

Silent Witnesses Sculpted in Gabriel García Márquez's *Chronicles of a Death Foretold*

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Abstract

Social psychological theories on perception assert how human perception is shaped by experiences, emotions, expectations and context. Naïve realism and Bystander effect are two prominent socio-psychological theories that help in understanding the ways in which individuals perceive social situations. Naïve realism as propounded by Lee Ross reflects an individual's conviction that one's own perception reflects objective reality. John M. Darley and Bibb Latane proposed the Bystander effect, which explores how humans tend to diffuse responsibilities in a group. A review of literature has unveiled the fact that despite being extensively analysed as distinct theoretical frameworks, their interconnection is yet to be explored. Employing qualitative analysis this paper attempts to bridge the gap by analysing the silent witnesses in Gabriel García Márquez's *The Chronicles of a Death Foretold*. It determines how Naïve realism inflates confidence in personal judgements while Bystander effect erodes collective accountability leading on to collective inaction.

Key Words : Naïve Realism, Bystander effect, Top-down Effect, Effortless Perception, Pluralistic Ignorance and Bias Blind Spot

Human behaviour pivots on the interplay between individual perception and collective dynamics. Human perception is insistently explored in the field of psychology and mirrored in literature. At the perceptual core of perception lies naïve realism which according to the social psychologist, Lee Ross, is a common man's belief that their sensory and interpretive experience constitutes of undiminished truth that are impervious to distortion. This cognitive default not only shapes personal worldviews but permeates into social interactions. It in turn aids in the formation of group phenomena like the bystander effect. Bystander effect is the diffusion of responsibility by a crowd of audiences who withhold aid at times of distress.

Theories on human perception trace back to the philosophical debates on epistemology, from Plato's cave allegory to modern empiricism. These concepts which have further evolved in the twentieth century has exposed the fragility of human perception. Literature which acts both as an artefact and an experiment of human behaviour has proliferated on the theory of perception. They present how perception leads to a false sense of realism which in turn affects the society. Ancient epics like *The Iliad* portray how warriors' 'honour codes' paralyse ethical intervention. Similarly, postmodern novels such as *Lord of the Flies* are embedded in similar narratives and probe how subjective 'realism' enables societal paralysis.

Naïve realism emerges from the human propensity to trust one's unmediated senses and interpretations as veridical truth. Coined by Lee Ross, Naïve Realism posits that people view their perceptions as direct apprehensions of reality, dismissing alternative viewpoints as biased or irrational. Ross states that individuals believe that they, "...see entities and events as they are in objective reality, and that their social attitudes, beliefs, preferences, priorities, and the like follow from a relatively dispassionate, unbiased, and essentially "unmediated" apprehension of the information or evidence at hand" (110). In psychological terms, this manifests as egocentric bias, where individuals overestimate consensus with their own views and attribute disagreement to others' flaws.

Bystander effect elucidates why such perceptual certainty fails to spur action amid ambiguity. Pioneered by Bibb Latané and John Darley, this effect attributes inaction to pluralistic ignorance, where bystanders assume that others' passivity signals 'normalcy' and thus dilutes personal obligation in crowds. Bibb Latané and John Darley in their work, *Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility* state that,

...when there are several observers present, the pressure to intervene do not focus on any of the observer; instead the responsibility for intervention is shared among all the onlookers. As a result...potential blame might be diffused (377).

This likely happens because people believe that the responsibility gets diffused among all observers.

Empirical studies, from the Kitty Genovese murder case that took place in 1964 confirms that the bystander presence inversely correlates with intervention rates. This paper aims to portray the interconnectedness between Naïve realism and Bystander effect as a symbiotic loop in the novella, *Chronicles of a Death Untold*. Contemporary works of literature illuminates this nexus. In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), the clones accept their organ-donor's fate

through naïve realist acceptance of a 'benevolent' system and through their bystander-like resignation diffusing resistance across the group. Ishiguro critiques how perceptual naivety entrenches systemic inaction, aligning with recent neuroscientific findings linking naïve realism to reduced empathy in groups.

The interconnectedness between naïve realism and bystander effect can be seen in real-world phenomena like online outrage cycles or climate denial, where naïve realism fuels bystander apathy. This paper aims to interpret Gabriel García Márquez's novella, ***Chronicle of a Death Foretold***, through interdisciplinary lens drawing on Lee Ross' perceptual psychology, Latané-Darley's social dynamics and narratological frameworks. It also intends to prove the hypothesis that naïve realism and bystander effect are not parallel errors but interdependent mechanisms eroding agency, as evident in the novella, ***Chronicles of Death a Foretold***.

Naïve realism and Bystander effect are the key concepts in the theory of perception and has been widely explored and analysed. "The Illusion of Information Adequacy: A Corollary to Naïve Realism" by Hunter Gehlbach, Carly D. Robinson and Angus Fletcher discuss naïve realism, highlighting how divergent perception leads to misunderstandings in interpersonal conflicts. "Vision: Top-Down Effects" by Mary Peterson (2006) deals with how high-level processes, intentions and past experiences influence visual perception challenging the traditional bottom-up processing. It provides empirical evidence for top-down effect.

Richard F. West, Russell J. Meserve and Keith E. Stanovich in their research paper, "Cognitive Sophistication does not Attune the Bias Blind Spot" (2012), brief about bias blind spot, highlighting how individuals perceive cognitive bias as prevalent in others than in themselves. It examines this phenomenon across various cognitive biases. "What's so Naïve about Naïve Realism" by Carlo Raineri (2021) focusses on Naïve Realism from a philosophical perception. It discusses the ontological and phenomenological claims of Naïve realism. The review of literature asserts that human behaviour in social context is strongly influenced by cognitive bias, social norms and group dynamics.

Ruud Hortensius and Beatrice de Gelder in their paper, "From Empathy to Apathy: The Bystander Effect Revisited" (2018) emphasise on the neural mechanisms and the dispositional factors influencing apathy in bystanders. The paper, "The Volunteer's Dilemma Explains the Bystander Effect" by P Campos-Mercade (2021), focusses on bystander effect exploring factors like diffusion of responsibility along with perceived harm and helpfulness which influence decision making in emergency situations. The historical roots, psychological mechanisms and social influence of bystander effect are discussed in Jiddane Mohamed's, "Understanding Human Behaviour in Emergency Situations: Unravelling the Bystander Effect" published in 2023. It provides strategies to mitigate its effects and shows ways to encourage proactive societal response to emergencies.

Yu. Ai, R. Ismal and S, T. Chong in their research article, "A Study of the Bystander Effect in Different Helping Situations" (2024), explore the presence of bystander effect in general helping situations verses emergency situations. It concludes that the bystander effect is significant in general situations but not in emergency situations, highlighting differing responses to help. The journal article "The Bystander Effect: A Social Psychological Phenomenon" by Ruud Gelder (2025), explores bystander effect in social psychology. It analyses bystander effect in modern society through neurology. It also highlights the influence of social media on group

dynamics and intervention strategies. The review of literature asserts that human behaviour in social context is strongly influenced by cognitive bias, social norms and group dynamics.

Research in the field of Naïve realism and By-stander effect as individual entities has flourished in the recent years but the symbiotic relation between them has been underworked. The proposed framework bridges these fields, by arguing that naïve realism and the bystander effect form an interconnected dyad. The former rigidifies perception, while fuelling the latter's inaction. These two key concepts illustrate how perception shapes behaviour. Through literary evidence, this paper will demonstrate their mutual reinforcement, offering fresh insights for interdisciplinary scholarship. This article will examine how naïve realism shapes an individual's perception in a group situation by unearthing its features such as Egocentric bias, Top-down effect and Bias Blind Spot and how these cognitive biases contribute to bystander effect.

The novella *Chronicles of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel García Márquez chosen for the study is treated as a site where psychological beliefs and social responses are represented through characterisation and narration. The research paper is divided into three parts. The paper begins with an introduction which delves into the major theories and concepts related to naïve realism and bystander effect. The second part focusses on textual analysis where the chosen text is dissected and coded under analytical categories such as Pluralistic ignorance, Bias blind spot, Top-down effect and Egocentric bias. This would be followed by the conclusion that naïve realism has a significant impact on Bystander effect.

A theoretical framework integrating Lee Ross' theory of naïve realism and Bibb Latané and John Darley theory of bystander effect forms the foundation of this study. The primary method used would be close reading, supported by thematic and discourse analysis, to identify scenes in which characters assume their judgement is self-evidently correct and subsequently fail to act when witnessing harm, conflict or injustice. The research adopts library research method, relying on secondary sources collected through library catalogue search, reference chaining and database searching using academic databases. The novella, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel García Márquez is selected on the basis of its relevance to social perception, group behaviour, moral choice and inaction. This text was chosen so that the analysis remains focussed and conceptually coherent with the ideas of perception.

The novella, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel García Márquez published in the year 1981, chronicles the death of Santiago Nasar in a small Latin American town. The story blends elements of magical realism along with journalistic enquiry. The novella is written through testimonial fragments collected by the unnamed narrator 27 years after the murder of Santiago Nasar. These statements parody news testimonies while suggesting that truth is often fragmented and subjective in nature. The novella also stands as a profound criticism of the social norms and collective morality. It demonstrates how rigid honour codes, gender expectations and communal facility contribute to violence. The unnamed narrator who is a friend of Nasar returns to the town many years after the murder of Nasar to investigate and reconstruct the circumstances that lead to the murder of Nasar.

The narrator gathers testimony from various people in the town such as his relations, friends and the townsfolk. These testimonies form a narrative that resembles an investigation report or a journalistic chronicle. The story unfolds in a non-linear way and shifts between time frames, recollections and perspectives. This reflects the complexity of memory and the difficulty

an individual faces while trying to present an objective view about the past event. The reader is aware of Nasar's death from the very beginning, so the focal point in the story is not his death but rather the understanding of how a murder could occur after its wide spread knowledge. The events that led to Nasar's untimely death begins with the marriage of Byardo san Roman and Angela Vicario. Byardo soon discovers that Angela is not a virgin and this goes against the moral conduct of the town and expectation of the society on a woman. Later Byardo sends Angela to her family in disgrace.

Angela's mother brutally torments her and under pressure Angela blurts out the name of the man, with whom she had an affair as Santiago Nasar. However, until the end of the novella there is no conclusive proof that Nasar is guilty yet Angela's words act as catalysts that lead to the ensuring tragedy. Angela's twin brothers Pedro Vicario and Pablo Vicario, butchers by trade, vow to avenge their sister's dishonour according to the traditional practice. They publicly proclaim their desire to murder Nasar in the market in front of the entire townspeople. Almost all of them in the entire town become aware of the twins' plan but none come forward to take action against it. Some people treat their words as a drunken bravado while others assume that someone else might intervene. The townsfolk gossip and some others try to warn half-heartedly but none act decisively. These chains of misunderstandings, indifference and apathy lead to Nasar's murder.

Nasar goes casually to meet his fiancé Flora Miguel unaware of the looming threat and it is then that his friend Christo Bedoyo frantically searches for him soon after he learns about the twin's plan. Through the elements of magical realism, Nasar is continuously foretold of his impending death through a series of dreams which he fails to decode. At 7:05 a.m. the twins corner Santiago outside his house and stabs him more than 20 times until his intestine spill out. The brothers then surrender themselves to the officials and justify their action as an act of honour. The legal system treats this case with leniency reflecting the social acceptance of honour bound violence. Though the cause of mishap could be attributed to the bystander effect, naïve realism also plays a vital part here.

Naïve realism states that people assume that their perceptions reflect unvarnished truth. Though the degree of truth might vary, "...people's reaction depends on their perception, not simply by the giver's action" (Taylor 12). This egocentric bias leads individuals to dismiss alternative viewpoints as flawed, creating a perceptual echo chamber. Complementing this is the bystander effect, identified by Darley and Latané in the year 1968. Their experiments demonstrated diffusion of responsibility, as the number of bystanders increases, each person's sense of obligation diminishes, compounded by pluralistic ignorance misreading others' inaction as a cue that no help is needed.

The interconnection emerges when naïve realism distorts the bystander dynamic. Observers perceive the situation through their own unassailable lens, interpreting ambiguous signals as less urgent if they conflict with personal schemas of 'normalcy', under naïve realism. This bias entrenches pluralistic ignorance where "... individuals see the existence and operation of bias much more in others than in themselves" (Pronin et. al 369). Here the bystanders are convinced that their inaction is rational thus reinforces collective passivity. Naïve realism when seen from a perpetual perspective refers to the belief that sensory experience provides a direct and accurate representation of the external world.

Individuals assume that what they see, hear and feel is objective reality rather than those being a result of interpretive process carried out by the brain. These, "...intuitive beliefs are often mistaken ones that mask critically important limitation on our cognitive abilities" (Chabris and Simons x). This being the case, naïve realism still persists because in most cases perceptual process operates unconsciously. The individuals do not experience the interpretive processes involved in perception and they tend to assume that their perception is transparent. This assumption provides a sense of stability leading on to over confidence in one's own sensory judgement and underestimating the incessant variability across individuals.

Naïve realism plays a central role in social conflict and misperception. A defining feature of naïve realism is the experience of effortless perception, "...whilst part of what we perceive comes through our senses from the object before us, another part always comes out of our own head" (James 258). Perception occurs immediately and automatically with no conscious effort which makes people assume that their perception is a faithful representation of reality. This subjective experience forms the psychological basis of naïve realism. In perception psychology this sense of effortlessness arises because the processing is fast automatic and largely unconscious:

The speed with which we organize and perceive the world around us arises to a great extent from the excellent (top-down), unconscious guesses we make based on sparse cues coming from either the actual or the expected content of the retinal image (Cavanagh 92)

The brain rapidly organises the sensory output it receives, making use of the prior knowledge expectation and contextual cues. This results in the individuals being unaware of the constructive work involved in perception.

Effortless perception reinforces Naïve realism by creating an illusion of transparency. This takes place because of an individual's "... tendency to over impute one's knowledge to others appears to stem from a failure to recognize the privacy of one's own experiences, or a failure to make a sufficiently sharp distinction between internally and externally produced aspects of the experiences+" (Nickerson 748). When perception requires no conscious effort then there is no reason to question its accuracy. In social context this tends to go beyond sensory experience and extends to social judgements. People believe that they can accurately sense another person's intentions emotions or motives. Disagreement or alternative interpretations are therefore attributed to irrationality rather than to differences and perspective

The ground work for naïve realism was laid by Richard Gregory in the 1970. In his work, *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing* published in 1997 he opines that,

The seeing of objects involves many sources of information beyond those meeting the eye when we look at an object. It generally involves knowledge of the object derived from previous experience, and this experience is not limited to vision (10)

Gregory's work on visual illusion claims that the brain uses prior knowledge and hypothesis to interpret sensory information that are unclear and ambiguous. Effortless perception plays a significant role in accelerating Nasar's death in the novella. It is seen in how social conditioning and passive observation can prevent people from behaving ethically.

Gabriel García Márquez presents effortless perception through the way the townspeople accept knowledge about the murder instead of questioning them. They assume that someone else

will intervene, creating a dangerous sense of complacency. This makes perception feel almost automatic as people see the signs, repeat the rumours and still remain passive. Here the narrator reinforces the idea that seeing and understanding come naturally, while intervention does not. Their collective failure to act demonstrates how perception is shaped by routine and social assumptions rather than critical thought. The townspeople continue with their ordinary lives on the day of Nasar's death, illustrating how easily people overlook obvious truths when they rely on familiar expectations rather than personal judgement.

Effortless perception is also reflected in the unquestioning acceptance of Angela Vicario's accusation against Santiago, despite the absence of proof. This reveals how honour and social convention distort perception. Márquez describes Angela's accusation with the image, "...she nailed it to the wall with her well-aimed dart, like a butterfly with no will, whose sentence has always been written" (27). This metaphor suggests that Nasar's fate is sealed the moment his name is spoken, regardless of the truth. The townspeople perceive the accusation as unquestionable because it aligns with their cultural beliefs about honour, demonstrating that effortless perception often results in passive acceptance instead of careful evaluation.

Human beings' sense of objectivity masks the cognitive bias that shapes how information is interpreted. One among the most prominent biases is the 'egocentric bias' which plays a central role in naïve realism. According to Myres David, "Egocentric bias is the tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share our beliefs and behaviors" (71). Egocentric bias also helps to explain why people overestimate the validity of their own perception and underestimate the extent to which the perception is shaped by subjective and contextual factors. In social and cognitive psychology, naïve realism is not a claim about the metaphysics of perception but a belief system that individuals hold, about their own cognition. In relation to this view, people assume that they see the world truly as it is and their interpretations are driven by fact than personal perspective. This assumption is fundamentally egocentric because it treats the self as a neutral observer while viewing others as interpreters influenced by bias, ideology and emotion.

Egocentric bias reinforces naïve realism by making personal experience feel transparent and authoritative. Egocentric bias is supported by other cognitive mechanism such as anchoring on the self and metacognitive limitations. Anchoring on the self, leads individuals to use their own perspective as a starting point for interpreting the world with insufficient adjustment for alternate viewpoint. Individuals fail to recognise that, "There is no impartial facts. Data do not have logic of their own that results in the same perception and cognition for all people" (Krech and Crutchfield 94). Metacognitive limitation on the other hand makes it difficult for individuals to perceive the extent to which their perceptions are influenced by prior belief, emotion and expectation. This results in an illusion of objectivity where subjective judgements are experienced as factual observations.

The Vicario twins, Pedro and Pablo embody egocentric bias by centring their honour-bound duty above all else. After Angela names Santiago as her seducer, they sharpen knives publicly and declare their intent, yet view the act as a personal restoration of family pride rather than a communal crime. Pablo later recalls feeling "relieved of thirteen pounds" (40), prioritising his emotional burden while ignoring the town's horror or Santiago's innocence. Their bias leads to false consensus where they assume that shared cultural approval absolves them, minimising

others' potential opposition. This self-focus blinds them to intervention opportunities taken by characters like Clothilde Arango.

The town's residents exhibit egocentric bias through spotlight effects, overestimating how others perceive their inaction while underplaying personal agency. Father Amador prioritises the bishop's visit over warnings, assuming his clerical duties exempt him from lay conflicts. Prudencia Cotes, Pablo's fiancée, supports the murder, "I knew what they were up to" (35). Prudencia Cotes from her romantic lens, believes that murder is just without considering broader consequences. Collectively, the town recalls events egocentrically, each of them claim ignorance or hope: "I thought someone else would stop them" (59), inflating their peripheral role while diffusing the blame. The concept of Egocentric bias gets mirrored psychological studies such as 'unconscious inference', where individuals acknowledge group consensus over their individual views, fostering paralysis.

The characters' individual guilt rooted in their respective egocentric biases eventually make them collectively guilty of Nasar's death. Psychologically, it links to self-serving biases, where failures attribute externally to fate or honour, while preserving self-image. Márquez uses non-linear structure to mimic biased memory, forcing readers to piece together perspectives denied to characters. This application reveals the town's inaction not as fatalism but cognitive failure, egocentrism erodes empathy, prioritising 'my view' over shared humanity. Ultimately, the bias transforms a preventable killing into inevitable chronicle, indicting insular societies.

Top-down effect is another prominent feature, an influence on naïve realism, refers to the impact on higher-level cognitive processes such as prior knowledge expectation belief, goal and emotion. According to E. Bruce Goldstein, "Top-down processing refers to the influence of knowledge, expectations, and experiences on perception" (64). Perception rather than being sensory information as seen in bottom-up processing, is considered to be shaped by what we already know and expect in top-down processing. Top-down effect highlights the active and interpretive nature of perception in which the brain uses existing mental frameworks to make sense of or incomplete sensory input.

A clear demonstration of top-down effect is the role of expectation in perception. In particular an individual attempts "...to make his judgements compatible with his knowledge about the subject matter, the law of probability and his own judgemental heuristics and biases" (Tversky and Kahneman 1130). When individual expect to see a particular object or outcome, they are more likely to perceive stimuli in a way that confirm those expectations. Memory and learning further contribute to top-down effect. Top-down effect challenges the assumption that perception provides a direct view of reality. They state how sensory input is continuously reinterpreted with the help of prior knowledge. Predictive processing theories extend this idea by suggesting that the brain actively generates predictions about the world when sensory input become insufficient.

The top-down effect in in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* can be seen in the way communal expectations shape individual perception, judgement and action before the murder of Nasar. The townspeople interpret events through pre-existing cultural schemas of honour, masculinity and duty, so that the Vicario brothers' intention is treated less as a moral decision than as a socially intelligible obligation. As the character Clotilde Armenta observes that they were, "not as eager to carry out the sentence as to find someone who would do them the favour

of stopping them” (33). At one point of time the twins’ wanted to shun the idea of committing murder, but it is the town’s ingrained perception and their inaction to stop them, makes them move forward with the plan.

The impact of top-down effect is particularly evident in the brothers’ behaviour, which is predominantly shaped through the town’s honour code rather than through individual conscience. The text explicitly frames their act as socially validated when Pablo insists, “It was a matter of honour... We killed him openly...but we're innocent” (26). Prudencia Cotes reinforces this schema by saying, “I never would have married him if he hadn’t done what a man should do” (35). Here the people’s perception is filtered by culturally inherited assumptions. The twins see murder as fulfilling a script, even though the narrative repeatedly indicates their reluctance and distress.

Top-down processing is also visible in the town’s response to Nasar’s alleged guilt, since reputation and expectation override evidence. Nasar is judged through assumptions about class, gender and sexual conduct, while the community’s shared belief that the murder is inevitable weakens any impulse to intervene. This is seen when, “The Vicario brothers had told their plans to more than a dozen people” (32). The warning spreads, yet action does not follow. Márquez therefore presents the novella as a critique of collective cognition, where people see what their society has trained them to see and that socially constructed certainty becomes fatal. Another feature that defines naïve realism is Bias Blind Spot.

Bias blind spot refers to the, “widespread tendency to assume that one’s own judgments are less susceptible to bias than the judgments of others” (Kelly 27). This reflects a systematic error in metacognition where people presume that their own judgement is rational and objective while also adhering to the idea that human cognition is generally biased. Bias blind spot prevails because individuals evaluate their own judgement based on introspective access while evaluating others judgement based on observable behaviour. The bias blind spot is closely linked to egocentric bias and top-down effect. These three together reinforce naïve realism by creating an illusion that their perception of things is objective and factual. While egocentric and bias blind spot may look similar, they refer to distinct cognitive phenomena. Egocentric bias primarily concerns itself with how information is processed and interpreted shaping perception, judgement and decision making from a self-centred point. Bias blind spot on the other hand refers to a metacognitive failure. It is the tendency to recognise cognitive bias in others while denying or minimising its presence in oneself.

Gabriel García Márquez’s *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* chronicles a town’s foreknowledge of Santiago Nasar’s murder yet universal inaction, a dynamic illuminated by the bias blind spot. This cognitive bias leads individuals to readily identify flaws in others’ reasoning while remaining oblivious to their own biases, fostering a false sense of objectivity. Biases “...are generally viewed as undesirable and thus people are likely to want to deny them” (Pronin and Kugler 576). In the novella, characters perceive bias in peers such as cultural zealotry or negligence but exempt themselves, from enabling the tragedy and mirroring real psychological mechanisms.

The bias blind spot manifests as the tendency to recognise cognitive distortions like confirmation bias or egocentrism in others, yet deny their influence on one’s own judgments. Bias Blind Spot “...prevents people from working to correct their biases and leaves them to

instead impute bias to others” (Emily et.al 402). Rooted in the introspection illusion, people view their decisions as deliberate and unbiased, while attributing others' errors to flawed processes. Studies show near-universal susceptibility, with individuals rating themselves less biased than average peers. Márquez exploits this through retrospective accounts, where narrators critique communal lapses but rationalise personal roles

Pedro and Pablo Vicario sharpen knives publicly and proclaim Santiago's doom, yet they see it as a honour-driven quest for justice, blind to their vengeful bias. Their blind spot aligns with psychological denial. Father Amador's biases get reflected through his prioritisation of the bishop's visit over his intervention in the twins' murder efforts. He fails to recognise his own schedule-driven detachment from the common concerns of the townspeople. However, at a later period he confesses that , “The truth is I didn't know what to do...My first thought was that it wasn't any business of mine but something for the civil authorities (38). The mayor disarms the twins briefly but eventually returns their weapons. He criticises their impulsivity while overlooking his inconsistent authority. Father Amador and the mayor like others in the novella, assume that they are right. It is their role-based confidence that masks their selective ethics which is a reflecting their Bias Blind Spot.

A fundamental mechanism connecting Naïve realism to By-stander effect is pluralistic ignorance. This phenomenon, “reflects a situation where people appear to operate within a ‘false’ social world, or at least one quite different from that observed by the presumably objective social scientist” (Fields & Schuman 427). This occurs when individuals believe that a situation requires action but assume that the others don't share this belief. This results in every one remaining passive because they interpret others' inaction as evidence that the situation is not serious. During emergency situations individuals often scan the other's reaction to determine how to respond, if no one responds then each individual would believe that the situation is non dangerous. This mutual misinterpretation leads to dormancy.

Pluralistic ignorance in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is seen through the town's shared but unspoken assumptions about honour and violence. Everyone seems to know that the Vicario brothers are preparing to kill Santiago Nasar, yet each person thinks that someone else will stop it, which helps make the murder feel almost inevitable. The community's passivity is tied to reputation and social conformity and the Vicario brothers themselves hide behind the language of duty. This creates a powerful example of pluralistic ignorance because public silence makes people act as though they accept the situation, even when many personally sense that it is wrong, including the twins. The same pattern appears in Angela Vicario's treatment after the wedding, where personal truth is overridden by what others believe should be true. In that sense, García Márquez presents pluralistic ignorance as part of the tragedy.

The townfolks' mistake mutual silence for agreement and that silence helps kill Santiago. This transpires because of the peoples “...motivation to exhibit norm-congruent behaviour [and] the discomfort of behaving inauthentically” (Zann 165). Pluralistic ignorance therefore acts as a bridge between naïve realism and the bystander effect. Naïve realism encourages individuals to trust social hints as objective indicators of reality while pluralistic ignorance causes those cues to be misinterpreted. Naïve realism, here supplies the perceptual rigidity that sustains pluralistic ignorance, while the bystander effect reinforces naïve realism by providing ‘evidence’ from the crowd that one's inert interpretation is objective.

Gabriel García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is distinguished by a fragmented, retrospective narrative style that resembles an investigation rather than a conventional chronological account. The opening sentence reveals Santiago Nasar's fate, hiking up novel's tension that arises not from suspense about the outcome but from the gradual reconstruction of causality and responsibility. The work follows 'a non-linear narrative' with an unnamed first-person narrator who does not recount events in straightforward order. This structure lends the novella a journalistic quality, exposing the instability of memory, since the narrator pieces together testimony from multiple sources and thereby foregrounds the limits of truth.

The imagery in the novella is often intensely corporeal and sensory, especially in descriptions of blood, knives, weather and domestic spaces. These together create an atmosphere of foreboding. The repeated references to the Vicario brothers sharpening knives and to the physical aftermath of Santiago's death, transform violence into something almost ritualistic, making the murder feel both mundane and horrifying. The author also uses natural world as symbols to depict life and death. These recurring images of birds, flowers and rivers function as a figure for time's inexorable movement enriching the text by linking private tragedy to broader patterns of inevitability and decay.

Symbolism in the novella is closely tied to social values, particularly honour, purity and religious authority. While the Bishop's visit becomes an ironic emblem of institutional blessing it fails to intervene in human injustice. Thus Márquez's symbols expose the moral contradictions of the community, in which honour is treated as sacred while compassion proves absent. The novella therefore operates as a critique of collective ethics, using symbolic detail to reveal how social rituals can mask violence rather than prevent it.

The insidious interconnectedness of naïve realism and the bystander effect, two psychological phenomena that conspire to erode human agency in the face of evident peril is illuminated through this study. Naïve realism, with its egocentric insistence stresses that "...people tend to see their own behavioural choices and judgements as relatively common and appropriate to existing circumstances" (Greene and House 279). This false consensus in turn amplifies the by-stander effect's diffusion of responsibility, where individuals defer action by naïvely presuming that others would intervene perceiving the urgency of the situation.

The paper through the poignant lens of novella *Chronicles of a Death Foretold*, portrays how a townfolk's collective ignorance, their interpretation of omens through personal prisms of superstition, gossip and denial precipitated a foretold yet unaverted tragedy. The novella's non-linear chorus of voices exemplifies this synergy. Each character's 'realistic certainty' fragments into group paralysis, transforming potential saviours into silent witnesses. Recognising the naïve and bystander nexus empowers individuals to pierce collective denial, converting untold chronicles into narratives of decisive action.

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