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A Psychoanalytical Study on *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* By Gabriel Garcia Marquez

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Abstract: Gabriel Garcia Marquez works has been most famous for its magic realism and besides that in Marquez's novels human psyche is perfectly mirrored and it can be rightly used as a means of study in the literary world of psychoanalysis. The contrasting psychology of men and women, love relationship, psychological trauma and superstition affects the psyche of the people and illusion the real world unconsciously. The "collective unconscious" of the society is one that carries the plot of the novel and this blending with magic realism serves as the hallmark of the story. Human unconscious drive has its important aspect that forms a significant part of literature. Crime and suicide as some of the sources for mental turmoil which eventually effects human psychology. Marquez's styles of writing are developed as a consequence of social and cultural practices of its contemporary time. In this paper, an effort has been made to analyze the novella, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, in the field relevant to the topic of research and it has been proved that Marquez's novels to some certain degree fits into the study of psychoanalysis besides its subtle use of magic realism and humor.

Keywords: id, ego, superego, collective unconscious, illusion, psychological trauma, repressed wishes.

Introduction

Literature has been used by writers as a means to present the psychology of human perception and discernment of the world around them. Psychological movement in the study of literature is not fresh to literary criticism. It has been known since the time of Aristotle where in his classic deals with human emotions like pity and fear accountable for catharsis, and Sir Philip Sidney in his defense of the moral effects of poetry highlighted the psychological activity which led to poetic creation. In the psychological approach, the psychology of the author and/or the psychology of the characters are studied. This approach came to be related with the school known as psychoanalysis, developed by the Austrian-German psychologist Sigmund Freud, in the twentieth century.

Chronicle of a Death Foretold is a novella published in English in 1983. The novella revolves around the incident of one morning, when Santiago Nasar was brutally murdered. The story is narrated by an unnamed narrator in a form of detective story. The newly wedded bride Angela Vicario was returned to her mother by her husband, Bayardo San Roman, on their wedding night when he found out that she lost her virginity. The twin brothers, Pablo and Pedro Vicario were searching for Santiago Nasar to kill him, as their sister Angela Vicario informed them that, Santiago was the person who defiled her purity and honor. The narrator collects the story about the murder of Santiago by the twin brothers, from the perspective of different characters. The reader knows beforehand about the killing of Santiago from the beginning of the first chapter itself. Likewise the town's people in the story are already aware of the plot made by the two brothers to kill him. Some townsfolk warn him while others could not get time to warn him as in the same morning people were busy receiving the arrival of Bishop in their town. However, the "collective unconscious" of the people led to the murder of Santiago. People were assuming the twins' plot as a joke, and some thought of them to be silly and drunk. The story was inspired by real life incident that took place in Sucre. Garcia Marquez tries to portray how people in a small town take honor seriously, and the conventional belief of the community that is inevitable.

Id, Ego and Superego and the Illusion of Reality

Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis maintains that the human psyche can be constituted into three aspects – id, ego and superego. Freud tries to explain the function of different parts of the mind and its formulation in human characters. According to Freud the first component of the psyche, i.e. "id" functions based on what he refers to as "the pleasure principle". The "id" is unconscious and unreasonable; it always seeks for pleasure and wish-fulfillment, it wants to satisfy the erotic desires and is driven by sexual instincts. During infancy, a child is unconsciously preoccupied with the need to fulfill his instinctual needs such as the need to be fed and be comforted. Although sexual development occurs much later in childhood, a child's consciousness is

fundamentally a mass of “id”. As an infant grows to childhood his “ego” and “superego” start to develop gradually. As such the “id” is repressed in favor of the “ego” which operates on the reality principle.

As Sigmund Freud calls it, “ego” is the “reality principle”. When a child grows up he recognizes his position in the world and becomes self-conscious and is more aware of the world around him. Ego is reasonable and it controls its desires to work in tune with reality. While ‘id’ follows no time and think only of the moment, “ego” works as a mediator between “id” and “super ego”. Freud also points out that not all desires can be fulfilled and that our conscience tells us that the repressed wishes can also destroy our joy that is conceived in our mind unconsciously. Super ego stops us from doing things which “id” wants to do that might either hurt the other person’s sentiments or even ourselves. It is ethical and spiritual and therefore it acts as the custodian of the mind.

In his lifetime Freud wrote on diverse topics as art, war, fear, death, literature and his technique of psychoanalysis and the genesis of religion, society and culture. In his 1920 essay, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” he expressed the idea of probability of comprehensive drive with regards to death. During his writing vocation, Freud uses the fundamental methods of psychoanalysis and made an approach to study art, literature and culture. One of his famous psychoanalytical studies was *Hamlet*, a play by Shakespeare which gained much attention in the field of literary studies. In this he claims that Prince Hamlet’s psyche reflects that of Shakespeare’s. This concept came into being from Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, a legendary Greek hero who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. In his theory of psycho-sexuality, Freud named this as “Oedipus Complex” where a male child is sexually attracted to his mother.

Many literary critics since the early half of twentieth century have employed Freud’s theory to gain significant psychological insight into the process of literary conception. This model of literary analysis can help in examining the psychological reality behind the conception of literary works as well as the relationship between the social reality and its impact upon the author’s psyche and his creative output through literary creations. Much like many prominent writers, Columbian writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his work, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, depicts a representation of the social reality as he perceives it. The id, ego and the superego are depicted through the characters’ motivation, action and desires.

The narrative style used by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is very much different from most conventional style of narration. It narrates the information collected by one narrator from the view point of different characters that have either seen or have heard some sort of the plot made by the Vicario brothers. The death of Santiago is of course foretold when the brothers inform the town’s people, whomever they met, about their intention to kill Santiago Nasar. As the title of the novella suggests, the town’s folks already knew the scheme, though it was hard for them to believe as they thought that they might be joking. “Those two aren’t going to kill anybody, much less someone rich” (Marquez, 55). This is how the plot of the novella is knit chronologically according to the information gathered by the narrator from different characters/people. This narration from multiple perspectives helps us to understand the psychology of various characters in the novella.

The character of Santiago Nasar, the protagonist in the story, seems to be slightly complicated. His life itself is a misery which ultimately led him to his doom. In the novella he is seen as a womanizer who enjoys going to the brothel and had frequent love affairs with women. However, according to the narrator he is also a man who is happy and calm, and large-hearted. He is a well known and respected persona in the town, who is the only child of Ibrahim Nasar and Placida Linero. Before his father Ibrahim died, he was happy and love to be in his company. He acquired many things from his father like “mastery of firearms, his love for horses, and the mastery of high-flying birds prey...also...arts of valor and prudence” (Marquez, 6).

Besides all these, Santiago Nasar developed the same sexual impulse that he probably might have inherited from his father’s seductive nature as quoted in the text which according to Victoria Guzman, she was seduced by Santiago’s father when she was young and later brought her to be the cook in the house. Guzman’s daughter Davina Flor says in the novella, “He grabbed my whole pussy” (Marquez, 12). Santiago has been always looking for a chance to seduce Davina Flor which makes the girl suspicious in the beginning and later on she began to feel insecure to be alone and to go in a dark room. “He went about alone, just like his father, nipping the bud of any wayward virgin that would begin showing up in those woods” (Marquez, 90). Here, the ‘id’ in Santiago might have developed from his early childhood memories and through his encounter and the things people talks about his father. According to the Freudian critics, this can be the repressed wishes of Santiago driven by his sexual instinct that he eventually became a womanizer.

In the novella, the narrator also calls Santiago as a “chicken hawk” (an adolescent who preys for sex). Santiago seems to be unconsciously preoccupied with libido. He refers to Angela Vicario as “booby” which can be term as stupid but it also refers to women’s breast which resembles a phallic symbol according to the Freudian critics. Though Santiago might have been to brothel and had seductive nature, only the two relationships were known to the town’s people, one with Flora Miguel, and the other with Maria Alejandrina Cervantes, which made him crazy for more than a year. Despite all these, his sexual relationship with Angela Vicario, the central ground for the plot, was not shown clearly in the text though Angela claimed that Santiago was the one who took her virgin.

Santiago's character is not much known in the novella. He was already killed from the beginning itself. However, the story revolves around his murder by the two Vicario's and the response of the society to it. The actions of the twin brothers and Angela, moves the story which involved the collective unconscious of the society.

In the story, the death of Santiago has been foreshadowed in many ways, through his dreams and the actions of the people around him. The first chapter of the book begins with the narrator talking about Santiago's dream where he had dreamed "going through a grove of timber trees where he was happy in his dream, but when he awoke he felt completely splattered with bird shit" (Marquez, 1). His mother, Placida Linero says, "He was always dreaming about trees" (Marquez, 1). According to Freud's theory of interpretation of dreams and his dreams symbols, a "tree" is referred to as phallic symbol. It can be understood as repressed wishes of Santiago unconsciously driven by his sexual instinct in his dream. He was a womanizer and he might have been haunted by the memories of his visits to the brothel, reflected in his dreams as passing through a grove of timber trees. Later, we see it as foreshadowing of his death, when after his happy moments in his dreams he sensed like his body was fully covered with the bird shit splattering all over him.

When the narrator came to Placida Linero, she was sitting in the hammock and day dreaming and that she unconsciously mistook the narrator's approach with her late son, Santiago.

According to Freud, daydreams, like play, and the dreams of the night are geared primarily towards fulfilling wishes that we cannot fulfill in real life. In these wishes the unconscious roams free, satisfying in fantasy what is more difficult to satisfy in the real world. (Thurschwell, 114)

Freud's psychoanalysis of day dreams and repressed wishes claims that the author writes to fulfill his repressed wishes through his work of art. However, the same can be applied to the character of Linero. She might have been dreaming about her long lost son and wishing to see him and that in the illusion she saw her son coming when the narrator came to her. In Placida Linero, "id" can be viewed in her desire to see her son that subconsciously preoccupied her mind and not in a way of sexual instinct.

In some way the "id" in Divina Flor also contributed to the murder of Santiago. If only she was controlled by the presence of "super ego" at that moment she might have prevented the twins from killing Santiago. She was still a child and she seems to be more afraid of Santiago. Whenever she was alone Santiago would try to seduce her. All these led to her hatred toward Santiago. So she didn't warn Santiago, the narrator explains,

Divina Flor confessed to me on a later visit, after her mother had since died, that the latter hadn't said anything to Santiago Nasar because in the depths of her heart she wanted them to kill him. (Marquez, 11)

She was subdued by her "id" with no second thought of the real life moral standard.

Bayardo San Roman was a brilliant, smart, and rich gentleman who was admired by everyone in the town. He had been travelling from town to town searching for a bride whom he can marry. The people in the town believed that Angela Vicario had been tricked to marry him. After that ill-fated wedding night, he vanished from the town. Angela could not cease thinking about him and she tends to fall in love with Bayardo San Roman whom she hated a lot in the beginning. She wrote a weekly message and sent numbers of letters to him for seventeen years which piled up to almost two thousand letters over the years. During this period, Angela began to understand her own life and how love and hate can be reciprocal passions. After more than one and half decades one morning Bayardo appeared at her door. Marquez, through his subtle narration with a mixture of violence, crime, love and hatred, portrays how people are ill-fated and he does not disappoint the readers. The psychological trauma that Angela goes through and the way women position are placed in the fictional Colombian society, helps us to understand the anatomy of society, love, pain and emotions people faced according to their distinctive psyche and perception of the world around them.

The twin brothers, Pedro Vicario and Pablo Vicario had no conscience to recall from their plan to kill Santiago. Especially Pedro Vicario, who was six minutes younger than Pablo, was more authoritative than the latter, which he adapted from his army days. He is not afraid of death and it was him who had this high impulse to chop off Santiago and Pablo was simply following his plan. The primitive impulse and dark side of their mind urge them to follow their instinct and they could not overcome it until they fulfill their desire. In Freud's psychoanalysis, repressed desires are mostly applied to sexual and/or libido. However, this is also applied to the unconscious desire of human being without the second thought of what the consequence would bring. They could not wait to murder Santiago when on the other side they are committing a crime without their conscience. Like the impulse of sexual desire (id) their whole minds and hearts were driven by their passion to kill Santiago which makes them more impatient until they finish the task. When Prudencia Cotes was not ready with their tea, Pablo Vicario replied that they are in a hurry and that they will leave it for later (Marquez, 63). According to Freud's first structure of human mind, i.e., "Id" wants to do things that our desire wants to do without being aware of any moral conscience. If the twins were guided by their superego, they could have had a second thought and might have twist their plan to the reality principle ("ego"), which may not exactly stop them from committing the murder but in some sort they could have at least warn Santiago for his mistake or have had strict inquiry with him to find out if it was true. However, in the novella, it was the collective unconscious of the society and their rituals and beliefs that their "id" becomes part of the town's folk and vice versa.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez knitted this story in such a way that it looks like the society's imperfect practices, when at the same time people were not totally oblivious of the twins' madness. The collective unconscious of the people, having been living in a world with full of superstitions make it difficult to find out which one is right and wrong, either the victim or the twin brothers. Human minds are naturally runs by their subconscious mind, and mostly they are not aware of what they are doing. Human unconscious desires automatically appear into actions when it is not control by their ego and superego. Thus, Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis had proved in some way that the three structures of mind makes it possible to exemplify how people perceive things according to their Id, Ego and Superego.

The word "honor" was everything for the people in the fictional town of Colombia in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, though that might not be exactly relevant to the actual Colombian town. They take honor very serious and it was to do with something pure and virgin and they will do anything to maintain this honor. They regard it as the fundamental moral and no one were aware to question the twins and was oblivious to defend Santiago. "The only thing they believe is what they see on the sheet" (Marquez, 38) and they called it as "the stain of honor". The two brothers killed Santiago in order to return her sister's honor and gain back their family's honor. They believed that to kill him was out of obligation. According to the narrator's mother "Honor is love" (Marquez, 98). Pablo Vicario's fiancé, Prudencia Cotes, according to her she would have never married Pablo Vicario if he had not killed Santiago for his sister's honor. This depicts that how the people treats honor in the town and they could not see it as a crime. However, some people were there, like Cristo Bedoya and Clotilde Armante, who took part to warn Santiago when it was already too late. Also there were some who were consciously shocked of the brutal act, like, an old Rogelio de la Flor, who didn't survive the shock.

This attributes to the term which C.G. Jung called it as "collective unconscious" which illusion the reality when we could not see the actual truth of the society. In his essay *The Archetype and the Collective Unconscious* (1968), Jung argues that collective unconscious is the memory of the past ancestors, traditional way of life and thinking and collective experiences of humanity that becomes alive when the aid of our ego and our culture is not sufficient, which unconsciously controls the present minds of the people. It is a kind of dogma that has been embedded in the minds of people for generations. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, cherishing honor and traditional beliefs of the people drives their mind unconsciously which makes the reality illusion when the crime seems to be real and painful. Their beliefs in honor have pre-existed in their mind. Jung term it as archetypes, which is hereditary, impersonal and universal and it can only be conscious with secondary psychic system, collectively. (90)

In the novella, the psyche of the whole town can be considered as one collective psyche driven by their subconscious mind and unable to balance with their moral standard. Here, the "reality principle" –ego became illusion when the desire of the Vicario brothers overpowered the "super ego" of the society unconsciously.

From the narrator's perspective we also came to know that taking somebody's life was not as significant as maintaining the honor in the town. Unsurprisingly, he mentioned the killing of Santiago in the beginning of the chapter and the focus of the main plot was on how and why Santiago was killed. The fear and casual treatment to the twins' threat by the community and obliviousness of Santiago led to the crime. This adds to the collective unconscious of the townsfolk where their reasoning failed to make out which one is real and which is not, to consider Santiago's brutal murder or the act of honor.

The novella is full of gruesome imagery. The way the narrator describes the scene how Santiago Nasar was killed by the twins with multiple cuts and strikes, and the disgusting image of all the innards coming out from the death body.

The priest had pulled out the slice-up intestines by the roots, but in the end he didn't know what to do with them, and he gave them angry blessing and threw them into the garbage pail. (Marquez 76)

This horrific and disgusting picture of Santiago's death body had been foreshadowed symbolically in the first chapter when Victoria Guzman pulled out the intestines from the rabbit, before cooking it, closely the way it is done with the death body. Seeing all these kind of disgusting imagery with the encounter of several repressive massacres, it psychologically affected Colonel Lazaro Aponte that makes him become a vegetarian. The twin brothers were haunted by the memories of their crime, which became a psychological trauma for them. They said that whenever they close their eyes to sleep, they would commit the crime all over again. The mental trauma became unbearable for them while they were in the jail. It cause them sleep deprivation and Pedro Vicario was awake for nearly a year. This could be viewed as how human beings are traumatized by their own crime and how it affects their psychological state preoccupied by the unconscious or the "id" through their past deeds and distracts the clear thinking of the mind.

According to Marquez, the story was taken from the real life incident that occurred in 1951 in the town of Sucre, Colombia. Though the story is not exactly historical and factual, Marquez with his famous technique of magic realism and fictitious setting and characters, he beautifully narrates the story of the unfortunate Santiago Nasar. With the coming of the wealthy Bayardo San Roman and the Bishop, Marquez also tries to represent the entry of Colonialism and the dominance of Catholicism in the Colombian culture.

Conclusion

Thus, this research made an attempt to analyze the characters in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in the light of Freud's three states of mind, i.e., Id, Ego, and Superego. As the novel is narrated from the perspective of different characters, it helps us to interpret the psychological perception of different people from different angle and how they treat the situation in their own way. The characters of the twins, Pedro Vicario and Pablo Vicario, are characterized by their 'id' mindset which without thinking of the reality principle ('ego'), they tend to follow their own desires to kill Santiago with no second thoughts of its consequence. Here they lack the moral principle referred to as 'superego'. Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* may be seen as a depiction of the collective memories of the community. The collective memories added to the shaping of the narrative style. Such structuring of narrative through collective memory operates at two levels within the framework of Marquez's narrative: literal (stories told by interviewees) and figurative (symbolic significance of Marquez's literary technique). It aids the readers to understand the characters' psyche better and analyze their way of perception with more in-depth details of both individual and society as one.

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