An Analysis of “One Holy Night”

How is narrator’s duplicity represented in the story of “One Holy Night”? If so, is her dual personality or rationalization justifiable?

Cisneros’ “One Holy Night” tells of the trials and difficulties through which a young girl undergoes. In the narrative, Ixchel gets pregnant being a teenager and this looks like ‘hereditary’ since her mother “took the crooked walk too,” as well as her “Abuelita has her own story” (Cisneros 27). Her family and the society condemn her. However, the relatives seem to be not a very good example to follow because she is given to herself in her bringing-up. She tries to earn money selling cucumbers as her mother used to. At that time, Ixchel meets more than twice older Chaq and falls in love with this experienced man who is good in making up stories about himself. When Exchel is “dar a luz” and her lover disappears, she finds out the horrifying truth about Boy Baby who is a seducer of girls of childish age and, what is more, a murderer. Additionally, the author uses such literary technique as indirect descriptions to allow the reader create the full picture of events on his own. In “One Holy Night,” Sandra Cisneros illustrates girl’s duplicity in behavior towards her lover, family, and society in general that cannot be justifiable.

Ixchel insisted upon her virginity because she did not want to be similar to other women who stand in doorways for men to have sexual relationships. Nevertheless, she failed to stick to her strong personality because she also experienced a sexual relationship with a
strange man after she fell in love. The author depicted aspects of carrying duality in her mind by trying to rationalize thoughts within herself and constantly finding ways to prove to herself that she was different. The 13-year-old girl tries to overcome the obstacles confronting her, but latter appear to be stronger. Nevertheless, Ixchel’s behavior was still unjustifiable and wrong due to the fact that she ultimately was not able to control her feelings or her actions and gave in to having physical contact with a man resulting in her getting pregnant.

The narrator’s duplicity is represented throughout the story in her childlike imagination of what entails normal and proper behavior as pertaining to a young girl in society. Though having information about the wrongdoings in her own family relations, and seeing the amoral behavior surrounding her daily life, she is unable to escape this environment. “Abuelita says it’s Uncle Lalo’s fault because he’s the man of the family and if he had come home on time, like he was supposed to, and worked the pushcart on the days he was told to, and watched over his goddaughter, who is too foolish to look after herself, nothing would’ve happened” (Cisneros 27). Therefore, Abuelita and Uncle Lalo’s statements toward who or what is to blame are different. Her Aunt Abuelita puts the blame squarely on the existent infamy of men; she angrily burns the cucumber pushcart and brands Ixchel as a shameless person. What is more, Abuelita blames the lack of proper guidance and protection by Ixchel’s Uncle Lalo. The latter, in turn, blames the decadence of the country (the U.S.) as being responsible for the eventual outcome. Thus, since of the permanent financial hardship, there was almost no one to take care of the girl.

She wanted to keep her virginity in order to be different from other girls and to prove she is “. . . not like the Allport Street girls, who stand in doorways and go with men into alleys” since she “didn’t want it like that” (Cisneros 30). However, due to her duality, her emotions have overcome the principles, and when Ixchel had a sexual relationship with a
man, she admits, “The truth is it wasn’t a big deal. It wasn’t any deal at all.” (Cisneros 30). She started to lose control of herself because she lacked a strong will. The girl cannot define if her personality is “not bad” or “special.” Furthermore, though longing to keep herself pure, she also had an inert longing for a love that only she could express. Her work as a cucumber salesperson was to later provide an avenue through which she was to meet the Man of her dreams in the name of Baby Boy, Chaq Uxmal Paloquín. “The past and the future are the same thing” (Cisneros 27) lied Chaq answering the question about his age. This innocent lie should have alarmed a prudent individual which Ixchel was trying to be, but being in duality all that she wanted to perceive was “the way he looked” at her (Cisneros 27). That was where her moral downfall started.

She was ‘awe-struck’ by the strange person whom she had no idea about; no one seemed to know him anyway, and visualizing him as she did, being a grown up, with hardened features of a man, must have endeared him to her more. The strange attraction to a man, who had the strange name Boy Baby – is another aspect of Ixchel’s duality. Even when Chaq tried to get her acquainted with his past showing his twenty four guns in the back room of the Esparza garage, she just “didn’t want to know” (Cisneros 29). Consequently, where ordinary people would put alarm or run away from danger, she just “didn’t want to know.” Hence, this was her duplicity in behavior again.

Her giving in to his way, and later getting pregnant, was something that should have been shameful, but, instead, she felt the opposite. She mused what all the fuss was about sexual encounter:

“Did I look any different? Could they tell? We were all the same somehow, laughing behind our hands, waiting the way all women wait, and when we find out, we wonder why the world and a million years made such a big deal over nothing… I know I was
supposed to feel ashamed, but I wasn’t ashamed. I wanted to stand on top of the highest building, the top-top floor and yell, I know!” (Cisneros 30).

On the contrary, her duality in behavior can be explained appealing to Ixchel’s age. She was a teen-age girl who made a kind of rebel towards the existing society norms or opposing the amorality surrounding her. She tried to prove herself to be adult while the narrator was still a child that had no support from the outward but only its disapproval and hurts.

Ixchel contradicts herself in her actions and her feelings. She has sexual intercourse with a man even before marriage or at least being in love with one, and later develops feelings for him although the relationship is no longer existent. She tells herself things to maintain her self-pride and esteem as a woman, but is hurting deep inside. The narrator tries to fight own dual personality through the later rationalization.

Though her man was gone, and, in addition, to the information portended to Boy Baby being a pedophile killer, she still did not give up her love for him. “A picture of him looking very much like stone, police hooked on either arm . . . on the road to Las Grutas de Xtacumbilxuna, the Caves of the Hidden Girl . . . eleven female bodies . . . the last, seven years . . . Then I couldn’t read but only stare . . . that make up the face I am in love with.” (Cisneros 34). Moreover, the above is reinforced by the love-hate feeling she espouses to her child in the womb calling one an animal. Afterward, Ixchel understands her guilt before society, her family, her unborn child and stresses her baby “will be named Alegre, because life will always be hard.” (Cisneros 35). Blaming herself for her deeds, she is nevertheless content that life, even though hard with its ups and downs, will always be made warm and comfortable through the aspect of love espoused through the statement “This is how it is with me. Love I mean.” (Cisneros 35).