PAID IN FULL? JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS ON JUSTICE, PUNISHMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS AS MANIFEST IN THE STORY DEATH CONSTANT BEYOND LOVE (1978) AND IN THE NOVEL CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD (1982) BY GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ.

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Abstract

Using a textual analytical framework and spousal murder and honour killing as fictionalised by García Márquez in Death Constant Beyond Love (1978) and Chronicle of a Death Foretold (1982), the article examines the question of punishment framed within Judeo-Christian teachings and human rights. Honour killings and spousal murders are usually premised on the desire to control female sexuality. In these narrative works García Márquez displays anxieties over due punishment for transgressors and the non-redemptive nature of colonial prison systems and is critical of adherence to irrelevant and morally conflicted social scripts. It is evident from the narratives that whatever religious teachings and laws governing these homicides, they do not always discourage the transgressions and thereby fail to reduce instances of such crimes. Thus García Márquez raises the fundamental question of the right to life, justice and punishment.

Key words: Crime of passion, debt to society, honour killing, human rights, Judeo-Christian traditions.

Introduction

The question of due punishment framed within Judeo-Christian teachings and human rights is significantly evident in García Márquez's short story "Death Constant Beyond Love" (*Death Constant* henceforth) (1978) and the novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (*Chronicle* henceforth) (1982), respectively. The two narratives diametrically fictionalise spousal murder and honour killing. Thematically, both are concerned about human sexuality and if as today's readers we are to make meaning of the numerous narratives written on the theme over the ages, it is crucial to acknowledge that sexuality has always been a difficult terrain to negotiate, especially female sexuality. For instance, Geoffrey Chaucer's controversial poem, *The Wife of Bath* (in *The Canterbury Tales*) features the persona Alison; an uncharacteristically outspoken woman who engages biblical and religious references to buttress her ideas and opinions on sexuality, especially female sexuality. Chaucer's construction of Alison appears to subvert the creation myth that centres on a womanhood forever locked in the double bind of the original sin realised on Eve because in his time, female sexuality was connected to the original sin and equated with improper female behaviour. The double standard that haunts the construction of female sexuality is underscored by this period's tolerance of male homosexuality then, a widespread practice among the clergy, yet any expression of female sexuality was thought abhorrent as observed by Agner Fog in *Cultural Selection* (1999). Similarly, analyses of representations of sexualities in Victorian literature open up male/ female ideological questions

that also resonate with cultural attitudes. Generally Victorians have been considered rigid in their attitudes to sexuality but more recent scholarship has shown that Victorians were not prudish and coy morally, rather, they espoused a broad range of perspectives on sexual practices, activities and identities (Mathieson, 2012).

Literature also abounds with thoughts on this human engagement whose expression may stretch from virtuosity to utter depravity. Hallett and Skinner's (1997) collection *Roman Sexualities*, offers an overview on ancient Greek and Roman sexualities. For example, Ovid (43 BC – AD 16 or 17) stands out for his constructions of sexualities and wrote extensively on the theme of love. In the three-book didactic and elegiac poem "The Art of Love", Ovid teaches the arts of seduction and love. The first book teaches men how to seduce women. The second teaches men, how to keep a lover while the third one teaches women seduction techniques. Ovid was already writing sex manuals in the First Century AD, much the same as erotic literature is freely available today. He critically departs from the more serious didactic poetry of his contemporaries such as Virgil (Hallett and Skinner, ibid). It is indeed a moot point that whether a writer constructs sexuality as a burden of shame, desire or a liberating force, a gendered sexuality or sexual conduct, such writing has always been an important indicator of a society's morals and values (Manyarara, 2016).

Sexuality is one of the fine strands that connect Gabriel García Márquez's numerous creative works. Another observable strand in Marquez's works is the all-pervasive presence of religion. For this reason, there has been vociferous castigation of his fiction as irreligious. John Cussen (2007) for example, offers a lengthy description of the writer's oeuvre, in which four grievances stand out namely that García Márquez:

- writes against ecclesiastical hard-heartedness;
- opposes the Church's privileging its own tradition of miracles over equivalent indigenous occurrences;
- sometimes criticizes the Church for its focus on Latin America's spiritual needs and its lack of concern for the continent's material needs; and
- excoriates the Church for what he perceives to be its *inordinate dedication to sex's curtailment and virginity's promotion* [my emphasis] (373).

Thus Cussen (2007) sees an unabated "… animus against the Catholic Church … the Church's sexual ethics … the centrality and durability of the issue of desire's burden in the shelf of his [García Márquez] work" (p.373). The same critic concludes that García Márquez runs the risk of diverting his remarkable talent by his concerted focus on sexuality, particularly prostitution. While the writer is quite explicit about the Church's limiting roles in the practice of sexuality in the Colombian context, he has reverted to metonymy in his portrayal of other sexually premised postcolonial concerns such as disease and different forms of discrimination such as gender stereotyping and minoritisation of sexualities. Along the same lines, Raab (2005) posits that García Márquez finds the Church and feminists a safer and more politically correct subject matter than the economy, politics or other contentious issues that beset the sub-continent in the postcolony. Clearly, this critic misses the point that representations of sexualities can be vehicles for the expression of many political, social, and economic concerns. García Márquez is no moral coward and does not treat the Church as a soft touch because it is indeed another contested space as is illustrated in this discussion.

Critical writing on Gabriel García Márquez's short story, "*Death Constant"* (1978) has concentrated on symbolism, especially 'the rose' as a symbol of death, rather than of love as is ordinarily believed (Lawall, 1999; Marsh, 2011). Yet there is a well-defined link between the short story and the novella, *Chronicle* (1982) because in many ways the short story is an inversion of the novella in its emplotment and themes. To atone for the murder of his wife in the short story, Nelson Farina is imprisoned on Devil's Island, where he has as much chance of survival as Santiago Nasar of the novella, who is murdered in cold blood for a purported code of honour transgression. Questions of the operations of penal codes and 'the law of Moses' on legal and social transgression can be profitably applied to both narratives to uncover what unconscious anxieties García Márquez appears to have over the interstices between the practice of religion and social life as manifest through punishment for sexual transgression and the right of an individual to life.

Death Constant is told in a matter of fact mode that belies the deeper realities by treating its subject matter quite superficially. Attending to the minute details given on Nelson Farina unlocks a lot of ugliness buried behind the simple almost careless references made to aspects of life on the penal island colonies of Europe. In *Chronicle,* the church is strongly implicated in quite perplexing instances of violations of the very laws that form the bedrock of Judeo-Christian traditions on justice, punishment and human rights.

Conceptualising honour killing and spousal homicide

An understanding of the two notions of honour killing and spousal homicide is essential to unlocking the nuances of the two death narratives under analysis and the seeming authorial anxiety over the homicides.

2.1 Honour killings

Honour killings were generally practised in traditional societies but have remained active in many parts of the world where cultural and religious conservatism are the norm (Raffaelli and Ontai, 2004). Largely understood as attempts by men to control and abuse women, honour killings can also be perpetrated by women on other females (Manyarara, *ibid).* The honour-shame connection is the driving motivation for these crimes and can be realized beyond the individual family to reach community level (Raffaelli and Ontai, *ibid*). In their processes honour killings involve a sense of shame that can only be cleansed through violent retribution against the women or the men involved. Controlling female sexuality is the basis of honour killing but such honour rests with the woman's acceptable sexual behaviour. In traditional societies women do not possess honour that is separate from their roles within the family structures. Indeed a woman's actual or perceived sexual indiscretion brings dishonour to those around her and to herself (Manyarara, *ibid*). Thus the males of a family strictly control the sexuality of the female members although they themselves are not bound by such codes (Schneider, 1971; Araji, 2000).

Honour killings may be motivated by codes of morality and behaviour that typify some cultures and are often reinforced by religious teachings. Further encouragement for the practice is implied by laws that rarely prosecute the enforcers of the honour code by handing out deterrent sentences. Although there are different types of honour killings and different types of victims, honour killings are largely family collaborations and so often have multiple perpetrators. The males of the family have the onerous task of showing courage and skill in carrying out honour killing whenever the need arises (Chesler, 2010; Manyarara, *ibid).*

Situating the practice of honour killings, Beattie (1997) observes that the all-pervasive military culture of South America further reinforces the code of honour by promoting the cult of machismo and yet such killings are strictly an abuse of the concerned individual's right to life as promulgated by law and by Judeo-Christian religious practice. Thus García Márquez's unconscious anxieties are understandable over this socio-cultural practice that is embedded in Colombian culture hence its fictionalisation in *Chronicle.*

2.2 Spousal homicides

Spousal homicides are spontaneous 'crimes of passion' that result from momentary rages arising from the heat of circumstances rather than from a fixed determination to kill (Howard, 1986). Crimes of passion are crimes committed in the throes of passion with no opportunity to reflect on what is happening and what the person is about to do, that is, there is no specific intent to kill, a necessary condition for a conviction of murder (Hill and Hill, 2005). The notion of spousal homicide can be expanded and linked to domestic violence and alcoholism (Delbreil, Voyer, Lebeau, Sapanet, and Senon, 2013). Quite significantly, in France spousal homicide represents about twenty per cent of total homicides. Thus a defendant can excuse their crime on the basis of sudden anger or heartbreak in order to eliminate the element of 'premeditation'. In such cases there has to be no previous record of spousal abuse or infidelity, the usual reasons for spousal homicide. The three conditions that merit homicide conviction are the intent to kill, the motive and the circumstances that provoke the mortal interactions between victims and offenders but the dead spouse usually dies with their knowledge of the truth (Delbreil, *et al*., 2013). Literature on spousal homicide cites the causes of such killings as: marital discord; bruised ego due to infidelity or the threat to leave the family home; a history of abuse either as victim or witness, among others (Howard, *ibid*; Westerhof, 2007; McDougall, 2012). There is little known about the psycho-social motivations for spousal homicides because such killers might be ordinary law-abiding citizens who kill in momentary rage or they could be sadists who claim momentary rage to reduce their blameworthiness before the law (Howard, *ibid*).

In 19th century France, spousal homicides or crimes of passion "*crime passionnel*" were a valid defense in murder trials and for that reason some cases earned a custodial sentence of two years for the murderer. This only ended in France as the Napoleonic Code was updated in the 1970s but it has been quite influential inside and outside Europe and in many former French colonies where laws continue to be based on it (Howard, 1986). Therefore the law offers the possibility of reduced sentences with regard to adultery-related violent crime. Human Rights Watch advocates observe that crimes of passion have a similar dynamic as honour killings in that women are killed by male family members and the crimes are perceived as excusable or understandable (Mayell, 2002). In the case in point, García Márquez's anxieties over spousal homicide are most evident in the *Death Constant.*

However using both quantitative and qualitative methods were scholars held 190 interviews with 95 English couples on spousal homicide, Dobash and Dobash (2004) found that:

> … intimate partner violence is primarily an asymmetrical problem of men's violence over women and women's violence does not equate to men's in terms of frequency, severity, consequences and the victim's sense of safety and well-being and significant social problem the world over (p. 324).

The two scholars also observe that male murderers that used violence against their female partners were likely to have used violence against previous or current partners, that is, they

"specialised" in violence against women. Viner (2005) confirms the Dobash and Dobash findings and notes how up to 120 women in the United Kingdom are killed by their partners each year and how not all cases result in convictions for murder or manslaughter. Such women tend to endure high levels of abuse before death such as:

> … years of violence; physical and verbal assaults; harassment; and intimidation and bullying. Some of the men who killed them were subject to restraining orders and facing assault charges but the authorities did not do enough to protect those at risk (Viner, *The Guardian Weekend,* December 10, 2005).

This lack of protection for the victims of homicide is observable in *Chronicle* where, although aware of the pending mortal threat to the persona, Santiago Nasar's life, the civil, the religious, and the military authorities, do nothing to protect him from a death that turns out unjust and seemingly premised on alterity. On the other hand, Nelson Farina in *Death Constant* does not get a short sentence, he gets the worst, probably because the court that tried him did not believe his wife's behaviour, such as nagging or infidelity merited her death. Thus the literature available on spousal murders seems to suggest that there are usually underlying causes to this crime beyond these being "crimes of passion", unlike the laws obtaining in 19th century France.

Homicide

In *Chronicle,* the victim of the honour killing Santiago Nasar is bi-ethnic, with an Arab father and an indigenous South American mother, clearly a subject of alterity. He is wealthy but all earned cleanly through inheritance and hard work. Santiago Nasar is fingered but never proved as the violator of the girl Angela who is rejected on her wedding night for her lack of virginity by her new husband, Bayardo San Roman. Angela's two brothers, publicly intending to exact punishment to recover family honour as cultural sanctions, kill Santiago Nasar in cold blood. This revenge murder ignores any number of social, legal and religious frameworks in its execution.

In *Death Constant,* García Márquez understatedly inverts the notion of honour killing to construct a narrative where a woman is drawn and quartered by her pharmacist husband Nelson Farina, for reasons that are not disclosed. The fact that Nelson Farina lands on Devil's Island to serve his sentence suggests the gravity of the crime that he was judged to have perpetrated against his victim. The details of the two murders share similarities in their execution and atonement and both cause reader anxiety over the causal effects of the two tragedies. The similarities are going to be illustrated in the following section from the religious, legal and socio-cultural perspectives as these encompass the Judeo-Christian perceptions of justice, due punishment and readerly reactions to the more modern concerns over a person's primary right to life.

3.1 Punishment for taking a life: drawing and quartering in *Death Constant* and honour killing in *Chronicle*

That Nelson Farina is sent to the French penal colony on Devil's Island implies a serious crime, but its intensity is further suggested by the cruelty of the actual killing itself. We read that:

> … he listened to the speech from his hammock amidst the remains of his siesta, under the cool bower of a house of unplaned boards which he had built with the *same*

> *pharmacist's hands with which he had drawn and quartered his first wife* [my emphasis] (*Death Constant,* p.221).

In medieval Europe as described by Frusher (2013), for those convicted of treason, the journey to death was quite gruesome. Hanging, drawing and quartering was meant, at a superficial level, to produce the most bloody and visible death as possible, clearly intended to dissuade such crimes among the populace. Through the dominance of the church, as informed by history, people of the Middle Ages (c. 500-1500 AD) were immersed in a culture of symbolism and ritual so that the whole process of hanging, drawing and quartering was to remove the criminal's status and identity bit by bit until there was nothing left (Westerhof, 2007). That is, even the person's physical integrity had to be destroyed. Thus Nelson Farina's drawing and quartering of his first wife may be understood as an attempt to totally annihilate her from his life and society. However, García Márquez does not clarify what crime the woman could have committed to deserve such a death. As readers we can surmise that at the personal level, adultery may be thought of as betrayal that is tantamount to treason against a spouse and therefore may have led to this fictional but horrendous case of spousal homicide (McDougall, 2012). Spousal infidelity in the form of premarital sex is also the reason that honour killing is perpetrated against Santiago Nasar by Angela's brothers although again in typical Garcíamárquian fashion, Santiago Nasar's guilty is never confirmed to the end. Thus establishing the illusory nature of honour killing as a strategy for ensuring family honour is fictionally maintained in the novella.

The physical erasure of Nelson Farina's wife through drawing and quartering is comparable to the execution of the murder of Santiago Nasar by the Vicario brothers in its goriness and can be interpreted as an attempt to recover manly honour by removing the cause of dishonour. Thus "… when the Vicario twins killed Santiago, they knifed him so much that at one point he hung onto his house's front door, Christ-like, propped up and stapled to it by their knives" (*Chronicle,* 72). The tacit law of honour as espoused in the novella is incongruous with the church's teachings as practised in the same community. In grave misalliance, the code of honour is the basis of murder vis á vis the Sixth Commandment, 'Thou shall not kill'. This society completely ignores the fact that love and forgiveness are the pillars of Christian faith. To meet legal requirements, a botched autopsy is performed by the local priest Father Amado, whose only qualification for the task is that he had dropped out of medical school. Implicitly participating in the honour killing, the priest cut the cadaver up so much that he admits, "… it's like we killed him all over again after he was dead" (*Chronicle,* p. 72). Showing no remorse for his failure to mediate in the killing and almost gleefully, Father Amado lists seventy-six stab wounds and witnesses swear to a stigmata wound on one hand, perhaps as a reminder of Santiago's Jesus Christ-like innocence (Manyarara, *ibid*).

From the perspective of social custom rather than the law, Santiago Nasar's death could be deemed fair, but like that of Jesus, it was not a just death (Traer, 1991). In this instance, García Márquez does display some anxiety over obedience of laws whether through cultural practice, legal frameworks or the teachings of the church. He appears to suggest that laws must be obeyed because they are right not simply because they are in place. The standard for the law must be sought outside the law as exemplified by the explication of the statutes and judgements of the Ten Commandments in *Exodus* 20, 1-17 (Traer, *ibid*).

Santiago's killing was no haste undertaking. The Vicario brothers went about informing all and sundry of their intention to kill Santiago, thus establishing a specific intent to kill, a condition that makes the act a premeditated crime, therefore an indictable offence. Jewish law instructs

'an eye for an eye' and may translate to 'a life for a life'. In the fictional circumstances, Santiago does not get a chance to defend himself as the social script for honour killings requires, so this killing is in itself without honour (Manyarara, *ibid)*. More democratic laws would require his accusers to prove his guilt but the fictionalised inept investigations ignored many pertinent details relevant to the honour killing. Thus constituting a miscarriage of justice. From *Chronicle*, one might assume that honour killings belong with some long past Colombian traditions but the truth of the matter is that statistics on such killings are burgeoning worldwide despite human rights advocacy against such violence, particularly against women (Mayell, *ibid).* This again points to some unformed and therefore unarticulated anxieties about the fine line between crime and socio-cultural practice in the writer.

Whereas Santiago's murder is followed by an almost frenetic hurry to dispose of the body as decently as possible in the circumstances, Nelson Farina does not just draw and quarter his first wife's body, he attempts to conceal the murder, thus establishing the intention to kill as evidenced by how he disposes of the woman's dead body: "… whose pieces had fertilized her own cauliflower patch …" (*Death Constant,* p. 222). The execution of this murder is particularly horrendous because of the close relationship expected between a husband and wife and so called for a stiff sentence such as the perpetrator being posted to the French penal colony and on Devil's Island in particular.

By all accounts Devil's Island has the doubtful honour of having been the most notorious prison island in the world in its time as noted by a former lifer James Erwin in his exposé, "Among the ghosts: Erwin James on the French Guiana penal colony, Devil's Island", (*The Guardian*, December 04, 2006). Erwin James further observes that Devil's Island was once the world's most notorious penal colony – a place where spirits and bodies were broken, with no prospect of redemption and/or rehabilitation. Perhaps this hell-hole is comparable to South Africa's Robben Island at its worst. Henri Charrière's semi-autobiographical best-selling novel *Papillon* (1968), further informs on who could be transported to French Guiana penal colony. Those specifically confined on Devil's Island were people convicted of treason and the most serious "common" crimes such as murder, rape and robbery, as well as habitual petty criminals. Statistically, about 40% of new arrivals to the colony perished within the first year. According to Erwin James (*ibid*):

> … most were killed by the merciless nature of forced labour, the poor diet and lack of protection from the myriad diseases rampant in the unfamiliar tropical environment. Many died during escape attempts, savaged by wild animals, ravaged by scurvy, or picked by professional escapee hunters – or in the case of sea-bound escapees, drowned or were eaten by the sharks that infested the coastal waters (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/dec/04/france.prisonersandprobation).

That the fictional Nelson Farina had to serve his sentence on this particular island prison reflects public shock and abhorrence at his crime and the premeditated nature of the disposal of the dead wife's cadaver. Although García Márquez glosses over the details of the crime, it is common knowledge that serving a prison sentence on this island reflects the seriousness of the offence and the full horror of this form of punishment would have had significant implications for family honour and impact severely on the convict's family.

Being banished to Devil's Island can be equated to a cleansing operation, the mass destruction of unwanted segments of humanity, all in the name of punishment. Such prisoners were also forced to remain on the French Guiana penal colony if they had served a sentence of eight years

or more, under the policy of doublage when their debt to society was paid. This was a life without hope, banished to the edge of the 'western world', a true living hell as further confirmed by Adams (2015). Therefore Nelson Farina's aggravated homicide, escape and survival of the rigours of the dangerous journey from Devil's Island takes on a different complexion when viewed from the perspective of the horrors of serving time on this penal colony. García Márquez appears to question the colonisers' almost scorched earth approach towards punishment and the value of punishment itself as well as the notion of populating the Caribbean with France's 'undesirables'. Such prison systems were not necessarily redemptive nor do they consider a prisoner's debt paid even if one has completed their time. They had to remain in the 'larger prison of life in the Caribbean' even if they could have preferred to return to the motherland.

By seemingly trailing the physical and philosophical features of Devil's Island as detailed by Erwin James (*ibid*), García Márquez appears to implicitly engage the capital punishment debate in that legal systems may dish out lengthy prison sentences whose execution may turn out more deadly than an actual death penalty. Sentences can also be just but unfair if one is sent to certain death. Adams *(ibid)* the survivor of Devil's Island concludes,

> … this was punishment and beyond. Here souls were extinguished as, en masse, thousands of men were systematically imprisoned to death. This was life without hope, banishment to the edge of the world, a true living death" (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/dec/04/france.prisonersandprobation).

The notion of penal colonies as export zones for Europe's worst criminals exacerbates all that is evil about this system because what was offered to the prisoners were not opportunities for redemption and/or rehabilitation but a living death in a place no Frenchman would go unless sent by a judge (Adam, *ibid*). His travelogue advances the reason why the French needed Devil's Island. The convicts were sent to this colony to do the work once done by African slaves. Critically paralleling the fate of the African men and women who survived the sea voyage from Africa to the Caribbean, prisoners who survived the horrors of the penal system were encouraged to remain in French Guiana and marry female felons from France to populate these islands. Like South Africa's Robben Island that has gone on to become a world heritage site and a place of interest, Devil's Island has become a macabre tourist attraction despite or because of its ugly past, perhaps as Mount Gol'gotha (mountain of execution), the site of Jesus' crucifixion, attracts numerous visitors to Israel.

García Márquez's Nelson Farina shows immeasurable ingenuity to have survived and managed to escape from Devil's Island; find and use a black ex-slave stock woman to marry and thus lend a seeming respectability to his criminal past. Superficially at least, in Judeo-Christian traditions, servant women have been employed to populate the Jewish nation, as exemplified by the birth of Ishmael by Hagar on behalf of the childless Sarah, Abraham's wife (*Genesis*: 16; 1-16 [*King James Version*]). Similarly, just as Hagar and her son were sent away once their purpose was met, Nelson Farina disposes of his daughter Laura by using her to gain his freedom and potentially enslaves her into a prostitution that starts off as familial duty. Thus she is another woman trafficked for a new but fake identity: that is, Nelson Farina becomes a woman trafficker over and above a woman killer. In this instance García Márquez creates a character that will always be a prisoner for going against humanity, one who has not been cleansed because of his failure to pay fully, his debt to society. He is therefore doomed to remain in limbo without any real freedom (Bauman, 2011).

However, there are also other ways of understanding Nelson Farina's arrival at Rosal del Virrey after his escape from Devil's Island. He arrives,

> … on a ship loaded with *innocent macaws*, with a *beautiful and blasphemous black woman* he had found in Paramaribo and by whom he had a daughter. *The woman died of natural causes* a short while later and she didn't suffer the fate of the other one … [my emphasis] (*Death Constant*, p. 222).

Nelson Farina's arrival at Rosal del Virrey village with a "*beautiful and blasphemous* black woman … *the woman died of natural causes*" calls attention to Jewish religious laws and practice against blasphemy. The author's almost anecdotal "… the woman died of natural causes" is an overt pointer to the probability that being married to Nelson Farina, she could also have been 'drawn and quartered' considering the character's history of spousal homicide.

According to the Judeo-Christian laws on blasphemy (*Exodus* 20: 7), this woman could have been stoned to death in tandem with the distinctly sexual discourse of this tract as almost happens to the woman accused of adultery and brought to Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees (*John* 8: 3-9, *King James Version*). In this case, García Márquez can be understood as advocating tolerance of difference just as Jesus' reformative and transformative teachings saved the Biblical woman. A more current instance of the grievous consequences of purported blasphemy is the case of the Pakistan Christian woman, Aasiya Noreen Bibi who was convicted and sentenced to death by hanging in 2010 after an argument with a Muslim woman over a bowl of water (Allen, 2014). Eight years later, the Pakistani Supreme Court has not been able to finalise her appeal hearings mostly due to religio-political pressure on the judiciary (*Morning Star News*, Dec. 04, 2017). Therefore, García Márquez also further lays open ideas on the thin divide between godly and socially sanctioned religio-social practices. There are grounds for death which are clearly unacceptable in Christian teachings yet practised by those that purport to belong with the faith as exemplified by the murder of Santiago Nasar in *Chronicle* by the Vicario brothers over their sister's lost honour for which he was not convicted but persecuted.

Secondly, the notion that Nelson Farina arrived with innocent macaws (parrots), underscores the paradox that to survive Devil's Island, a prisoner must continue to break the law. The phrase "innocent macaws" further draws attention to another South American problem where, wildlife trafficking is thought the third most valuable illicit commerce in the world after drugs and weapons despite the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) bans in 1973 (Michels, 2002; Bergman, 2009). The smuggling of the birds counterpoints the spousal homicide in a significant way.

> Macaws as a species mate for life. They not only breed but also share food with their mates and enjoy mutual grooming. In the breeding season, 'mothers' incubate eggs while 'fathers' hunt and bring food back to the nest. Macaws, native to Central and South America are popular pets and many are illegally hunted (*National Geographic Magazine*, January 1973).

Thus the banishment of personae non-grata into French Caribbean colonies through the penal colony system is countermanded by the trafficking and deracination of these delightful birds away from their natural habitat in the rain forests of the subcontinent to the western world. This is a symbolic death for the subcontinent because there is negative gain from what could be thought of as 'importing' undesirables as they 'export' key natural resources, the exotic birds.

That Nelson Farina arrives with a black woman in tow also raises issues of alterity in that no free white woman could have accepted in marriage, a Devil's Island escapee. Her fictional natural death underscores the violence of the first wife's murder. It can also be understood as an authorial strategy to shift focus onto the daughter about whom Nelson Farina, "… had good reason to imagine that he was rearing the most beautiful woman in the world" (*Death Constant*, p. 222). Alternatively, Nelson Farina's social and moral debt had been paid in full by virtue of his having managed to escape where few have survived. García Márquez's silence on the character's attitude towards his incarceration or towards the crime itself invites readerly conjecture. If Nelson Farina had been constructed as genuinely sorry for his crime in addition to having survived Devil's Island, social justice and perhaps Judeo-Christian law could judge him as deserving of redemption but Nelson Farina does not give that impression. Instead, he bides his time until he can wear down the corrupt politician, Senator Onesimo Sanchez. The latter becomes an accessory to the former's prison break by issuing false identification papers to protect the criminal from being sent back to Devil's Island to pay his debt to society in full.

Unsurprisingly, García Márquez unfailingly employs the sexuality motif to allow the Nelson Farina's final bid for complete freedom to succeed by prostituting his daughter Laura Farina to the Senator, and not by any other means. Political dispensation could have allowed Senator Onesimo Sanchez to facilitate Nelson Farina to obtain a new identity card as he was granting other favours willy-nilly on his campaign trail. Whether from a sense of justice or ethics the Senator's refusal to grant him a false identity, Nelson Farina's only comment is: "'Merde' ... *'C'est le Blacamén de la politique.'"* [Shit! That is politics] [emphasis original] (*Death Constant*, p. 222). In this instance the writer draws readerly attention to another form of domination of women, a metaphoric 'honour killing' such as occurs in *Chronicle*. This is a living death and has little justification in either the Judeo-Christian laws or any other legal precepts. This notion is particularly sustained by the girl having to wear a chastity belt, (a lockable device designed to preserve female sexual integrity), when she goes to offer herself to the Senator in exchange of her father's false identity documents. The key is kept by the father. Thus Nelson Farina continues his disposal of the lives of the women of his family for his own flawed survival (Taus, 2014). He neither protects nor behaves honourably towards either of them.

3. Conclusion

The writer's almost casual reference to Devil's Island, the French penal colony in French Guiana, raises critical concerns over the former European practice of shipping felons to penal colonies without any opportunity for redemption and/or rehabilitation once their debt to society is paid. This amounts to enslavement of the ex-convicts and gives them an almost indentured servant status, a growing curse of the modern world.

Conflating García Márquez's problemitisation of honour killing and spousal murder enabled a paradoxical understanding of the exploitation of female sexuality. The recovery of family honour lost through purported female sexual indiscretion and the recovery of a convicted murderer's freedom through his daughter's sexual dishonour are particularly striking examples of a morally conflicted society. Female sexuality becomes the currency by which the

father can corruptly buy his freedom. Jointly, the two narratives expose an ambivalent attitude towards female sexuality and gross double standards towards religious teachings. In one sense García Márquez displays unconscious anxieties in his fictionalised treatment of homicide in the two works, *Death Constant* and *Chronicle.* Yet in another sense his fictionalisation of honour killing and spousal murder in these works, invites readerly questioning of honour killings and the so-called crimes of passion that in reality are murders and continue to dog the world today. In this way, García Márquez's voice is added to the worldwide consciousness raising campaigns variously organised to counter the psychology of such frightful crimes. Despite the seeming anxieties in these two works, he fulfils a key purpose of literature, namely, to expose purported social evil by causing debate.

Honour killings and spousal homicides have not abated in many societies around the world because some religious teachings encourage the practice and the relevant laws do not always give deterrent sentences to perpetrators of such crimes. García Márquez further invites his readership to question the operations of some cultural systems that tolerate complicity by families, communities and their social structures and continue to uphold social scripts that have lost relevance in the contemporary world. Societies need to work to strengthen perceptions that violence against a member of the community is merely a cultural rather than a judicial matter. Therefore García Márquez draws public attention to religio-social and legal concerns over the right to life of the victims of honour killings and spousal murders as well as the rights of prisoners and the payment of debt to society. Honour killings, spousal homicide and the payment of the resultant debt to society are critically framed around Judeo-Christian teachings and the legal systems that appear to operate in the different settings of the two narratives. For a more just world, humanity should struggle for a justice that is both biblical and spelled out in systematic terms of rights and duties.

NOTES

1. Disclosure: There is no clash of interest resulting from research or application of this paper.
2. Despite worldwide appeals for leniency, Aasiya Noreen Bibi's case remains unresolved (*Morning Star News,* Dec. 04, 2017).

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