October 15, 2013

IO Statement

Through the group’s IO presentation, my cultural and contextual understanding of The Chronicle of a Death Foretold was greatly changed. The group mentioned the two most important aspects of Latin American culture: social structure and religion, and how they were reflected in the novel. Before the presentation, I thought Marquez reflected the conservative and liberal side of Latin culture. However, after the presentation I learned that the town setting is conservative and sides with traditional values, but Marquez and the narrator are more liberal. This is shown through Marquez’s detached and skeptical tone regarding the town’s total belief in religion and male superiority.

Regarding the social structure in Latin America, I learned that although the men were often oppressive, and women didn’t have many rights, the men’s intentions were sometimes good. The men wanted to protect their women. In the novel, when the Vicario family finds out Angela is no longer a virgin, they kill a man. Although this was completely wrong, the men in her family wanted to help and protect her. However, this hierarchy in society was also very oppressive in manner. Not only was there a societal hierarchy between men and women, but there was also a hierarchy between the rich and poor. In 1928, this was shown during the Banana Massacre. United Fruit Company workers went on strike to protest their working conditions; however, since they were poor and didn’t have any power they were suppressed. The Colombian government deployed troops who stopped and often killed innocent protestors. The group mentioned this example and the impact it had on the people.

Similarly, the role of religion was very relevant in Latin culture. It was traditionally viewed as a part of a person’s culture and heritage, and regarded with the utmost importance. However, religious officials often took too much power and ended up oppressing the people. Marquez critiques this idea when the Bishop doesn’t even stop and board the town, but simply passes by and waves even though the town was waiting for his arrival. The narrator describes this event with a sarcastic undertone, while everyone in the village was still happy he even came near the town. This shows their dependence on religion. My understanding of Latin culture in the context of the novel was greatly developed through the presentation.