

## Hope and Despair in the Select Works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez

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**ABSTRACT:** *No One Writes to the Colonel* is a novella written by the Colombian novelist and Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez. It also gives its name to an anthology of short stories. García Márquez held it to be his best book. It is the tale of a poverty stricken, retired Colonel, a veteran of the Thousand Days' War, who still hopes that he would soon receive the pension he was promised fifteen years ago. The Colonel lives with his wife, who is asthmatic, in a small village under martial law.

*The General in his Labyrinth* is a fictionalization of the last seven months of Simon Bolivar, liberator and leader of Gran Colombia by Garcia Marquez. The book traces Bolivar's final journey from Bogota to the Caribbean coastline of Colombia in his attempt to leave South America for exile in Europe. The story explores the labyrinth of Bolivar's life through the narrative of his memories, in which despair, sickness and death inevitably win out over love, health and life.

Hope is a positive perspective that depends on a desire for good results as for occasions and conditions in a person's life or the world as a whole. As a verb hope means: "expect with certainty" and "to value a longing with expectation." The Psychologist Charles R. Snyder connected hope with the presence of an objective, joined with a decided arrangement for achieving that objective. The opposite of hope is "despair", which is feeling that nothing is left for oneself in the world, or rather purposelessness in life.

This paper attempts to explore the theme of hope and despair in these works from a psychological perspective by applying C R Snyder's Hope Theory.

**KEYWORDS:** *Hope, Determination, Despair, Purpose in life, Psychology.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

On March 6, 1928, Aracataca, in Northern Colombia, saw the birth of the person who was to overcome the universe of writing, Gabriel Jose de la Concordia Garcia Marquez. Marquez was raised by his maternal grandparents in a home loaded up with a lot of aunts and gossips about apparitions.

The most significant relatives of Garcia Marquez were his maternal grandparents. Colonel Nicolas Ricardo Marquez Mejia, a liberal veteran of the Thousand Days' war, was his grandfather. The Colonel was an intriguing man, and he was a brilliant story teller to little Marquez. He is the person who revealed the insider facts of words to little Gabriel. Marquez was gifted by his Grandfather with a dictionary, which made him familiar with words – an author's first link with the wide world of letters. The character of the Colonel in the novella *No One Writes to the Colonel* is modeled on his grandfather.

Hope is a positive perspective that depends on a desire for good results as for occasions and conditions in a person's life or the world as a whole. As a verb hope means: "expect with certainty" and "to value a longing with expectation." The Psychologist Charles R. Snyder connected hope with the presence of an objective, joined with a decided arrangement for achieving that objective. Alfred Adler had also contended for the centrality of focus on aim for in human psychology, as did the philosophical anthropologists like Ernst Bloch. Snyder likewise focused on the relation between hope and determination, just as the requirement for sensible view of objectives, contending that the contrast among hope and wishful thinking was that the previous included practical methods to reach a better future. This paper attempts to explore the themes of hope and despair in the novella *No One Writes to the Colonel* and the novel *The General in his Labyrinth* from a psychological perspective.

According to Snyder (2007), hope is defined as the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways. The adult and child hope scales that are derived from hope theory are described. Hope theory is compared to theories of learned optimism, optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Higher hope consistently is related to better outcomes in academics, athletics, physical health, psychological adjustment, and psychotherapy.

## Hope And Despair

*No One Writes to the Colonel* recounts the tale of an anonymous veteran in his late-70s who was a colonel in the Thousand Days' War, a Colombian civil war at the turn of the twentieth century. The colonel and his significant other live in a ruined town, stricken by abusive political savagery and degenerate authorities and privileged people. In spite of the fact that the colonel assumed a urgent job in the Thousand Days' War decades prior, conveying "the funds for the civil war in two trunks roped to the back of a mule" (NWC, p.26), the Colonel has never gotten his benefits checks.

Regardless of the sad circumstance, every Friday the colonel strolls to the mail station at the harbor and hangs tight for the checks. The postmaster has a negative frame of mind towards the colonel's cheerfulness, revealing to him that, "no one writes to the colonel" (NWC, p.21). The colonel's better half, as well, understands the annuity will never come and following quite a while of disillusionment and close starvation, reveals to her significant other that they can't "eat hope" (NWC, p.39).

The novella opens with the demise of a young fellow, "the first death from natural causes" (NWC, p.6) the town has had for "many years" (NWC, p.6). The Colonel's child, Augustín, was killed by fighters for "distributing clandestine literature" (NWC, p.11). From Augustín, the Colonel acquired a chicken, utilized in cockfighting. The chicken holds a probability of acquiring cash on the off chance that it battles well, yet the old couple can't stand to bolster the chicken and themselves. The colonel's better half considers the chicken a "expensive illusion" (NWC, p.11) however the colonel holds out trust in its result, comparatively to how he holds out trust in his annuity.

In spite of the fact that the colonel and his better half live on the precarious edge of starvation, with no expectation of salary, the colonel's nobility and pride stay flawless. He will not give his better half a chance to sell their couple of assets; in case anybody discovers they were starving. At his better half's request, the colonel offers the chicken to his companion, Sabas, a kindred veteran who wound up rich through pioneering political devotions. The colonel, nonetheless, reneges on the arrangement and recovers the chicken. At the novella's end, the colonel's significant other asks the colonel in edginess what they will eat. The colonel answers that they will eat "shit" (NWC, p.62).

Here, the novella moves forward with the theme of hope. The central character, the Colonel, survives all his difficulties in life by means of hope. The novella does not have a definite ending. It ends by leaving the reader hoping for the resolution of the Colonel's troubles. The troubles of the Colonel never really end with the ending of the novella. His problems persist but he is still optimistic. It is this spirit of positivity, that helps any person succeed in life. The Colonel clings on to his two major hopes. The first, being the arrival of his pension cheques and the second, of his rooster entering a fight and bringing in money. Hope alone cannot lead a person to success. Along with hope, the person has to keep working in the direction. Here, the Colonel is hopeful of his rooster, and he also takes good care of it despite his poverty. He even cancels the deal with Colonel Sabas and brings back the rooster. He does everything humanly possible to fulfill his hope. In case of the pension cheques, all he is capable of doing is to check with the post office regularly. He does that too. He never loses his hope in both the issues. That makes him a true hero and that is definite proof of his success in the future.

This is where the Colonel differs from the protagonist of *The General in His Labyrinth*, Simon de Bolívar. Bolívar had led a life of struggles and war like the Colonel, but in the time frame of the novel, he is reduced to the shadow of the man he was. He lacks positivity and hope in life. Even in his hope, there is doubt and he resigns to hope in passivity. He does not take the steps to achieve his hope. This leads to his losing purpose in life and consequent death.

*The General in His Labyrinth* is a fictionalization of the last seven months of Simón de Bolívar, liberator and leader of Gran Colombia by Garcia Marquez. The book traces Bolívar's final journey from Bogotá to the Caribbean coastline of Colombia in his attempt to leave South America for exile in Europe. Breaking with the traditional heroic portrayal of Bolívar El Libertador, García Márquez depicts a pathetic protagonist, a prematurely aged man who is physically ill and mentally exhausted. The story explores the labyrinth of Bolívar's life through the narrative of his memories, in which despair, sickness, and death inevitably win out over love, health, and life.

The novel begins on May 8, 1830 in Santa Fe de Bogotá, when the General is setting off on his journey towards the port of Cartagena de Indias, from where he intends to go to Europe. He has recently stepped down from the position of the President of Gran Colombia. To his dismay, he sees that the people of the lands he liberated have now turned against him, scrawling anti-Bolívar graffiti and throwing waste at him. This is first blow to his self-esteem and hope. On the first night of the trip, the General and his entourage stays at Facatativá. The General's loss of prestige is portrayed vividly in this section. He is genuinely surprised at the turn of events and his will weakens with every minute that passes. His physical deterioration, which makes him unrecognizable, can be attributed to his lack of will and hope.

As the journey progresses, his physical debilitation and pride are evident as he negotiates the slope to the dock: he is in need of a sedan chair but refuses to use it. The group stays a night in Puerto Real, where the

General seems to hallucinate. He claims to have seen a woman but his companions are unable to find her after an elaborate search. In the next city on his path, the people still believe him to be the President of Gran Colombia and prepare banquets in his honour; but these festivities are wasted on him due to his lack of strength and appetite.

His health gets worse every day, making a visitor describe his face as a dead man's face. General Daniel Florencio O'Leary comes with news of ongoing political developments. Joaquín Mosquera, appointed successor as President of Gran Colombia, has assumed power but his legitimacy is still contested by General Rafael Urdaneta. Hearing this, the General says that his "dream began to fall apart on the very day it was realized".

Soon, the General finally receives his passport, and two days later he sets off with his entourage for Cartagena and the coast. In Cartagena, a lot many receptions are held in his honor. Though he is surrounded by women, during this time, it becomes evident to the reader that his virility is lost. The final blow to his will is the ambush and assassination of his good friend and preferred successor for the presidency, Field Marshal Sucre. The General is now told by one of his aides-de-camp that General Rafael Urdaneta has taken over the government in Bogotá, and there are reports of demonstrations and riots in support of a return to power by Bolívar. The General's group travels to the town of Soledad, where he stays for more than a month, his health declining further.

In Soledad, the General agrees to see a physician for the first time. It is confusing whether to take this as the crumbling of his hope or his revitalization.

The General never leaves South America. He finishes his journey in Santa Marta, too weak to continue and with only his doctor and his closest aides by his side. He dies in poverty, a shadow of the man who liberated much of the continent.

## II. CONCLUSION

To sum up it can be said that the presence and absence of hope is the difference between life and death. In *No One Writes to the Colonel*, the Colonel is extremely positive in his life and still hopes for a better future. He never resigns to his fate, neither does he stop believing in the seemingly improbable happy ending of his life. He has been through all sorts of miseries in life. He had to face the failure of the rebellion and surrender against his will, he faced poverty with grace, he also lost his only son, yet he stood steadfast to his beliefs. This struggle made him stronger by the day and in turn strengthened his hope. Thus, he is able to live on.

In the case of Bolivar, he is portrayed as a shadow of the man he was. He has lost all the vitality in his life. He was perceived as a superhuman by the people in his country, but in the final days portrayed in the novel. He is a frail man trapped in the maze of his own mind. He hopes in vain to be called back by the citizens. Yet, he does not take any step towards fulfilling his hope. Rather, he sinks in despair when he finds that the very people he served with benevolence have turned against him. The next blow to him is the death of all his trusted associates by the faction of his military whom he had prevented from gaining control until then.

Thus, it undoubtedly confirmed that hope is the driving force behind a person's forward motion in life. The Colonel holds on to his hope and works in its direction while, the General's grows with each negative incident and ultimately leads to his doom. He dies lonely, at the port city, in poverty.

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