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Ms. Morales

AP/IB English HL II

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Reflective Statement

Word Count: 345

Question: How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?

Work used: *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and translated by Gregory Rabassa.

My understanding of topics dealing with the machismo and the cultural debacle of honor killings in Latin America societies, as well as Christian symbolism through both authority and the actual murder, was largely expanded as a result of the Interactive Orals. Afterwards, I began to contemplate Marquez's commentary on the unjust values of society and his calls for reform.

The topics of machismo and honor killings are closely connected, and several groups presented on the influence of societal norms as transferred to Pablo and Pedro Vicario. I learned about the role that honor dictates towards the men of the house, who were the brothers, not the disabled father, and how their actions perpetuated a chain of family honor that was greater than any individual honor. From this new knowledge, I thought about the rituals and habits of society which dictate these matters of honor, as well as the social acceptance of such events. Through absurdities in time and action, Marquez intends to reveal the arbitrary nature of such horrific actions.

Another topic was the influence, or lack thereof, of religious figures such as the Bishop, Father Amador, and the Nun sister. These hypocritical Catholic figures were found to be representative of the disdain that Marquez has towards the organized Catholic Church, and their inaction led the community by example to not take any action towards the murder. Through the depiction of laziness and irresponsibility, Marquez shifts a portion of the blame to the bloated Catholic society which has been creating adverse notions through the community.

Finally, a topic that was presented was the corruption and inexperience of governmental officials such as Colonel Aponte, who was presented as part of a larger study on politics in the regime. The factions, as well as the heroes that arose, likely lived a life of patronage, and ineptly wielding power. Marquez reveals the dishonesty and trickery behind such notions, and again calls for the societal standards to change.

Through these topics, I learned about how Marquez argued for reform in the community based on historical atrocities as well as present conflicting values of society. Through the absurdity of honor killings, Catholicism and corruption in government, Marquez mocks current societal issues and makes a desperate call for reform and reevaluation.

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On Authority

Word Count: 1263

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's pseudo-journalistic novella, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* translated by Gregory Rabassa, unleashes a wide barrage of social criticism through the devilishly simple act of murder. Garcia Marquez manipulates the idea of authority in communities, such as the government, machismo, and the church, to reveal the absurdity in which the community blindly follows orders and customs, revealing key aspects of contemporary social issues.

Garcia Marquez tackles the misleading concepts in the cultural absurdity known as machismo through billing the murder as an honor killing. By using masochism to justify this unforgivable crime, he ridicules the townspeople who accept this faulty logic. Although the village is somewhat responsible for the Santiago's murder, the actual action carried out by Pablo and Pedro is central to Garcia Marquez's message. Traditional machismo involves killing the female to purify the family line, but the Vicario brothers choose to murder the male who dishonored their sister instead. The murder is therefore not only redemption of their family's honor, but also the redemption of a family member. They justified their actions as being the most beneficial to their sister. This has the effect of making the brothers appear more human, as they "trembled with rage" for their sister (47). The murder is portrayed not only as a necessity, but also as a human emotion that has origins in love. In addition, the internal conflict between the brothers implies puzzlement over the ethics of the murder. Garcia Marquez uses the duality of the twin's view to reveal the debate raging between rational and irrational thinking, which occurs

in honor-bound people. Pedro's belief that "his duty [was] fulfilled when the mayor disarmed them" is contrasted with Pablo's belief of honor not being restored until the murder completed (60). These conflicting viewpoints reveal the absurdity of using irrational actions to justify rational problems, as doing so results in a loss of innocence for the brothers.

However, the community's definition of honor has just as large of an impact as the brother's own views of machismo. Garcia Marquez describes the brothers as "[looking] like two children," where the word "children" has the connotation of people who are not capable of independent thought (55). Instead, the brothers are reliant on townspeople and family to take charge, which implies that the brothers' morals were adapted from the values of the community. Through superimposing a definition of honor that permits killing as long as it is "legitimate defense of honor," the community forms a hostile environment that breeds discontent (48). Their blindness to what they have created, while feeling the excruciating pain of permitting murder for any reason, is perhaps part of why Santiago's murder haunts the villagers for many years after the killing. In addition, the willingness of the townspeople to accept with certainty the name that Angela chooses reflects the absurdity in machismo culture. Instead of calming down and investigating the issue, the community jumps to assumptions to preserve their honor. The brothers are compelled by their family to carry out a worthless murder, destroying lives and scarring the community. Garcia Marquez uses the stubbornness of clinging to the old traditions, along with the subconscious repercussions, in order to reveal the absurdity in the widespread acceptance of masculine honor.

Garcia Marquez portrays the official authority figures in the government with ridicule in order to expose hypocrisy and the imbalance of power. Men like General Petronio San Roman, whose mere presence forced "everyone to realize that Bayardo San Roman was going to marry

whomever he chose,” are used to expose decorated heroes as bullies and abusers of the general public (34). Many of the townspeople rush to appease this figurehead while others stick closer to their morals. More poignantly, Colonel Lazaro Aponte’s conducts a long string of missteps and failures that call into question whether he possesses any leadership skills. As his job was likely a result of patronage from the government and the military, his naivety and foolishness allow him to be “at peace with his soul” even when he made fatal errors in judgment (53). Through questioning Aponte’s legitimacy, Garcia Marquez establishes a platform to criticize the method of which Aponte came to acquire the job. The community reaches a similar conclusion, as they believe that “an order from the mayor ... stupid as they might have been, had to be obeyed” (72). Even though the community sees through the blatant foolishness of the uncouth military mayor, they are unable to turn away from his power, so that when he fails to act, the entire community is let down. ). Aponte’s attitude of completing minor tasks such as disarming the brothers while ignoring the larger picture trickles down through the community. This laziness and removal of personal guilt explains why the townspeople did not warn Santiago. Through the community’s half-hearted rejection of the mayor’s actions, Garcia Marquez calls for towns in Latin America to reexamine their governing systems and contemplate whether the current systems of government are benefiting the community, or perhaps just benefiting a useless military.

. Garcia Marquez mocks the unresponsive and lethargic church, shaping it to be a catalyst for the crime, exposing the hypocrisy of leaders in the church, leading to a reevaluation of what blind faith in organized religion curtails. Garcia Marquez’s representation of the elusive bishop, whose anticipated arrival is the cause for celebration, symbolizes the absence of God in the community. He never approaches the port, choosing instead to wave at the townspeople from a distance, which is a representation of the chasm between the villagers and God. It is implied that

this lack of piety leads to moral ambiguity, paving the way for crimes like the murder. However, Garcia Marquez portrays the failures of Catholicism more directly through Father Amador, the teacher turned priest. Although he is characterized as godly and pure within the community, his actions are contradictory to his thoughts as he feels “such despair and [is] so disgusted with himself that the only thing he could think of was to ring the fire alarm” (70). This is further emphasized when the unqualified Amador performs the autopsy, an action so horribly mutilating that it is often considered to be the second killing of Santiago in the book. Garcia Marquez uses magical realism and the three killings as an analogy to the holy trinity. Therefore, having a Father be part of the second murder is a blatant accusation against the church. Even though Father Amador’s role is to be a beacon of faith in his community, his actions are no more Godly than anyone else. Because Amador possess the authority to influence the townspeople, his apathy spreads throughout the village causing devastating consequences. This theme was previously explored with the government figures, but the church clearly displays similar issues. Garcia Marquez does not directly question Christian customs in his book, but he challenges the hypocritical organization of the Catholic Church, implying it to be one of the key downfalls for Santiago. Garcia Marquez forces contemplation of the current role of religion in communities, implying that blind compliance to religion may lead to despair.

Garcia Marquez challenges many core beliefs of a community in shock through writing his novel, hoping to create a paradigm shift in the society which he lived in. Growing up in Colombia with stories of the Civil War from his Grandfather, Garcia Marquez embeds many of the lessons he learns from questioning assumptions. He embarks on a quest for a better life through rejecting or reevaluating the traditional roles of government and military, established ideas of honor, and organized religion.

Works Cited

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