volví loca por él –me dijo-, loca de remate».” (Crónica 92-93).

This scene from the *Crónica* clearly illustrates that Ángela consciously opts to break free from her destiny, in an attempt to avoid becoming like her mother. She does so by giving herself over to her former husband, this time with all her might and energy. It is the start of years and years of writing (love?) letters to Bayardo San Román, which for the longest all remain unanswered, in order to try and win him back. Mary Davis writes that “[Ángela’s] letters become an instrument through which [she] gradually understands herself. She is as fearless in her solitary love as she was earlier in assuming the consequences of not loving Bayardo” (Davis 42). So the process of writing all those letters teaches Ángela all about herself:

“Dueña por primera vez de su destino, Ángela Vicario descubrió entonces que el odio y el amor son pasiones recíprocas. Cuantas más cartas mandaba, más encendía las brasas de su fiebre, pero más calentaba también el rencor feliz que sentía contra su madre [...] Se volvió lúcida, imperiosa, maestra de su albedrío, y volvió a ser virgen sólo para él, y no reconoció otra autoridad que la suya ni más servidumbre que la de su obsesión” (Crónica 94).

Angela’s stern upbringing of her daughter teaches her that she ‘will learn to love’. Her mother believes that “[c]ualquier hombre será feliz con ellas, porque han sido criadas para sufrir” (Crónica 36). And it is true, it so happens with Ángela: She learns to love Bayardo San Román, albeit by the pain of writing all these thousands of letters to Bayardo and very much out of a passionate hate for her own mother. Moreover, it is the crafts that her mother taught her that help her overcome the past: “Todos los que la vieron en esa época coincidían en que era absorta y diestra en la máquina de bordar, y que a través de su industria había logrado el olvido” (Crónica 89).

The letters that Ángela Vicario writes to her former husband Bayardo San Román are most curious. After she realizes that she hates her mother and loves/desires Bayardo, she writes him letter after letter, thousands of them, which all arrive but are all left unopened. One day, years after Bayardo sent his bride Ángela home, Bayardo knocks on Ángela’s door with a suitcase in hand “con casi dos mil cartas que ella le había escrito. Estaban ordenadas por sus fechas, en paquetes cosidos con cintas de colores, y todas sin abrir” (Crónica 96). What exactly is written in these letters the reader will never know, nor does Bayardo San Román know himself, for he leaves them unopened. The impression is given that she has outpoured her whole life into these letters, her whole emotional being, as well as her reasons for her loss of virginity at the day of their wedding and her reasons for falsely accusing Santiago for it. Of course it is most bizarre that, even without Bayardo knowing the content of Ángela’s letters, he does eventually return to Ángela. “Un medio día de agosto, mientras bordaba con sus amigas, sintió que alguien llegaba a la puerta. No tuvo que mirar para saber quién era [...] era él, carajo, era él!” (Crónica 95). It must have been the mere amount, expressing complete

surrender that wins Bayardo over to return to his former bride. “Bueno –dijo-, aquí estoy” (Crónica 95). And most of all reconciling with her former husband in the end ridicules Santiago Nasar’s murder; it becomes a “futile act” and his death therefore does not have the power to cleanse the tarnished mirror of honor (Millington 83).

A last letter of importance and another message in a bottle is the one that is left on the Nasars doorstep by an unidentified person, a letter which includes details of the crime before it has even taken place on that fatal morning. It is an important letter because it illustrates that there must have been someone who knew about Ángela not being a virgin anymore – most probably it is the man who slept with her - and who is well informed about Ángela’s brothers, for this person predicts in great detail what course the crime will follow. As said before, the narrator nor the story of the novel provide a clue as to who wrote the letter so any answer to that question is mere speculation: Dionisio<sup>16</sup> Iguarán, the local doctor, is persistent in leaving town that same morning which makes him suspicious. But so is Ángela’s father for instance (what honor did he have to keep up anyway?). John Christie believes that a case can be made that Ángela’s own father could be her offender, which would make the case one of incest. Christie argues that, just like Pontius Pilate, Poncio Vicario is a fallen man who tries to maintain his family’s honor by working gold and that the reader may wonder why one of Ángela’s sisters died (Christie 25-26). “Una hija intermedia que había muerto de fiebres crepusculares, y dos años después seguían guardándole un luto aliviado dentro de la casa, pero riguroso en la calle” (Crónica 36). Incest is hinted at. Inside the house the family does not keep up appearances (anymore) but outside the house they do very much so by going out in mourning wear. But this is all mere speculation, for there is no solid textual evidence that provides proof; there could then be many more characters who might have had relations with Ángela and who could have left this letter on Santiago’s doorstep.

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<sup>16</sup> The name Dionisio in this context would refer to the mythical god Dyonisus, the Greek god of wine and ecstasy, also called Bacchus. As such, there are two sides to his coin: His juice intoxicates, causing joy, pleasure and ecstasy (for Ángela), but his juice at the same time inebriates, bringing out the worst in people and making drama and theatre (as in the town turning to spectators desiring or causing Santiago’s crucifixion).

Love in this novel is also a notion subject to decay. True love is hard to find in Santiago's community; most intimate connections are not so intimate because they are not based on love. Casual love (promiscuity) and convenience (arranged marriages) are more common. Moreover, men and women are not viewed/treated equally when it comes to matters of love and missteps are more excusable in men than in women, meaning that men can get away with more than women. Yet ironically so, in the *Cronica's* story it is not Ángela who is questioned but instead it is the man who is accused of her loss of virginity who is attacked.

What we see in the (love) letters that pass the scene in the novel is that the function of all those letters is to convince, both the writer as the receiver: The narrator's mother, Luisa Santiago, only needs a few letters to her son to convince her son and herself that Bayardo San Román is a respectable newcomer that can be welcomed to town with open arms; Santiago's letters to his promised bride-to-be, Flora Miguel, are without love but serve to convince himself as well as Flora of the righteousness of their upcoming arranged marriage; Ángela's letters to Bayardo take a while before they are convincing enough for herself and for Bayardo, but they eventually do convince them both of their love (or destiny?) for each other, even though they are never opened by its recipient Bayardo; And the letter on the doorstep should have served the Nasar family to convince them of the fact that Santiago is going to be killed, however unimaginable and wrongful, yet this message in a bottle is not found in time and only opened after the fact, thus losing its purpose.

## FINAL NOTES

Mario Vargas Llosa, writing about truth and lies in literature, quotes Valle Inclán saying '[I]as cosas no son como las vemos sino como las recordamos' (Vargas Llosa 13) and it seems he had Gabriel García Márquez' *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* on his mind. The *Crónica's* story presented to us is one made up of pieces of memory from a time long gone, narrated and put together by a biased narrator. Memories are never flawless of course, yet the events in the novel seem painfully true and real. Fact is that a deeper, more complex story hides behind the luster of these so-called truthful memories. The true meaning of this murder mystery can be found hidden in the characters' 'divine faces' and 'virginal conduct'.

Answering the question posed in the Introduction – Is Santiago's murder religiously, racially, economically or culturally motivated? – it is demonstrated that motivations of Santiago Nasar's murder are not one-tracked but manifold. A complex combination of motivations together form a cultural setting and stage for the murder. To be more precise, motivations are born out of customs and tradition in a Christian heritage prevalent in Santiago's town (virginity and honor), out of historically important developments (presence of Arab immigrants) and out of economical considerations (marriages of convenience), together creating this cultural stage and setting for the honor killing of Santiago Nasar to take place.

Recapitulating the findings in this paper we see that in a religious sense, Santiago is like a figure of Christ, sacrificed in order to restore peace in the community. However, not guilty of the accusations he is charged with, Santiago's crucifixion does not realize purification, turning his death into a futility, leaving the townspeople's conscious even more tarnished. In the words of Katherine Callen King: "There is no closure, or purification, because minds dulled by stereotypes and escaping into stereotypes refuse to engage the cultural conflicts that produce the pain of authentic tragedy. Therefore years of obsession and destructive guilt ensue for the townspeople" (Callen King 323). Not examining their hollowed out traditional Christian values allows them to condone an honor killing, using the pretext of it being a family affair and thus of no concern to them. However, by not questioning Ángela's loss of virginity and by not questioning the general workings of the code of honor adhered to, but by allowing the false

accusations against Santiago to take over, the townspeople pretend to not share responsibility to stop the Vicario brothers' in their intent to kill Santiago Nasar. They pretend not to share the need to take control and examine the way things go, the way things always go. They use the concept of an honor killing to remain out of the loop by stating it is a family affair. This way they do not have to examine their own weaknesses and prejudices. This way, they can continue to hide behind the shroud of tradition. This way, they keep on belonging to the group and do not have to risk having to take a closer look in the mirror as to where they stand. This way they prefer pride over truthfulness. The narrator himself included pretends to make sense of what happened so many years back, but in fact he does not. All he does with his report, this chronicle, is verbalize the existence of traditional yet eroded Christian values prevalent in his town and the pain they cause, even after so many years have gone by since the honor killing of Santiago Nasar. Or, in the words of Mary Davis: "When the reporter arrives twenty years later to recapture the event, the wound has not healed, and Santiago's death has not been understood" (Davis 33).

In light of racial relations, the townspeople allow that Santiago's Arab/Palestinian origin - never before much of a problem - all of a sudden takes on the size and shape of a monster, turning him into an insurmountable and fatal threat to the community that needs to be disposed of. At the crucial moment, they allow injustice and discrimination to over, making the murder of Santiago Nasar partly a racially motivated attack, even though this is less obvious and more subdued so than their religious motivations.

As for the economic aspects to the motivations of Santiago Nasar's murder, García Márquez himself in "Het Verhaal van het Verhaal" says that he always thought that the story he recounts in *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* was that of a horrible crime, while in fact it was the secret story of a terrible love story (García Márquez/Het Verhaal, 109). The terribleness of this love story is to be found in the fact that love is calculated and not true love. The whole novel's story starts, ends and evolves, of course, around Ángela having lost her virginity and her most probably protecting the man she truly loves, the man who deflowered her. First and enough proof already that true love does not get a chance in the story. Then, considering that

it takes the deceived husband Bayardo San Román and his non-virgin bride Ángela Vicario over two decades to get together (again), there is a lot of life and love lost over the years. Their union, their first as well as their second time, is based on (financial) calculation, not on love. Moreover, it not only comes at the cost of an innocent life, namely that of Santiago, it also comes at the cost of longtime missing out on marital bliss and at the cost of a complete town's guilty conscious. No one of the townspeople's souls will ever be healed or at peace because of it. The emphasis on the importance of preserving virginity until marriage has put a spell on this Caribbean town. None of its townspeople convincingly display to know how to live by this strict rule, no one of them showing their true colors. Yet when a flaw is revealed in someone else – Ángela's loss and Santiago's Otherness – any one of them is ruthless and quick in their judgement.

Applying these findings and scaling them down to the level of specific characters, we see that when Ángela's secret is revealed, no one questions when and how this happened. Instead everyone seems to agree that someone should take the blame. It is curious, at least, that her participation in the act of sex preceding her situation is totally ignored, whereas throughout the story she may be protecting the real 'perpetrator', her possible secret love, for she wrongfully accuses Santiago Nasar. So, even when her secret finally does come out, Ángela continues to hide behind a façade, which is easily facilitated because no one ever questions her part in the story. She could have opted for honesty and pointed out who the actual perpetrator/lover really is but she does not and accuses innocent Santiago. Then, when Bayardo San Román enters the scene she agrees to marry him without too much trouble and without loving him. She agrees to what should be called an arranged marriage of convenience. But sent home for not being a virgin she cannot forget about San Román, for she realizes he is her ticket out of the suffocation at the home front. By means of the thousands of letters that she writes to her former husband whom she deceived and didn't love, she seems to slowly break free from the ties that bind her to her abusive and overpowering mother, confiding and confessing all she harbors within, possibly including giving away the secret of the man she loved before. Confiding and confessing is what makes her put aside her pride – as well as her shame and guilt - and in the end she manages to win Bayardo back. In a sense Ángela

eventually turns into an independent spirit, a woman freed from the shackles of Christian tradition.

With Bayardo San Román things are different. From the beginning it is clear that he is a man on the prowl, on the lookout for a good woman to marry. It implies he himself may have had other (many?) women before he marries Ángela and thus he is neither sticking to the Christian rule of abstinence and virginity before marriage. It also implies that he is not necessarily looking for love but rather for convenience. He finds this in Ángela, or so he thinks. Getting to what he wants, he first goes about flashing his fancy looks, which makes him acquire acceptance from the townspeople quickly. Then he goes about courting Ángela by flashing his wealth, seemingly thinking he can buy her heart with money. When on their wedding night he finds out Ángela is not a virgin he sends her home, all of a sudden clinging and reverting to the Christian traditions of virginity and honor, even though he himself did not stick to this rule. Outwardly he shows contempt for Ángela's deceit yet inwardly he knows he is not without blemish either. The irony, in a sense, is that he ends up rejecting what he buys. The fact that he returns to Ángela many years later proves he values the 'good' that speaks out of all the unopened (love) letters of his former and rejected wife, more so than remaining a deceived and single man. In one word he is a calculated man.

Santiago Nasar, the friendly young man, is also a man on the prowl. He is free as bird, not caring for any cult of virginity, not his own nor anyone else's. He is a friendly and promiscuous adolescent enjoying prostitutes and young girls alike, until his father asks he act mature. Thereafter he becomes the successful hacendado. Santiago's promiscuity, his relative wealth, and his Arab origin start working against him when Ángela accuses him. Instantly, he is no longer seen as part of the community but rather turns into an outsider, a threat to a community he had been part of for so long without any problems. Ángela's situation causes Santiago's unjustified and wrongful death, a martyr alike, resembling how and why Christ was nailed to the cross a martyr. He has no way to defend himself because for the longest time until when it is too late, no one tells him of the accusations made against him or of the imminent murderous attack on him. Having a different origin - his Arab-ness -, standing out in

business and having lead a promiscuous life before, nail him to the cross. He is 'el Otro', a threat which the Vicario family and the town as a whole need to eliminate. He is a scapegoat and his life taken as a sacrifice to wash away the stains of the community. But the stains remain because no one acts with a rightful mindset; everyone hides behind the facade of unbelief and presumptions, of tradition and fear, of the pretext that an honor killing is a mere family affair. The stains will forever stay when Bayardo and Ángela eventually do unite after all.

The town as a whole, too, shows to be clinging to eroded traditions and values. At first they cannot believe that Santiago Nasar is going to be killed yet more and more they become the twin brothers' accomplices by not trying to prevent the horrible honor killing from actually taking place. They allow themselves to be spectators to a scene of crucifixion. Father, mayor and townspeople alike dismiss the information of the imminent killing, caring more for being outwardly representative and respectable. In matters of love and passion they seem to condone promiscuity in men and condemn it in women, like we see happen in real life all too often as well. On the contrary, they seem to believe in (arranged) marriages of convenience – like the ones between Ibrahim Nasar and Plácida Linero, between Bayardo San Román and Ángela Vicario, and between Santiago Nasar and Flora Miguel – more than in genuine love connections. Money matters, not love. The townspeople also value how they are perceived by their friends and neighbors more so than how genuinely honest and friendly their connections are. Here, too, outward appearance is what is high on their list. Thus it can happen that outwardly all seem to be good Christians and law-abiding citizens, together creating a peaceful and harmonious close-knit community, yet at times of conflict they opt out and are swayed by pride, prejudice, rumor and presumptions, hiding behind pretexts in order to avoid having to act as responsible citizens. The discrepancy between their outward appearance and attitude and their actual actions and behavior seems to be a result of sticking to Christian traditions while not being committed to them. It makes them xenophobe, racially discriminating and forever frustrated. In the case of the murder of Santiago, this cowardly attitude causes them to be haunted by guilt for years after. They are now and were then paralyzed and trapped in their own hollowed out convictions and twisted pretexts. Repeatedly announcing the killing

before, and repeatedly recounting the memories and the details of the killing afterwards, as well as the repeated letter writing trying to convince themselves and others of their righteousness, do not help anyone shake the guilt. In *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* all characters are trapped in pride and prejudice.

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