Edward Auttonberry

Hatley

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Signs of the Apocalypse in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*

The novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* takes place in a rural town of post-colonial Columbia. The events that are recounted in the chronicle take place in the years following World War 2, which was a time that offered a uniquely violent combination of civil unrest and strong Catholic values left behind by the Spanish Empire. Gabriel Garcia Marquez is himself a practicing Catholic, and the themes of the Catholic church are ubiquitous within his stories. This story is no different, clearly involving the intervention of the local parish and a visit from the bothered and seemingly spiteful bishop. There is, however, another major Christian symbol not described directly in the events of the story’s past. This symbol is various characters in the story assuming the roles of the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

The four horsemen are symbolized by characters that brought war, death, pestilence, and famine to the town in which the story takes place, either while the events unfold or some time before. The role of the harbinger of war is assumed by General Petronio San Roman, who is a decorated hero that helped to overthrow a previous dictator in Columbia. His image is not observed equally by all people in the town, though, with the narrator’s mother expressing desire not to “’ shake hands with the man who gave the orders for Gerineldo Márquez to be shot in the back’” (Marquez 34). This paints a particularly aggressive picture for his past, fitting him to the role of the horseman of war. The harbinger of Death is portrayed by the Vicario twins. In the story, they murder Santiago Nasar for allegedly deflowering their sister dishonorably. In exacting revenge for damage to their family name, they bring death to the town. The harbinger of pestilence is personified by the dogs in the story. The horseman of pestilence brings disease and pests. The dogs, in this case, are quite pestilent, as they eagerly consume the rabbit entrails provided by Victoria Guzman, much to the dismay of Santiago Nasar. Later on, after Santiago is murdered, the dogs are “aroused by the smell of death” (Marquez 73) and continue to howl well after they attempt to feed on his entrails as well. The final horseman, the harbinger of famine, is characterized by Victoria Guzman in two ways. She is the cook for the Nasar family and is preparing a rabbit in the events of the story. As previously mentioned, she pulls the organs out of the rabbit and feeds it to the dogs gracelessly. Though the entrails are not intended for the meal that is being prepared, it is a loss of perfectly valuable consumable resources that is wasted at the hands of Famine. She also represents Famine in that her “fertility” has been taken from her by Ibrahim Nasar.

This the murder of Santiago Nasar, who represents innocent loss in the wake of the four horsemen, is an apocalypse for the small town in the story. He is a devout catholic who, while not free of sin according to his doctrine, has been an overall good influence on his community and a well-respected neighbor. Ultimately, the loss of this character results in tragedy for many of the other innocent characters of the story, like his fiancé and Clothilde Armenta’s husband. All four of these harbingers appear before these events, and what follows is loss and suffering for people who seemed to have no involvement, which is analogous to the apocalypse described in Abrahamic legend.