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GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

A Critical Companion

Rubén Pelayo

CRITICAL COMPANIONS TO POPULAR CONTEMPORARY WRITERS
Kathleen Gregory Klein, Series Editor



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***Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981)**

The publication of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* broke Gabriel García Márquez's self-imposed "publication strike." (He had pledged to not publish anything for as long as Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet remained in power.) García Márquez's period of silence started in 1976 and ended in a spectacular way in 1981 with the publication of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, which was written, according to some critics, at the urging of other Chilean authors. While it is common for countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia to have their own publication run of 5,000 to 30,000 copies, 30,000 being the exception, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* was, without doubt, an exception beyond that. García Márquez's publishing house, located in Spain, Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, published 1 million copies of the book. Immediately after, as might be expected, García Márquez gave private interviews and newspaper reviews appeared the world over. One year after the publication of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, in 1982, newspapers around the world announced that García Márquez was that year's winner of the Nobel Prize in literature. The glory days that had followed the publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1967 had returned.

• *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* reconstructs an actual murder that took place in Sucre, Colombia, in 1951. In an interview for the Argentine newspaper *La Nación* (The Nation), García Márquez declared that Cayetano Gentile Chimento—Santiago Nasar in the novel—had been one of his childhood friends. On January 22, 1951, two brothers of the Chica

family (Vicario in the novel) killed Cayetano because their sister was taken back to her family by her husband, Miguel Reyes Palencia, on their wedding night when he discovered that she was not a virgin. Similarly to the way the murder takes place in the novel, in broad daylight, the two brothers knifed Cayetano to death in the town's plaza. In spite of the parallels, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, uses an anonymous town and fictional names for the characters. In this sense, the narrative is not a chronicle. García Márquez did not talk to any of the witnesses, nor did he use the real names and places as a chronicle would when recounting past events. Nevertheless, García Márquez insists that the circumstances and the events of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* are absolutely truthful.

The incident was highly publicized in Colombia and elsewhere. García Márquez's reconstruction of the story is now a classic in Latin American literature. Six years after its publication in Spanish, in 1987, Italian movie director Francesco Rossi released it as a film. To date, the public can also enjoy *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* on the stage, where it continues to be performed for Spanish-speaking audiences.

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

The first chapter opens with a sentence announcing that on that day, the main character, Santiago Nasar, is going to be killed. While this event is the focus of the narrative, there is at least one subplot: the wedding of Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Román. There is also a secondary event that distracts the characters in the novel while the killers go about their business: the visit of a bishop. At the last minute, the bishop decides not to get off the boat in which he is traveling. The omniscient narrator, functioning like a murder detective, reconstructs the crime bit by bit. In the process, he describes a classic coastal town where religion and law as institutions are inefficient in protecting the townsfolk. Santiago Nasar and his friends are all members of the ruling class. The narrator's family, for instance, is best friends with the Nasar family and so has reasonable expectations that the bishop will pay them a personal visit during his stay in town (199). The town's economic makeup presents a background of contrasting wealth and poverty. Santiago Nasar, an only child, lives in one of the best houses in town, has two mulattas as maids, and is the owner of a farm, named the Divine Face. His death gives the novel its title. With few exceptions, nearly everybody in the town, the mayor and the priest included, know that the identical twins, Pedro and Pablo Vicario, are looking for Santiago Nasar in order to kill him. What makes,

the plot intriguing are the pieces of information that are left for the reader to put together. Santiago Nasar, for example, is not aware that he is the target of the Vicario brothers until right before the time he is attacked. However, the threads that weave together the murder are all present in the first chapter. As is the case with *Leaf Storm* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, the plot of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* unfolds in an inverted fashion. Instead of moving forward, the plot moves backward. This provides the reader with the pleasure of decoding, as a detective would, all possible reasons, circumstances, and motivations for the crime that takes place. By the end of the first chapter, readers have been told who killed Santiago Nasar, how he was killed, and why. These facts, however, are the guideposts that allow García Márquez an opportunity to take readers through an intricate and detailed labyrinth of surprises.

The second and subsequent chapters flesh out the plot, so to speak. Bayardo San Román is the man who marries Angela Vicario, only to return her to her parents five hours after the wedding ceremony. Angela is not a virgin, which has significant and potentially dangerous consequences, of which Angela is amply aware. She knows that there is no love between her and Bayardo, and she wants to stop the marriage. The Vicarios, however, are impressed by his wealth and oppose her decision. The comedy of errors, which turns into a tragedy, builds up bit by bit and minute by minute. Angela does not love Bayardo and neither does he love her. Rather, he is enamored with the concept of being married to a beautiful woman. The wedding celebration is an excuse for Bayardo San Román to show off his wealth and power. The narrator comments that Bayardo could marry any woman he chose. He is the son of a decorated hero who had defeated Colonel Aureliano Buendía in one of the civil wars of the nineteenth century. (This is the same Buendía who features prominently in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.)

* If lack of love is not a good enough reason to stop Bayardo San Román and Angela Vicario from getting married, Angela's loss of her virginity to someone other than Bayardo is enough to cause her return. Bayardo does not beat Angela for her indiscretion, but her mother does, for hours. Questioned and pressured to name the perpetrator, Angela names Santiago Nasar. Pedro and Pablo, her twin brothers, know what to do next. In fact, the whole community knows that to restore the Vicarios' honor, which resides in Angela's virginity, Santiago must be killed: one only washes one's honor clean with blood. Pig butchers by trade, the twins set out to kill Santiago and carve him up like a pig (186). However, readers do not witness this event until the last chapter. Before that, the plot reconstructs the psychological reaction of the twins, who believe

they are innocent, "before God and before men" (220). After three years in jail awaiting trial, the twins are acquitted by the court because their action is considered a legitimate defense of their family's honor. Before the murder, the twins tell everybody of their intent but people do not believe them. When the town's mayor is told, he treats them like children, confiscates the butcher knives, and sends them home to sleep. They come back with a second set of knives but look for Santiago in places where they know he will not be. They are hoping not to find him; they plan to kill him yet hope someone will stop them. However, no one takes responsibility to see that the killing does not occur. In fact, there are those, like Santiago's maid, Victoria Guzmán, who want Santiago dead. She does not tell Santiago, although she is aware of it, that the Vicario brothers are looking for him to kill him. 87

The reader comes to the end of the third chapter and reads, "they've killed Santiago Nasar!" (237). However, the plot has not yet entirely unfolded. The reader is still not a firsthand witness; he or she continues to be led, and the narrator still holds the reader in suspense. Almost tormentingly, the narrative voice continues leisurely to piece the story together. Indeed, no stone is left unturned. The narrator recounts the story of the life of both Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Román. Foreshadowing *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Angela Vicario starts an epistolary (a continuous series of letters) that continues for seventeen years. After she has written Bayardo San Román nearly 2,000 letters, he shows up with two suitcases. In one of them he has all the letters Angela has written, all unopened. In the other is clothing in order to stay. Bayardo San Román is no longer trim, handsome, and elegant. He needs glasses to read, he is fat, and he is losing his hair. "She knew he was seeing her just as diminished as she saw him" (255). Have they reconciled their understanding about love? It seems like another error in a comedy that is meant to be a tragedy. Angela does not love Bayardo; he takes her back for not being a virgin; her brothers kill Santiago Nasar to regain her honor and that of her family; she realizes, seventeen years later, that she really loves him. The plot, unfortunately, affords no time or interest for this second chance.

Finally, in the last chapter, the reader witnesses the brutal and horrid crime. Now there is no escape: neither Santiago Nasar nor the reader can escape their fate. The murder is gruesome, but the story is wonderfully told. Before the curtain falls, the narrator brings to the reader's attention the fact that in this tropical tragedy there is also a comedy of errors. Cristo Bedoya, Santiago's friend, can stop the crime but does not. He has a gun that he does not know how to use—he cannot even tell if

it is loaded. Those who want to come forward to prevent the killing of Santiago are uncertain and are put off by his apparent carefree attitude. Once Santiago is told of the Vicarios' plan to kill him, he decides to go home. However, rather than using the back door to his home, which always is left unlocked, he decides to use the front door, which faces the plaza. His mother, thinking that he is inside the house, locks the front door seconds before Santiago gets to it. The attack begins, and nobody does anything to stop it. Indeed, Santiago's screams go unheard as they are confused with the sounds of the bishop's festival.

GENRE AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Chronicle of a Death Foretold reads like a fictional work. The reader of García Márquez, however, should be interested in knowing that the account the novel relates is based on a factual event. However, as Latin American literary critic Gonzalo Díaz-Migoyo put it, "it is an account no less imaginary for being faithful to the facts and, conversely, no less historical for being a work of the imagination" (Díaz-Migoyo 75). The faithful facts to which Díaz-Migoyo refers took place in Sucre, Colombia in 1951, thirty years before *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* was published. On January 22, 1951, Miguel Reyes Palencia returned his wife, Margarita Chica Salas, to her family on the morning after the nuptial night because she had not been a virgin. A short while later, Margarita's brother, Victor Chica Salas, killed Cayetano Gentile Chimento for stealing his sister's honor without an intention to marry her.

Chronicle of a Death Foretold is a combination of journalism, realism, and detective story, and therefore a hybrid genre. Its journalistic orientation, announced in the title of the novel with the use of the word *chronicle*, is seen in the novel's precise detailing of the time of each event and the matter-of-fact usage of language that marks the plot and presents the events of an atrocious and horrid crime. Journalism, however, attempts to report on the basis of fidelity to the facts. As such, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a deceiving chronicle, for the facts are altered by the fictitious additions made by García Márquez. In real life, the returned bride continued to live alone after her return, while the embarrassed husband left the country, got married in Costa Rica, and went on to have twelve children with his new wife. In the novel, Angela stays with her mother and Bayardo goes off and is not heard of until seventeen years after the date of the wedding, when he and Angela reunite.

The story is told in a journalistic style of reporting. García Márquez

freely admits that he is the narrator who is reconstructing the story. Luisa Santiaga, the narrator's mother in the novel, is the name of García Márquez's own mother, and Luis Enrique, the narrator's younger brother, is also the name of García Márquez's own younger brother. Luisa Santiaga has a daughter who in the novel is a nun; García Márquez, in real life, has a sister who used to be a nun. As if that were not enough, the narrator recounts that on the night of Angela and Bayardo's wedding, he proposed marriage to Mercedes Barcha, only to marry her fourteen years later because at the time she was just finishing primary school. García Márquez married a woman of the same name, Mercedes Barcha, to whom he proposed on the exact day of the wedding in 1951 and whom he wed fourteen years later because she, too, was just finishing primary school. Most of the story has a factual/journalistic base with a few exceptions, such as the fact that García Márquez was not in town at the time of the crime, nor were the lovers ever reunited. Both instances are fictitious. The realism of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is seen in its intent to faithfully portray life in a coastal town. The novel accurately describes the routine of everyday life: the ways in which the town's people prepare for the visit of the bishop, and celebrate at Angela's wedding; the habit of the single young men to spend time at the bordello; and even the fact that, as a result, one of the Vicario twins is suffering from a venereal disease.

Chronicle of a Death Foretold, as is typical in realistic fiction, is interested in ordinary people, whom it faithfully depicts at both the social and the psychological levels. The reader of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is exposed to the inner workings of the minds of the twin brothers and the nature of the personality of other characters. As a detective story, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* seems to fit the pattern almost perfectly. The murder is being pieced together by the nameless narrator, a friend of the victim, in the same manner that a detective might approach the case. However, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is intentionally deceiving—moreover, it can be read as if inverted or backward. From the start the reader knows the culprits, so there is no unsolved crime. Instead, the reader looks to find out whether the victim or the culprits is actually in the wrong. The absurdity of the crime, however, calls for a reader who might question who really killed Santiago Nasar. The physical evidence indicates that the killers are the Vicario brothers, but is there any responsibility on the part of the townsfolk or the legal or religious authorities? This is a question for the reader to decide. In that sense, then, the novel can indeed be read as a detective story.

The narrative structure of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* will seem fa-

miliar to the García Márquez reader. It starts in medias res (in the middle of things). At the start of the novel, an omniscient narrator (a character within the novel who knows everything there is to know) is describing the last hours in the life of Santiago Nasar. The time line of the events is very precise and linear, faithfully following the clock. However, the reading is not so linear. Even the events of the main plot do not unfold in a straightforward manner, but rather move back and forth in time. Besides dealing with the genesis of the main plot, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* also has a subplot describing the short-lived idyll of Bayardo San Román and Angela Vicario. This subplot, contained in Chapters 2 and 4, plus the intrusions by the omniscient narrator discussing the origin of the characters, makes the narrative structure a bit complex, although not impossible to follow. In the end, the focus remains on the killing of Santiago Nasar.

The narrative structure, like the genre, is rather deceiving. The story of Santiago Nasar's murder is described with rigid adherence to the exact hour and minute of each event because of the insistence by the narrator to be exact. However, the time line presented to the reader is arbitrarily jumbled and replayed haphazardly, moving forward and backward in time with equal ease. While Chapter 1 stars at 5:30 and has Santiago killed by 7:05, an hour and thirty-five minutes later, the narrator eventually takes the reader all the way back to the end of the nineteenth century and its civil wars.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

As is the case with most of Gabriel García Márquez's fictional work, the number of characters in this novel is large. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, this is due to the fact that the entire coastal town where the murder takes place is an active participant. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, as in *Leaf Storm* and *No One Writes to the Colonel*, the community is charged with a moral responsibility for its indirect participation. As a result, the community can be viewed as a character. There is an abundance of names that come in and out of the plot, comprising nearly eighty characters. The main characters, however—those most involved with the plot of the murder—are relatively few: Santiago Nasar, Bayardo San Román, Angela Vicario, and the Vicario twins, Pedro and Pablo. The secondary characters are much more numerous, however. As is typical of García Márquez's writing, female characters densely populate this novel. There are women who do everything they can to stop the murder,

particularly Clotilde Armenta and Luisa Santiaga; and there are also women who, each in some fashion, contribute to Santiago's death, including Flora Miguel, Plácida Linero, Victoria Guzmán, and Divina Flor. The secondary male characters are also numerous. Cristo Bedoya is instrumental in the plot, as are Father Carmen Amador, the mayor, Lázaro Aponte, and General Petronio San Román.

The description of the main character, Santiago Nasar, is both detailed and exquisite. Santiago is handsome, young, and well-mannered and has an enviable fortune at the tender age of twenty-one. He is a lover of horses, a fan of falconry, and, from his father, he is supposed to have learned both courage and prudence. Santiago is portrayed as a happy young man. He is described as pale, curly-haired, and, like his father, with Arabian eyes and long, dark eyelashes. He is the only child of a marriage of convenience. From his father he has inherited a cattle ranch, the "Divine Face." He is known as a peaceful man, although he is also a lover of guns. However, he is never armed unless he is dressed to tend his ranch. Being a first-generation Colombian of Arabic descent, the reader might expect that Santiago practices the Islamic religion, but instead he is deeply Catholic. On the day he is killed, he was hoping to kiss the bishop's ring. His social life, although he is a rich and rather aristocratic young man, is as simple as that of the rest of the townsfolk. A lover of parties, Santiago Nasar has an intimate group of friends. His friends include the narrator, the narrator's brother, Luis Enrique, and Cristo Bedoya. The four friends grew up together, went to school together, and vacationed together. Their friendship lasted right up to the day Santiago was killed.

When Santiago was fifteen, he fell completely in love with María Alejandrina Cervantes, a local prostitute. The love affair lasted fourteen months. It was so strong that his own father stepped in to end it, entering the brothel and dragging Santiago out after delivering a beating with his belt. To complete the punishment, the father isolated his son at the ranch. At the time of Santiago's death, he was formally engaged to Flora Miguel, a loveless arrangement favored by both families. The marriage was to be held within the year.

Fate plays an important role in the character development of Santiago. He is accused by Angela Vicario of being responsible for the loss of her virginity. This is the reason why he is killed at the hands of Angela's brothers. Everyone in town, including his best friends and his maids, knows that he has been sentenced to die—except Santiago himself. According to the police report, he died from seven stab wounds. What seems ironic is that there is never any proof that Santiago is, in fact,

responsible, as Angela claimed.] Among the many facts supporting Santiago's innocence are the facts that he and Angela were never seen together in public, he considered her a "fool," (251) and they belong to separate social classes in a town where social class determined identity. Supporting a case for Santiago's guilt is Santiago's fame as a "sparrow hawk," (251) who liked young girls, especially those beneath his social class (like his father before him). The narrative voice, however, suggests that ^{Import}*₁ Angela Vicario was probably protecting someone she really loved and picked Santiago's name because she thought that her brothers would never dare to kill such an important man as Santiago. However, one way or another, Santiago dies. As the narrative voice explains, never was a death more foretold. Despite all the efforts, no one is able to stop it, not even Father Carmen Amador or the mayor, Colonel Lázaro Aponte.

The husband of the bride, Bayardo San Román, is a thirty-year-old man whose personality evokes opposing remarks. "He looked like a fairy," but "I could have buttered him and eaten him alive," (202) says one of the female characters. He is known for his honesty; good heart; religious inclinations; knowledge of Morse code, trains, and medicine; ability as a swimmer; and love of a good party. On top of all this, he is immensely rich: the townspeople gossip that "he's swimming in gold" (203). However, he is not a man whom someone gets to know when they first meet him, and his golden eyes, says the narrator's mother, "reminded me of the devil" (204). He is heartless when he literally brow-beats Xius into selling him his house in order to please Angela's caprice and to demonstrate his own power. Although Bayardo San Román is a member of a distinguished family, he shows up in town alone. Nobody knows where he came from or what he stands for. Before he even meets Angela Vicario, and after seeing her only once, he decides that he is going to marry her, and six months later, he does. He never tries to court her, but instead seduces her family, showering them with presents and his charming personality. Angela and Bayardo's wedding is both extravagant and costly, perhaps to hide the fact that their marriage is a loveless one. In fact, their fated marriage only lasts five hours. Bayardo San Román takes his wife back to her parents when he discovers that Angela is not a virgin. After the tremendously emotional embarrassment of being held up to ridicule, Bayardo locks himself in his new home and is found intoxicated a week later. Finally his family comes to his rescue and takes him away.

Bayardo continues to surprise the reader with his strange personality up to the end of the novel. Seventeen years after that fateful Monday

Possible that it wasn't even him

Nonplussed

when he returned his wife to her mother, he seeks out Angela. He is now fat, balding, old, wearing glasses and, as if he has lost all his pride, returns to the woman who had caused him such embarrassment.

→ Angela Vicario's role is twofold. She is the cause of the death of one main character, Santiago Nasar, and the reason for the destruction of another, Bayardo San Román. She is a member of a poor and simple family. Her father, Poncio Vicario, has gone blind from the eyestrain of his work as a goldsmith. He is a man without a will of his own, who is dominated by his wife. His wife and Angela's mother, Purísima del Carmen Vicario, was a schoolteacher until she married Poncio. She rules the house with an iron fist. Angela has two older sisters, both married, and twin brothers, Pedro and Pablo, who are pig butchers by trade. Angela is a beautiful twenty-year-old who, like her father, lacks character and determination and does not enjoy the moral support of her mother. She lives in fear of her mother's demanding character, a fear that is emphasized on the night when her parents, her sisters, her husband's sisters, and her twin brothers decide that she must marry a man she has hardly seen and does not love. Although she makes explicit her lack of love for her husband-to-be, her mother flatly responds, "Love can be learned too" (209). Angela tries to commit suicide but does not have the strength to do so, so she realizes that she has no other alternative but to marry Bayardo San Román. She arrives at this decision with the hope that she will manage to fool Bayardo into believing that she is a virgin on the night of their wedding. On the day of the wedding, she continues the charade by wearing the traditional dress of a virgin. This is later interpreted as a profanity against the sacred symbols of purity. In truth, however, she is horrified in the knowledge that she has to face her husband that night. Her husband does not have to think twice about what to do once he becomes aware that his wife is not a virgin. He decides to denounce his marriage and return Angela to her parents. Although humiliated and full of shame, her feeling of horror changes into one of liberation when Bayardo takes her back to her parents. Angela not only knows that he does not love her, she also considers herself inferior to him and says that he is too much of a man for her.

After the death of Santiago, Angela and her family are asked by the town's mayor to leave the town forever. Angela then undergoes a positive change. She spends her time embroidering and regains her zest for life. Inexplicably, she cries after Bayardo and nearly goes insane over him, so much so that she starts to write frequent, desperate love letters. This absurd obsession continues for seventeen years, during which she writes nearly 2,000 letters but gets not a single response. She takes consolation


Character who had
possibly only
a positive change

3. Motivational

in the fact that her letters are not returned to her. This is a clear foretelling of *Love in the Time of Cholera*, except that the roles are reversed. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, it is the woman who writes in order to achieve a goal, whereas in *Love in the Time of Cholera*, it is the male who writes with the same intent. In both instances, the writers attain their goal, and in both, ironically, the two letter writers are first rejected yet, over time and with persistence, gain the loved one.

Pedro and Pablo, the twin brothers of Angela, are twenty-four years old and known in town by their good looks. They have the innocent demeanor of a child, and their reputation is that of good young men. Their fate, however, is to kill Santiago to restore Angela's honor and reputation. Pedro is six minutes older than his brother. He seems to be more imaginative, decisive, sentimental, and authoritarian. When they both show up to enlist in the military at the age of twenty-one, Pablo is exempted so that he can help take care of his family. During his time in the military, Pedro's character develops as one willing to give orders and to decide for his own brother. It is Pedro who decides that they must kill Santiago Nasar.

Throughout the novel the reader becomes aware that the twins do not really want to kill Santiago yet must do so to save the family's honor. The narrator states that the twins did more than could be imagined to get someone to stop them, yet no one did so. From the very start of the ordeal, they publicly announce that they are going to kill Santiago Nasar. They tell the priest, the police, and every passerby. When the news reaches the mayor, he half-heartedly tries to stop the crime by taking away their knives, but they get others. As if to confirm their child-like innocence, they bless themselves when they see the town's priest and bless themselves again right before killing Santiago. On the day when they are taken into custody and put in jail, they suffer mental and emotional torment. Pedro affirms that he can smell Santiago on him regardless of how much he washes himself. He adds that he cannot sleep, an insomnia that continues for eleven consecutive months. Pablo suffers from diarrhea, which leads Pedro to think that his brother had been poisoned. Although the brothers suffer the psychological fallout of having killed a man, they do not view themselves as sinners and refuse to confess themselves to a priest when they have the opportunity to do so. When they leave jail, they decide to do so in broad daylight so that everyone can see their faces and judge their innocence and lack of shame.

The mission of the Vicario brothers in the novel is odious. The twins especially fear that the Arab community in town will react against them; but the Arabs in town, surprisingly, hold no grudge against the killers.

Clotilde Armenta is a strong woman, valiant and decisive, who tries wholeheartedly to stop the killing of Santiago. She and her husband, Rogelio de la Flor, own a shop where they sell milk in the morning and goods during the day; they also operate a bar in the evenings. Therefore, their shop is almost always open. Their business is located in the plaza, which Santiago's house faces. It is in their shop that the Vicario twins wait for Santiago in order to kill him. Clotilde sells the twins a bottle of liquor for no other reason than, hopefully, to get them too drunk to act. At first she thinks that the brothers do not have the heart to kill any man. However, as they continue to drink, she starts to realize that they are indeed serious. She also senses that the twins are looking for someone to stop them. She insists that the town's mayor, Lázaro Aponte, do something, and she is disillusioned when she realizes that he will not arrest the twins but simply takes the first set of knives away from them. Worried about the consequences that this might provoke, Clotilde sends people out to warn Santiago. She also sends a young girl to tell Father Amador. In addition, she sends a warning note to Santiago's maid, Victoria Guzmán. However, all her efforts are futile.

Luisa Santiaga is the mother of several characters in the novel. Her children include the narrator and Luis Enrique, both intimate friends of Santiago. Her youngest son is Jaime. She has a daughter who is a nun and another daughter, Margot, who is also a good friend of Santiago. Luisa Santiaga is strong in character. She is the godmother of Santiago and the person for whom he was named. Luisa Santiaga is the one who takes to the streets in an attempt to warn Plácida Linero, Santiago's mother, that the Vicario brothers are looking for her son to kill him. She rushed to the Nasars' house to prevent the crime, but her efforts are also in vain—she does not arrive in time.

Among the female characters close to Santiago Nasar who actually may have contributed to his death in various ways, the four most salient are Flora Miguel, Plácida Linero, Victoria Guzmán, and Divina Flor.

Flora Miguel is a woman who lacks grace and judgment. She is the conventional fiancée of Santiago Nasar. Her character is frivolous and selfish. Although she has been Santiago's betrothed since her teenage years, she demonstrates her immaturity at several opportune moments. Early on the day when Santiago dies, somebody tells Flora that the Vicario brothers are looking for her fiancé to kill him. She feels humiliated and hurt because of the rumor concerning why the Vicario brothers want to kill him and decides to end the relationship with Santiago instead of asking him for an explanation. When Santiago arrives at her home, Flora Miguel is so upset that she throws Santiago's "loveless" letters at him.

and bitterly screams, "I hope they kill you!" (270). Santiago stands there speechless, not knowing what to do. She runs to her room and locks the door.

Plácida Linero is Santiago's mother. She is one of the last people in town to hear about the Vicario brothers' intent. She is described as a beautiful woman who has lived in solitude since her husband, Ibrahim Nasar, died. As a solitary woman, she spends time interpreting dreams, yet she fails to interpret her son's dream as an omen of his death. Ironically, it is she who, in trying to stop the crime, closes the front door of her home to her son as he approaches to escape the Vicario brothers.

Victoria Guzmán deliberately abets the crime although she could have helped to stop it. Her decision to remain silent and thus allow the killing to proceed dates back to her youth, when Ibrahim Nasar, Santiago's father, seduced her and made love to her in secret for several years in the stables of his cattle ranch. As Victoria grew older and Ibrahim fell out of love with her, he brought her into his house as a maid. Victoria fears that Santiago is contemplating doing the same thing with her daughter, Divina Flor. Therefore, she despises Santiago. Knowing what it is to be a sexual object of a man who seems to have it all, Victoria Guzmán withholds the warning message that Clotilde Armenta sent with a beggar earlier on, which would have been early enough to prevent the crime. Victoria does this knowingly, as if to take revenge. She may have fallen as a young woman, but she is determined to prevent the same from happening to her daughter. The name *Victoria* is reminiscent of victory, as if to emphasize Victoria's triumph over an age-old tradition in which the landlord abuses the rights of women, whether maid, slave or otherwise.

Among the male secondary characters, there are two worthy of special mention: Cristo Bedoya and General Petronio San Román. Cristo Bedoya is one of Santiago's intimate friends. He is a young medical student who accompanies Santiago during the last minutes of his life. Of the circle of friends who grew up together in school, it is he who suffers the frustration and anguish of knowing Santiago's fate without being able to change it. He partakes, with Santiago and their other friends, in the celebration of Angela and Bayardo's wedding. He is so close to Santiago that he loves him like a brother. He and Santiago walk along the dock together while waiting for the bishop to arrive. The townsfolk look at them in bewilderment, knowing what is about to happen but not realizing that Santiago and Cristo are unaware. After Cristo and Santiago separate, an Arab friend of Santiago's father tells Cristo that the Vicario brothers are going to kill his son. Cristo races around, trying to find

Santiago and warn him. However, his efforts, too, are fruitless, and he witnesses Santiago's fatal stabbing just a few steps away.

General Petronio San Román is Bayardo's father. He is a hero of the civil wars of the nineteenth century and a member of the Conservative Party. His role in the novel, although small, is sufficient to demonstrate the glory and power that he gratuitously parades in public. The first time he arrives in town, he does so in a Ford Model T convertible with official license plates, in the company of his wife, Alberta Simonds, a tall, large mulatta from Curacao, and his two daughters. For Bayardo's wedding, he arrives with his family and his illustrious friends on the official vessel of the National Congress, loaded with wedding presents. At first glance, everybody in town knows that his son can marry any woman he wants. Petronio San Román, as a character, represents a recurring theme in García Márquez's writings, that of the two opposing Colombian parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals.

THEMATIC ISSUES

The reader, depending on the choice of focus, can recognize several different themes in this novel. For example, a reader may focus on the theme of machismo, a theme that, in turn, can be related to the theme of moral responsibility.

The theme of machismo in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* can be observed as a form of emphasis on male pride and on the characters' sexual behavior. Upon his arrival to town, Bayardo San Román attracts the attention of the female characters by his looks and the way he dresses. His looks, however, make some female characters say that he looks like a *marica* ("a fairy"). This reaction by the female characters denotes an expected code of male behavior. This societal code is perhaps the justification for the bordello in town. It is male behavior to frequent this place, where women can be used as objects of desire. The males are proud to go there and feel no shame to show the results, not even when sexually transmitted diseases appear, as is the case with Pedro Vicario. Bayardo San Román shows his male pride when he returns Angela Vicario. The Vicario brothers flaunt their machismo in the abusive way they drink and also by defending an age-old tradition of placing the family's honor in the women's virginity.

The sexual behavior of the male characters shows an attitude passed on through the generations. Santiago Nasar, like his father before him, is a "sparrow hawk" (251). Both father and son have made a sport of

having their young female servants for their own sexual satisfaction. The pun on sparrow hawk by the narrator is intended, both literally and sexually. Santiago's father, Ibrahim Nasar, teaches him the art of domesticating high-flying birds of prey. In addition, fidelity, to Santiago and his father, is not a part of the sexual or moral code. Males in this community can express their sexuality in any way they want because theirs is a patriarchal society (ruled by men according to men's needs). It may seem contradictory for the reader to realize that Bayardo San Román returns his wife because she is not a virgin when the same society glorifies men who go after women only to take away their virginity. The female characters succumb to this patriarchal society where women are educated to be stoic wives, passive beings capable of giving and expected to ask for nothing in return.

The incident motivating the killing of Santiago Nasar in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is the loss of honor by Angela Vicario. The blood of virginity, when lost outside the sanctity of marriage, can only be washed off with the blood of the perpetrator, cries an age-old Spanish folk tradition. In the town where the novel takes place, this tradition is morally acceptable. Therefore, the Vicario twins must kill Santiago Nasar to restore the family's honor. The townsfolk go along with this and see the twins' deed as morally acceptable; hence, they do nothing to stop the killing. There is only a small minority within the novel that objects to the killing. The majority views the Vicario brothers' deed as a socially and morally acceptable response. Within the moral parameters of Colombian rural society of the 1950s and 1960s, the loss of a woman's virginity without the balm of marriage destroyed not only the honor of the woman, but also that of the family. Such an act could only be absolved with the death of the perpetrator. This is why, without a legal trial or a simple conversation to clarify the innocence or the guilt of Santiago Nasar, the Vicario twins are convinced of their moral duty. Since Angela's father is blind, and thus unable to carry out this duty, the burden falls to the brothers. Ironically, the twins, who are now in charge of guarding the moral values of the family, were seen the night before drinking and carousing at a house of ill repute, in the company of Santiago Nasar, their ultimate victim. Moreover, one of the twins, Pedro Vicario, is suffering from a venereal disease that the town's doctor cannot cure. Pedro's *blennorrhagia* (gonorrhea) demonstrates a moral life that is, indeed, hardly praiseworthy.

On the surface, the Vicario family professes a strong moral value system. However, regarding Angela, they are a family that pays no attention to such essential values as love, respect for others, and free will. They

know, because Angela tells them, that she does not love Bayardo San Román and does not want to marry him. However, they ignore her and decide to marry her even without her consent. Their morality takes a back seat when it comes to this marriage of convenience because Bayardo San Román is rich beyond imagination.

The moral value system of Bayardo San Román, the offended husband who returns his wife, is also ambiguous, if not ironic. He is the one who decides to marry Angela at first sight, before even being introduced to her. He is the one who, instead of courting her, pays more attention to seducing her family with his money and his charm. It is he who marries Angela, as if to purchase his happiness with his immeasurable fortune. It is Bayardo who, showing no scruples, forces Xius, a widower who married and lived in love in his house for many years, to sell that house to him because he wants it. Bayardo, as a character, shows no moral value system greater than his monetary system.

The moral and legal institutions of Church and state pay little attention to the Vicarios' thirst for revenge. Father Carmen Amador, who presumably is in charge of the town's religious values, refuses to get involved although he is clearly capable of putting a stop to the planned murder. He justifies his action by saying that he was concentrating his attention on the imminent arrival of his bishop. Ironically, the bishop arrives but does not disembark to greet the people who so anxiously await his visit. The civil authorities could stop the killing, but also choose to ignore it. The mayor of the town, Lázaro Aponte, could incarcerate the twins for carrying the knives and threatening to kill Santiago, but he chooses not to. It is his nonchalant way of enforcing the law that permits the twins to commit their crime.

Relating to the theme of moral responsibility, the town at large also bears its share of responsibility for the crime. The narrator insists that everybody in town knows the intention of the twins, but few make an honest attempt to stop it. There seems to be a kind of secret complicity among the townsfolk. Their silence can be viewed as a form of acceptance, a belief that the crime against Angela had to be avenged. Santiago, according to the town's code of moral responsibility, has done something wrong. The town's moral value of virginity is superior to a man's death. Only the blood of the perpetrator can wash off the blood of stolen virginity. The Vicario brothers believe that, but the townsfolk seem to enforce it. Early in the morning of the day of the killing, a crowd of women, men, children, and young people congregates on the dock to receive the visiting bishop. This type of behavior is consistent with what would be expected of a Christian town. Therefore, one would also expect to find

townspeople are responsible

a solid moral value system. However, when it comes time to stop the killing, the townspeople assume a passive role and act as mere observers of the spectacle. Their inaction seems to imply that redeeming a family's lost honor by the killing of the perpetrator is consistent with their collective sense of moral values.

All the town's individuals, from the civil and religious authorities to the simple folks, demonstrate an ambiguous sense of morality that challenges the presumed values of the town and the fundamental beliefs of society.

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chronicle of a Death Foretold is one of García Márquez's works that is least concerned with the political context, which permeates many of his other writings. Whether in *Leaf Storm*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, *In Evil Hour*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, or *Love in the Time of Cholera*, the reader is faced with descriptions of the Colombian civil wars of the end of the nineteenth century. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, however, this historical fact is dealt with in a single reference. The reference, however, should not pass unnoticed. General Petronio San Román, father of the groom, Bayardo San Román, is a member of the Conservative Party regime. Although the narrator describes him with admiration (he routed Colonel Aureliano Buendía of the Liberal Party), the narrator's mother, when she recognizes the general, will not even shake his hand. Luisa Santiaga remembers him as a traitor who ordered his troops to shoot Gerineldo Márquez in the back (208).

Although the historical context of the novel can be inferred from what has already been noted, the novel is not at all clear about the exact time of the events. What is clear is the time when García Márquez, working as a journalist, first heard of the incident, 1951; and the time when he published the book, 1981. In the early 1950s, Colombia was experiencing terrible shootouts between conservatives and liberals. This social and historical moment, recognized in Colombian history as La violencia (the Violence), is neither the background nor the focus of the novel. What are ← the background and focus, instead, are the disparity and even hatred between the rich and the poor. The marriage of Bayardo San Román and Angela Vicario provides a striking example of opposing social and economic forces. No one in town is as rich as Bayardo San Román. It is his wealth, along with his charm, that wins people over to him. This includes everyone—the priest, the mayor, and the town's aristocracy. Because of

add after
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his wealth, Angela Vicario's mother says, in response to Angela's statement that she does not love Bayardo, "Love can be learned too" (209). The attacks on the wealthy found in *No One Writes to the Colonel* are well camouflaged in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, due, perhaps, to an effort to fully focus on the main plot. Another such attack, for example, occurs when Faustino Santos, an obscure character, asks the Vicario brothers why they must kill Santiago Nasar when there are plenty of other rich men who deserve to die first (223). The narrator, however, adds that Faustino Santos says this jokingly.

By 1981, when *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* was published, Colombia was facing many of the guerilla factions still fighting today. The guerilla groups of Colombia have been at war with the government's army since the 1950s. The Colombian guerillas, as reported by the world news, continue to resist to the present day. In 1981, García Márquez and his wife, Mercedes, were linked by rumor to a guerilla group, M-19, which specialized in urban violence. Although just a rumor, the government forces wanted to arrest García Márquez and his wife. The couple sought asylum in the Mexican embassy and then left the country. Later that year, Colombian President Belisario Betancur invited the couple to return (Anderson 70).

ALTERNATIVE READING: NEW TESTAMENT (INTERTEXUALITY)

In intertextuality the reader acknowledges that there is no orphan book. That is, no book is totally independent; every book can, in one way or another, be related to another book or books. Thus, critics often talk about influences of one writer over other writers and connections of one book to other books. (Intertextuality in its theoretical form was first introduced in Chapter 6.) The biblical reading in this chapter assumes the same concepts. A biblical reading of any text, in this case *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, looks for ways in which the Bible as text has influenced the structure of another literary work. The Bible, as is also the case with Greek classics such as *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *The Iliad*, has often been connected with modern works. Intertextuality allows the reader not only to find connections, but also to make interpretations. These interpretations may vary according to time and place, from generation to generation, and from reader to reader. Not all readers react in the same way to the same connection. This biblical reading of *Chronicle of a Death*

Foretold, for instance, is one that favors irony. Thus, this interpretation offers an ironic intertextual reading of some Christian elements found in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.

Irony is a way or mode of seeing things, a way of viewing existence. There is irony when one says something to express exactly the opposite (verbal irony). One often says, for example, "Aren't you sweet" to express dislike about someone else's poor manners. Irony in literature is a mode of representation that seems to negate that which it describes. Therefore, when García Márquez tells a story as he does, the reader is expected not to take the literal meaning of the text. Instead, the irony presented in his works should be "appropriated" by the reader (the reader should make it his or her own). When the reader is faced with irony, he or she must give to it an individual interpretation or "tone." When García Márquez uses irony, he knows that he can use humor, for example magic realism, to tell something serious. Unlike satire, irony does not pretend to censor or ridicule the faults and vices of the society that it depicts. Instead, it simply presents the absurdity of life. One of the greatest examples of irony in literature is the work *Don Quixote* by the Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

The Vicario family is the protagonist in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. The word *vicarious* (*vicario* in Spanish) has a highly relevant and meaningful Catholic connotation. *Vicarious* denotes something done or endured by one person substituting for another. Therefore, the mission of someone acting vicariously is of great importance. For example, the Pope, according to Catholic theology, is Christ's substitute on earth and acts vicariously for Him.

The Vicario brothers are named Pedro and Pablo. Ironically, Pedro (Peter) and Pablo (Paul) are the names of two of the principal apostles of the Catholic Church. Both are considered pillars of the Church. Peter was the first Pope, appointed by Jesus himself to take his place (vicariously) to lead his flock, the Church (Matthew 16:18). The Apostle Peter, a fisherman by trade and a rather ignorant and simple man, showed great leadership in the books of the Gospel. It is he, among the twelve original apostles, who took the initiative and made decisions on matters of importance. Although he denied knowing his master three times, Peter was the first to enter the empty tomb of Jesus and give testimony to his resurrection. Like Peter the Apostle, Pedro Vicario in the novel is a simple and ignorant man but the leader of the two brothers. It is he who generally makes the important decisions, it is he who establishes the family's pig business and who decides to kill Santiago Nasar to redeem

his sister's honor. Pedro is the one who convinces his brother Pablo that they have done nothing wrong and therefore need not confess their ac-
tion to the priest.

The Apostle Paul was not one of the original twelve, nor was he ever Pope, but his mission, which was an important one, was to carry Christianity to pagan communities. Without his efforts, Christianity might not have spread beyond Israel. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Pablo Vicario assumes leadership, after the mayor of the town takes away the brothers' first set of knives. He seeks out a second set of knives and practically drags Pedro forward to complete their task. Pablo is the first to run to kill Santiago when the brothers see him approach his house. Without Pablo's obstinacy, Santiago might not have died.

Angela Vicario is another character who can be interpreted as substituting for someone else. The irony is in her name, Angela. The reader of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* will think of an angel. In Catholic doctrine, an angel is a spiritual being endowed with both intelligence and free will. An angel is a messenger of God and an advisor of humans. The word *angel* also denotes qualities of beauty, innocence, truth, and purity. Angela Vicario is certainly beautiful, but unlike an angel, she is not pure. She not only loses her virginity before she is married but also hides the truth from her husband-to-be. She is, like her twin brothers, a vicarious being. She assumes the role of an angel but performs it poorly. She condemns the innocent Santiago Nasar to death and her husband, Bayardo San Román, to shame. The reader of García Márquez may remember that angels in his work do not generally seem to enjoy the biblical qualities that angels traditionally hold. In the short story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," for example, the angel is treated like a circus animal (see Chapter 5).

Angela's mother is Purísima del Carmen Vicario. Ironically, she, too, plays a vicarious role. Her name, Purísima, leads the reader familiar with Catholic theology to think of the purest (*purísima*) figure, the Virgin Mary. As if to honor Mary's name, Purísima pays particular attention to the upbringing and the education of her daughters. She looks like a nun, recalls the narrator. Purísima Vicario is unrelenting in the education of her daughters as dutiful wives. To Purísima Vicario, there are no better daughters in the entire town. They are perfect, she would say; but they are not. Purísima (the purest) fails to see the lack of purity in her youngest, Angela.

To complete the irony of the Vicario family, the narrative includes the father, Poncio (in English, Pontius). Pontius Pilate is remembered for washing his hands during the trial of Jesus. He did not want to be held

responsible for the death of an innocent man. Poncio Vicario, like Pontius Pilate, also washes his hands when the time comes to decide the future of his daughter Angela. When the Vicario family gets together to consider the marriage proposal of Bayardo San Román, it is the wife and Angela's siblings who decide in favor of the marriage. As the head of the family, Poncio Vicario should make the decision, but instead he remains silent, saying nothing. Poncio symbolically washes his hands on two other occasions: the killing of an innocent man, Santiago, and the public shame of Bayardo San Román. The religious irony is clear to the reader. The family's name is Vicario and Vicario translates as *vicariously*, which in turn means to play the role of someone else. This family is intentionally named Vicario because its members are playing a role they wish not to lead.

The irony of this biblical intertextual reading is most obvious when the reader examines the character of Santiago Nasar. Santiago incarnates, even in small details, the persona of Jesus. Jesus was born in the Middle East (Bethlehem). The Nasar family comes from the Middle East and speaks Arabic, a language spoken today in the birthplace of Jesus. Nasar, Santiago's family name, reminds the reader of the word *Nazareth*, Jesus' hometown. Santiago Nasar's cattle ranch is significantly called the "Divine Face"; it is a ranch that Nasar tends with meticulous care. The majority of the witnesses describe the day of the killing as ominous. They note that it started to rain by five in the afternoon. They also mention that at the time of the murder, there was a light rain falling. Ironically, however, Santiago comments to everyone he meets that it is a beautiful day. The day that Jesus died was also gloomy and foreboding. It was cloudy and started to rain late in the day. Catholics, however, celebrate that day as a beautiful day because, with Jesus' death, humanity achieved salvation.

Although there were many disciples who followed Him, Jesus selected a group of twelve to continue his mission. Among them were three apostles who were close friends of one another, Peter, James, and John. James and John were brothers. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Santiago Nasar also has three close friends, Cristo Bedoya, the narrator, and Luis Enrique. Two of the friends are also brothers, the narrator and Luis Enrique. Jesus shared three years of his life with the apostles, but his three closest friends participated in the most significant moments of his life: the Transfiguration, when Jesus allowed Peter, James, and John to look on his divinity; his most important miracles; and his agony on the Mount of Olives.

In the last days of his life, Jesus celebrated Passover in the company

of his apostles, a most important celebration for Jews. This is a day of eating, singing, and dancing, a joyful celebration of the release of the Jews from their Egyptian captivity. Santiago Nasar also spends some of the last hours of his life in the company of his friends at a celebration. He and his friends take part in the wedding celebration of Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Román. The novel presents Santiago with his friends together at one table: eating, drinking, enjoying themselves, and even sharing a cup of wine with the groom, Bayardo San Román. Catholic theology presents Jesus as the groom and the Church as his mystical wife.

Immediately after the Passover dinner, Jesus retired with his apostles to the Garden of Gethsemane because he knew that the time had come for him to be turned over to the authorities for judgment. This was a special moment, and Jesus called for his closest three friends, Peter, James, and John, to console him and pray with him because he knew that he would soon die. After the wedding, Santiago also retires with his three closest friends, Cristo Bedoya, the narrator, and Luis Enrique. Ironically, the friends do just the opposite of praying. They go to a bordello run by María Alejandrina Cervantes. The Vicario brothers also stop at the bordello, where they sing and drink with Santiago Nasar and his friends five hours before they kill him. This scene reminds the reader of Judas Iscariot who, like the Vicario brothers, ate and drank with Jesus shortly before betraying him. When the Roman soldiers came to the Garden of Gethsemane and arrested Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the soldiers. Jesus disapproved of this action and surrendered himself without resistance, an act that culminated in his own death. When Santiago Nasar is about to leave the house of his fiancée, Flora Miguel, and return to his own home minutes before he is killed, Nahir Miguel, Flora's father, offers him a rifle to defend himself from the Vicario brothers. However, Santiago Nasar does not accept the weapon.

When Santiago is killed, he is wearing a white linen suit that he chose to wear because he was expected to greet the visiting bishop. This is a small detail, but one that can be interpreted as having great significance. A tunic of white linen is the appropriate dress of priests in the Catholic Church. In both the Old and New Testaments, a white tunic was reserved for the priest who presided over the liturgy. This tradition continues in the present time. Jesus was dressed in a white tunic when he was taken prisoner by the Romans. At that moment, He was both priest and victim. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Santiago dresses in white when he is killed and, like Jesus, he is victim (although not priest).

Jesus was judged by both civil and religious authorities. Santiago is judged by the conscience of the townspeople at large, including both the civil and religious authorities. To some, Santiago is innocent; to others, he is guilty. Pontius Pilate realized that Jesus was innocent, and he did not want to bear the responsibility for His death. Therefore, Pilate let the townspeople decide. Although there were those who would have let Jesus go free, the majority decided that Jesus must die, and nothing changed their decision. The Vicario brothers do not want to kill Santiago, and they do everything possible to avoid doing so. However, in effect, the town at large insists that Santiago must die by doing nothing to stop the deed.

The townspeople play a significant role in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. The whole town prepares to witness the death of Santiago Nasar in the same way that they would prepare to watch a parade. Jesus died, having been nailed to a wooden cross. Similarly, the blows that kill Santiago are delivered against the wooden door of his home. After His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, Jesus' side was pierced with a spear and water and blood flowed from the cut. Santiago is stabbed in the hands and the side. The first time Santiago is stabbed the knife comes out clean, but thereafter, blood comes from the cut in the back. Just before Jesus died, He invoked the name of his mother. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Santiago cries, "Oh, mother of mine" (273) shortly before he dies. At the foot of the cross where Jesus died, Jesus' mother cried along with the Apostle John and a few women, among them Mary Magdalene, the sinner whom Jesus had saved from being stoned to death. As Santiago is bleeding to death, his mother cries for him, along with his friend Cristo and María Alejandrina Cervantes, the madam of the local bordello.

After his death, Jesus rose from the dead, according to Catholic doctrine. His resurrected body was totally different from His human body. Those who saw Him said that His clothes were brilliantly white and His face radiantly beautiful. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Divina Flor, Santiago's maid, has a vision after Santiago's death. In her vision, Divina Flor sees Santiago Nasar walking up the stairs dressed in white with a bouquet of flowers in his hand. Argénida Lanao, the oldest daughter of Santiago's neighbor says, minutes before Santiago dies, "His Saracen face with its dashing ringlets was handsomer than ever" (275).

Finally, as was the case with the life and death of Jesus, according to the Christian tradition, an innocent man, Santiago Nasar, is put to death to atone for the community at large.