

Question: Portrayal of women in Marquez' Chronicle of a Death Foretold.

Answer: Concern for Minority Groups has always been a focus area in Post Colonial texts. In Marquez' Chronicle of a Death Foretold, women constitute one such marginalized section. Both patriarchal ideology and religious morality exploit women in this novel.

The novel shows how several generations of women have to suffer due to patriarchal domination. Women are presented only as object of happiness for men. Placida Linero has to tolerate a marriage of convenience without a moment of happiness with her husband Ibrahim Nasar. Ibrahim Nasar's treatment of Placida Linero is related to his exploitation of Victoria Guzman. Victoria Guzman is seduced by Ibrahim Nasar at her adolescence. Later she is brought to the house by Ibrahim as a house maid. The son of Ibrahim, Santiago Nasar now tries to exploit Divina Flor the daughter of Victoria Guzman. In this way the novel exposes the patriarchal exploitation of women as objects of pleasure.

Patriarchal customs and religious morality allows very little freedom to women in Chronicle of a Death Foretold. Bayardo San Roman proudly declares that he would marry Angela Vicario. He gives no importance to Angela consenting or not consenting. Within the Vicario family, Angela has no choice of rejecting the family decision to marry Bayardo. It has been thrust upon her as 'a prize of destiny.' The mother Purisima Vicario implements the patriarchal societal rules in her household. She has reared up her daughters following patriarchal and religious conventions. She has raised her sons to be men. But she has reared up her daughters to be married, to suffer. They have been trained in works which confine them within the four walls --- embroidery, sewing, weaving, ironing, making artificial flowers, and fancy candy. All these reveal the double standards of the society towards women.

The standard of purity and chastity is another weapon of women's exploitation. Girls' purity and chastity are considered matters of great honour. But the boys are free to visit the brothel run by Maria Alejandrina Cervantes. Even women have become the agents of patriarchal conventions. So Prudentia Cotes wants her fiancé Pablo to behave like a man so that he kills Santiago Nasar.

The novel also presents women who show some resilience. Angela refuses to fake virginity on the wedding night. Her decision reflects her rejection of patriarchal morality. She also refuses to postpone the day of her marriage. By doing so she protests against the Bishop. Maria Alejandrina Cervantes' character challenges not only the typical womanhood in the novel. Maria Alejandrina Cervantes also displays humanity. The town remains complacent in the act of the murder. But Maria's girls were putting mourning dye into their party clothes. In this way Marquez has incorporated in the novel voices which challenge patriarchal morality.