**Work in translation essay**

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***How and to what end has Gabriel García Márquez subverted the traditional narrative structure in ‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’?***

Quoting Gil Vicente’s *“the hunt for love is haughty falconry”* as the epigraph, Gabriel García Márquez’s *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* directly addresses machismo and achieves its unequivocal indictment through the circular and fragmented narrative structure of the novel. Marquez’s intentional subversion of the traditional linear narrative structure in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* very effectively directs the readers’ attention away from how the protagonist Santiago Nasar was murdered to instead focus on what happens when machismo becomes so deeply ingrained in a society by undermining the significance of the novel’s plot, making the theme of ritual more prominent in the novel’s narrative, and amalgamating the identity of victims and oppressors.

The plot is naturally what captivates the readers as they progress through a novel. While being effective at coherently presenting the plot of a novel, the traditional linear narrative structure makes it difficult for the deeper moral message to compete against the plot for the attention of the reader. By subverting the traditional linear narrative structure, Marquez undermines the plot of *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* to make his moral accusation against the town’s inaction towards Santiago Nasar’s foretold murder very apparent. Marquez’s cyclical and almost incessant emphasis on the fact that Santiago Nasar will be murdered throughout the novel evidently disempowers its plot. Opening the novel with line *“On the day they were going to kill him* (Santiago Nasar)*”*, the narrator defines the very setting of *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* by Santiago Nasar’s murder. As reading progresses, the readers are constantly bombarded with the reminder that Santiago Nasar will be killed, as the narrator continues to define the subjects of his narration with Santiago Nasar’s murder, such as how the moment when Santiago Nasar leaves his house is defined as the last time Nasar’s mother ever saw him and when the narrator’s sister Margot is introduced as *“one of the few people who still didn’t know that they were going to kill him* (Santiago Nasar)*”*. Together with the plethora of fragmented anecdotes, the circular structure of the plot itself further deprives the narrative in the novel of chronological coherence, made apparent by the fact that the first chapter ended dramatically with Jaime shouting *“They’ve already killed him* (Santiago Nasar)*”*, while the second chapter moves on to introduce Bayardo San Roman’s arrival at the town way before Santiago Nasar was killed. Spoiling the plot and making the readers’ reading experience a discomfort, the subversion of the traditional linear narrative in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* effectively subdues the significance of its plot. Having little anticipation for the plot development, the readers will start to notice subtle details in the narration such as how the characters interviewed by the narrator all showed a lack of compunction for the absence of their intervention in the murder. This makes instances such as when Angela Vicario says without even lifting her eye to the narrator that *“Don’t beat to death cousin, it was Santiago Nasar”* when she is questioned about the validity of her accusation occur even more outrageous to the readers, who will see her shocking indifference towards a murder she caused directly as solid evidence that machismo has completely distorted the town’s sense of justice. Had Márquez not subverted the traditional narrative structure in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’*, the readers’ attention would largely remain on the plot instead of the deeper moral message, which renders Márquez’s attempt to indict machismo futile.

Although Marquez’s subversion of the traditional linear narrative structure undermines significance of the plot in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’*, the theme of ritual in the novel is brought to the next level by the circular narrative structure to further achieve the moral indictment of the town. The Vicario brothers’ killing of Santiago is the overarching ritual of the novel. The murder was carried out faithfully although the Vicario brothers’ reluctance is strongly implied by the fact that they searched for Santiago Nasar where he is least likely be “just to make sure”, while announcing their plans to everyone they meet on the way; Santiago Nasar’s death also becomes completely unnecessary after Bayardo eventually returns to Angela Vicario years after the murder. Ritualistic behavior is repetition without regards to purpose. Alongside with other ritualistic behavior, such as how Santiago Nasar’s autopsy was carried out by a priest anyways despite having no legal standing, the omnipresence of rituals in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* indicates that the entire town society has been deprived of purpose by the deeply ingrained Hispanic machismo culture. As the traditional linear narrative structure is subverted by Marquez, the readers are left with no more insight into how Santiago Nasar is murdered at the end of the novel than what they have in the beginning. This essentially makes the circular narrative of the novel a ritual as well due to how it pointlessly and repetitively revolves around the investigation of how Santiago Nasar died without providing any revelation. Even the narrator himself acknowledges this pointlessness, as he describes the flooded office in which he searches for briefing documents on Santiago Nasar’s murder as a *“lagoon of lost causes”* towards the end of the novel. This shows that the narrator as a member of the town society the influence of machismo. Although the narrator does attempt to defy the ritualistic behavior of the town through his investigation into Santiago Nasar’s murder, his investigation still remains a ritual as he fails to identify the town’s collective responsibility in Santiago Nasar’s death. As the narrative in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* is deprived of purpose by Marquez’s subversion of the linear narrative structure, the readers will become ever more clearly aware of the fact that the subject of the novel is not Santiago Nasar’s murder, but the society in which the murder took place. This strongly reinforces the notion that the town is collectively responsible for the absence of their intervention against the ritual that lead to Santiago Nasar’s murder.

Alongside with undermining the significance of the plot and ritualizing the narrative in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’*, Marquez’s deliberate subversion of the traditional linear narrative structure also amalgamates the opposing identity of victim and oppressor. The heavy reliance on anecdotes in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* to propel the plot inevitably fragments its narrative structure, which means that the story has to be delivered from a multiplicity of different perspectives. At the very beginning of *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’*, the narrator directly acknowledges that his narrative is fragmentary by describing his investigation into Santiago Nasar’s murder as *“trying to put the broken mirror of memory back together from so many scattered shards”*. As the symbolism of the broken mirror indicates the town society’s collective inability to reflect on their guilt, the metaphor of each piece of anecdote being a single piece of scattered mirror shard suggests that Marquez intends paint a full portrait of the town society through the multiplicity of different perspectives in these fragmented anecdotes. While the readers could very easily identify whether each character is characterized as a victim or oppressor in the beginning of *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’*, it becomes harder and harder to do so as more and more different perspectives are compiled into the narrative until finally the victims and the oppressors becomes indistinguishable from one another. An example of this is how Angela Vicario is characterized throughout the novel. With her marriage being purchased like merchandise and brutally beaten by her mother after she was discovered to be not a virgin, it is undisputable that Angela Vicario is initially portrayed as a victim of machismo. However, she becomes an amalgamation of both victim and oppressor after she has exhibited absolutely no remorse towards Santiago Nasar’s death which she caused directly as if he deserved to die. The same could be also said about Santiago Nasar and the townsfolk. Although the dominant impression in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* would be that Santiago Nasar is the ultimate victim, he is definitely the oppressor from the perspective of Victoria Guzman in the way he mistreats her daughter and women in general; While the townsfolk appear to be the ultimate oppressor in the novel, it is evident that the they are also deeply traumatized by Santiago Nasar’s death, with examples such as how Maria Alejandrina Cervantes could not bring herself to be intimate with the narrator as he smelled like Santiago Nasar, and how Colonel Aponte became vegetarian for life after witnessing the autopsy. In the end, the fragmentary narrative in *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* shows the reader that everyone is in fact simultaneously oppressed and victimized when machismo becomes so entrenched in a society, which perpetuates the viscous cycle of suffering and makes absurd tragedies such as Santiago Nasar’s murder unavoidable

In the end, Gabriel García Márquez’s construction of a fragmented circular narrative completely subverts the traditional linear narrative structure implied by the word “chronicle” in the title of *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’*. This rebellion from the standard literary conventions has empowered *‘Chronicle of a Death Foretold’* as Marquez’s indictment against the Hispanic machismo culture through undermining the significance of the novel’s plot, making the theme of ritual more prominent in the novel’s narrative, and amalgamating the identity of victims and oppressors.

Word Count: 1545