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# Márquez' "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow": The Existential Crisis in Escaping Reality

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## Abstract

*Existential crisis befalls an individual whenever he/she becomes conscious over his/her own freedom in front of an apparently absurd universe or whenever he/she begins to think about his/her position and situation as a conscious being within the society. In order not to submit to the apparent absurdity of the world and not to remain in doubt over one's position and situation in the society, Existentialism offers humankind a set of principles to bear the universe and one's life and to live the moments of life in the best possible way. Gabriel García Márquez' "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow" is a short story in which Márquez has presented us with an individual's struggles with his existence as such, a man who is trying to make sense of his life before the existential crisis befalling him through the sudden death of his wife. The present study tries to investigate into the existential crisis that happens to Márquez' protagonist as such and highlight Márquez' solutions for such circumstances regarding his existential concerns.*

**Keywords:** existential crisis, Márquez, "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow"

## 1. Introduction

Concerns about the meaning and the purpose of existence are the most important points in the philosophical school of Existentialism. The "existential crisis" thus stands for those conditions or states of mind in one's life when one faces mental, including philosophical and psychological, problems over one's being and position in the world, asking whether one's life has any meaning, purpose, or value. An existential crisis often results from a significant incident or a multiplicity of events in the individual's life – marriage, separation, the death of loved ones, trauma, life-endangering experiences, new love partners, drug use, reaching a certain age, depressive disorders, dissatisfaction with life, isolation, thinking about death, health problems, sense of nothingness, losing one's sense of reality, extreme joys or pains, etc. – and their relations with the meaning of life. The new situation typically stimulates the individual to investigate into the nature of life and form his/her new perception of life and existence accordingly. In Existentialism, "existential crisis" particularly relates to the crisis when one realizes that one must always make a choice in order to be able to define one's life. Existential crisis thus occurs when one recognizes that deciding between action and stasis is itself an act of choosing. In other words, the human being is destined to choose. And thus he/she has to choose in order to escape annihilation and stasis. All self-conscious beings thus may develop methods to cope with the apparent indifference and absurdity of existence, as they may face it under specific situations.

Whereas traditional philosophy typically observes its role in making sense of "universally valid truths about such topics as knowledge, reality, and value," Existentialism poses questions that happen to individuals in the course of their lives (Guignon, 2004, p.1). Despite their differences, all

existentialists reflect Kierkegaard's claim that "it is up to each individual to decide where he or she stands in defining his or her own life" as well as Nietzsche's view that "the belief in Absolutes is no longer tenable" (Guignon, 2004, p.2). More precisely, at the core of Existentialism lies the Sartrean principle that "existence precedes essence." Sartre used this maxim in a lecture of 29 October 1945, entitled "Existentialism Is a Humanism." It inaugurates a view which is essentially opposed to idealism; it holds that there are "no ideal, outwardly, God-given, abstract, metaphysical essences giving reality or meaning to particular things." There is nothing beyond particular things except consciousness, or rather, "consciousness of particular things." In simpler terms, "existence precedes essence" means that each individual "exists first, without meaning or purpose, and strives thereafter to give himself meaning and purpose" (Cox, 2009, p.17).

Existentialism chose a philosophical view about the *human existence*, that is, to examine "the uniquely self-conscious and self-determining character of a human life as it is lived, enjoyed, and suffered" subjectively rather than objectively. Such self-consciousness includes "awareness of time", "a relationship to death", an "explicit understanding of the freedom to act" in the world and accepting responsibilities afterwards, and "a fundamental concern over the character of one's life" to distinguish whether one is living "authentically" in a responsible way or "inauthentically" in an ultimately irresponsible way (Michelman, 2008, p.1). Such existential attitude is initially "an attitude of self-consciousness" about one's state of being in the world. Self-consciousness is not, in fact, "awareness of self" as there is no "self" in existential terms; but the self is "an ideal" or "a chosen course of action and values" that the individual creates during his/her life in the world (Solomon, 2005, p.xvii). Accordingly, in self-consciousness, the individual becomes aware that many of the values and laws in our lives are no more than the "relics of dead authority or products of our weaknesses" in different situations throughout history (xviii). That is why, in Existentialism, existence is essentially "embodied" or "situated" in a world and lived "in relation to others"; in fact, existence cannot happen to "an isolated consciousness" (Michelman, 2008, p.2). An individual exists both for him/herself and others as he/she exists in the world as a human being.

As Blackham (2002) stated, "Man is only what he does, yet is always beyond what he does, without being anything in substance or in essence within himself" (p.151). Existentialists believe that in what the individual makes of him/herself through his/her actions, he/she becomes an essence both to him/herself and to others. But it is an essence which is subjected to both affirmation and repudiation, since the individual is never bound to anything. This feature is "a metaphysical absolute", one which makes human beings and can be eternally true of them "independent of historical change". However, this process can sometimes remain completely sterile due to the historical-social concerns of an age which may not let a human being keep his freedom. Moreover, this characteristic has no content in itself and does not determine the individual in any constant form but puts him/her "in question", whether he/she is anything at all. By putting him/herself in question, the individual also puts in question whatever there are before him, including all his/her desires and actions. This fact intensifies the concept of "situation" in Existentialism; "bonds and limits", "possibility and opportunity", "commitment and fidelity", as well as "project and choice" all imply that human existence happens in situations (p.162). Human beings are therefore deeply immersed within life and not detached from it; existence is in fact a kind of "participation" in one's own life and to deal with it in different situations (Panza and Gale, 2008, p.51).

Existentialists claim that people are too deeply involved in life to be able to detach themselves from it in order to investigate it from an objective viewpoint. Instead, an appropriate method to investigate life should "acknowledge the participatory nature" of existence in general. "A proper investigation strives to inspect existence *while* engaged within it." The main way to do so is to turn to "moods" (Panza and Gale, 2008, p.51), since existence means "being in a specific mood" regarding a specific situation during the course of our lives (p.59). Moods reveal our ways of engagement with the situations from which we cannot escape. And it is essential to know that "moods tend to structure" the ways in which we think about engaging with the world (p.57). This issue highlights the focus of Existentialism on freedom, choice, and action. "At the heart of freedom is choice and at the heart of choice is *action*" (Cox, 2009, p.5). "To choose not to choose" is still a choice for which the individual alone is responsible (p.6). Accordingly, based on the specific situation in which the individual is and the mood he/she has in it, he/she has the freedom to choose

and act not to remain stagnant, to be aware that it is only moods within which he/she should not imprison him/herself. Existentialism, in this respect, in many ways reflects the roots of philosophy, a return to the "ancients' concern with living well" and "the health of the soul". Mankind's position in the universe and the meaning of life were of great importance for earliest philosophers. Although many existentialists did not accept the existence of a soul in the sense that Plato did, they were concerned with the health of whatever traditionally was related to the soul, including "will, vitality, joy, and mental strength" (Panza and Gale, 2008, p.14). A non-healthy individual in this regard suffer from existential crisis.

The individual's self-consciousness over his/her present situation is very important in recognizing his/her specific existential crisis. An existential crisis befalls us when "something traumatic happens" for us, when our dearest ones perish, when we face a crisis demanding instantaneous response, and the danger lies in the fact that we may "break" or "fall into hopeless despair" as a consequence. For the existentialists, in more general terms, "this was the danger posed by the collapse of the traditional systems of value and belief that provided meaning to people for thousands of years" (Panza and Gale, 2008, p.45).

Among the writers who have focuses on such aspects of human life stands Gabriel García Márquez. Márquez' *Strange Pilgrims* (1993) is a collection of twelve stories about the lives of Latin American people who live in Europe in a state of semi-exile as they are far from their native land, or are travelling there only to end up with problems. Particularly the twelfth story which also ends the collection, "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow", portrays a Columbian couple who drives to Paris from Madrid for their honeymoon, only to get separated for ever when the woman is hospitalized in Paris and dies before her husband can find and visit her. The state of the characters' lives in this story indicates that they have gradually developed an existential crisis before consciously knowing it, that is, they are all dealing with a problem regarding despair about or hesitation over their present conditions against which they take actions or illusions over taking action. They try to make sense of their living away from the existential crisis which has befallen them, and since they find themselves disillusioned and distracted from their initial objectives, they end up either in renewals of their purposes or stuck in existential turmoil and illusory solutions which may yet never happen.

## 2. Methodology

This study was conducted through an existential perspective to interpret "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow" to decipher Márquez' covert messages regarding the importance of the basic principles of Existentialism which are at work in our very routine lives. As such, the approach here is mostly thematic, applying concepts in Existentialism to the main events of the story, highlighting the underlying philosophy that runs through the protagonist's life in his ups and downs. The study is therefore library-based, having made use of the available resources on Márquez' existential messages in interpreting the story. In this regard, part of the material has been provided through the existent research on Márquez' Existentialism and part of it, specifically the analyses by the researcher, are analytic and original.

## 3. Discussion

Reinholtz (2010) has pointed to the existential overtones of Márquez' fiction in general; in his view, Márquez' "three-year self-imposed exile in Paris in the mid-1950s coincided with the zenith of French existentialism." Reinholtz holds that "it is generally agreed that the influence of existentialism is more prominent in his earlier works" (p.64). Robert Solomon also dedicates a part of his book to quote a section from Márquez' *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985) to highlight the existential points about absurdity and hope inherent in it. Solomon's selection points to the fact that Márquez was not alien to Existentialism. Existential themes are also widespread in Márquez' later fiction, such as the stories in *Strange Pilgrims*. *Strange Pilgrims* is an embodiment of many of the existential themes that we find in that school of thought. This collection of twelve stories is rather a window to human life in its totality and acquaints us with different individuals in different situations, evaluating their abilities to cope with life in different circumstances.

The twelfth story in Gabriel García Márquez' *Strange Pilgrims* is a great and fascinating one. Billy Sánchez and Nena Daconte, children of two wealthy Colombian families from Cartagena, fly to Europe to celebrate their honeymoon after an enthusiastic period of friendship. Their journey is to begin from Madrid and end in Bordeaux where they have reserved a bridal suite. Although married only three days, Nena is already two months pregnant. On the day they are to begin their journey, Nena scrapes her ring finger on a rose thorn, and the "almost invisible" scratch starts bleeding continuously. Their honeymoon ends in Paris when Nena, whose finger is now bleeding "in an uncontrollable flood" (Márquez, 1993, p.174), is admitted to the intensive care unit of "a huge, gloomy hospital" in Paris (p.175). Nena is "admitted at nine-thirty on Tuesday, January 7" and visitors are "allowed only on Tuesdays, from nine to four." Billy must then wait six days before he can see his wife again. He spends most of his time alone in a nearby hotel "two blocks away, in a very narrow street" (p.177). He tries to visit Nena sooner, on Thursday, but is thrown out of the hospital by a security guard. Billy then attempts to enlist the aid of the foreign embassy, which proves unsuccessful, as there are rules which cannot be broken. When Tuesday finally arrives, Billy cannot locate his wife. He spots the physician who first examined Nena. The doctor regretfully announces that Nena "bled to death at ten minutes past seven on the evening of Thursday" (p.186). No one could find Billy to inform him of the situation. Even the embassy was informed, but Billy had left the embassy just one hour before any news reached the place. Therefore, Nena's parents were informed to arrange the affairs and her funeral. They have also transported the body to Catagena for burial. Billy exits the hospital with thoughts of "revenge for his own misfortune" (p.188).

"The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow" is a tale of choices and the reversal of expectations. In other words, it is a nightmare of *what if*: what if life unfolds in such nightmarish way as in the story? What if all our expectations according to our choices show up reversed in action by circumstances? What if unwanted events emerge in the course of our lives? Billy Sánchez is the character who can provide us with answers to these questions. Although half of the story focuses on Nena's state of mind during her relationship with Billy, she ends up in a tragic death. We are therefore less concerned with her viewpoints towards life, as she herself does not survive to deal with it, than with Billy's viewpoints.

Billy's existential crisis happens when he loses Nena in the hospital. Although he is sure that she is there receiving treatment, but he feels alienated because of both her absence and his distance from his native land. Having travelled for the first time outside his country, Billy "increased a feeling of desolation that he struggled to keep in a corner of his heart." And it is intensified by his loneliness, as he is without the company of his love. It takes time for him to become self-conscious and cope with his new situation, so that after a while he falls "without being aware of it, into the first trap of forgetting" (Márquez, 1993, p.171). As such, instead of finding an existentially acceptable solution for his situation, Billy develops what Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* calls "bad faith". According to Michelman, "bad faith" aims at neglecting one's "freedom and responsibility", most commonly by considering oneself as typically determined by "heredity, temperament, or social circumstances" (p.47). The goal of bad faith is to "escape oneself," to prevent the individual from acknowledging his/her freedom and responsibility "as a self-determining being" (p.44), through various "strategies of avoidance and self-deception that lie at the root of inauthentic existence" (p.47). "Striving to be a thing" to flee from the responsibility of being free is a common form of bad faith (Cox, 2009, p.63). A less common form of bad faith is in "discounting our antecedent condition in sheer wishfulness", as if we are "pure possibility with no actuality, living entirely in the future, unencumbered by any past" (p.74). Each form of bad faith is inauthentic; the one makes us determined by exterior forces, the other makes us oscillate between various situations all the time. In other words, Sartre believes that bad faith is choosing not to choose. It is "negative freedom", freedom that "denies, checks, and represses itself" (Cox, 2009, p.98). To deny the reality of freedom and choice, in giving up responsibility, is in fact bad faith. Finally, bad faith is complaining about your condition but "doing nothing" to change it (p.65). In this regard, Sartre seems to agree that our usual inclination is to deny responsibility for our situation, that is, to be in bad faith (Flynn, 2006, p.70). In fact, one runs away from one's responsibility by claiming 'That's just the way I am' (Cox, 2009, p.72). As such, bad faith is a strategy for neglecting the knowledge that one "makes oneself" through "one's choices and commitments", and that excuses are without external basis

(Michelman, 2008, p.44). On the other hand, affirming freedom in life requires that the individual affirms his/her "entire life without regret"; it thus follows that he/she must affirm his/her "mortality" as well (Cox, 2009, p.105). And that is a way "to overcome bad faith" (p.104).

Billy has a rich and well-known family, but he has received no affection from his parents throughout his life. During their relationship before their marriage, Nena discovers "a frightened, tender orphan" beneath Billy's "sad reputation as an ignorant brute" (Márquez, 1993, p.167). However, Billy proves rather indifferent towards Nena during the journey. He is partly blamed for Nena's catastrophe. His material interest in the new car distracts all his attention away from his bride to the love of riding a Bentley convertible which is a gift from his father. In the beginning of their journey, as the narrator says, "no one noticed that her finger had begun to bleed. They all [those who have come to greet the couple] turned their attention to the new car" (p.170). Nena initially does not care for the scratch; she also seems to be distracted by the enthusiasm of the situation just before the journey begins: "Nena Daconte did not realize that her finger was bleeding until they left Madrid... She sucked her finger in an unconscious way each time it bled, and only when they reached the Pyrenees did she think of looking for a pharmacy" (p.171). As a symbol, the scratch stands for all those trifle things that have magnanimous effects on one's life. Also, the thorn of the rose which scratches Nena's wedding finger symbolizes the fragility of their marriage. As such, it stands against the luxury of the new car and the leak it causes in their relationship; Billy

*was so delighted with his big, £ 25,000 toy that he did not even ask himself if the radiant creature asleep at his side-the bandage on her ring finger soaked with blood and her adolescent dream pierced for the first time by lightning flashes of uncertainty-felt the same way too. (p.165)*

It is "the intoxication of the new car" that keeps Billy going without food and rest from Madrid to Paris than his happiness about his marriage (p.172). This leak is more manifested in Billy's three-day seclusion, in the hotel two blocks away from the hospital where Nena bleeds to die, after he is disappointed to find a way to enter the hospital. Billy proves inconsistent as a lover and, becoming conscious over the agony of life, he drowns in his own seclusion than struggling face-to-face with the world. If he had continued his attempts to see Nena before Tuesday, at least he would have not missed the news outside the hotel that they are searching for him. But his decision to neglect the freedom which his existential agony gives him and his bad faith to face his new condition in the face of despair betray him and he loses Nena forever.

He considers himself a source of misery, a fact which highlights his bad faith. As the narrator says, "If he had spent the rest of his life in the attempt, Billy Sánchez could not have deciphered the enigmas of that world founded on a talent for miserliness" (Márquez, 1993, p.178). But once he becomes conscious of his own ability, he moves towards authenticity: by "doing things, so different from his own," Billy "felt so confused and alone that he could not understand how he ever had lived without the help and protection of Nena" (p.178-179). Billy begins to face the truth through the lack of relationship with the other. Since it is only possible to take ourselves as granted through the presence of others, the absence of others strikes us with alienation and self-consciousness over our condition. "As he tossed and turned on the bed and could not sleep, he thought for the first time not only about Nena Daconte, but about his own grievous nights", his house, and his parents in Cartagena (p.180). Billy is undergoing changes toward self-consciousness. Getting stuck in a situation where no one is to help him, he grows up and leaves his carefree years behind. As the narrator says, Billy "was not conscious ... of so many other terrible things" in his childhood loneliness, "until the night he found himself tossing in the bed of a sad Parisian garret, with no one to tell his sorrows to, and in a fierce rage with himself because he could not bear his desire to cry" (p.180-181). And the next morning, on Friday, he wakes up "wounded by the evil night he had spent, but determined to give definition to his life" (p.181). He begins "to be an adult" and decides to take serious action; he manages to go to the ambassador (p.182). Billy, therefore, chooses not to be a carefree and irresponsible creature and takes it as his duty to counteract against what has befallen him. His decision for change is authentic enough, although he is to face failure soon.

This is in the embassy where Billy faces ultimate despair. The ambassador, who understands Billy's concern, reminds him that they are "in a civilized country" with "strict norms" based on "the



most ancient and learned criteria, in contrast to the barbaric Americas,” where tempting a hospital porter is possible through bribery (Márquez, 1993, p.183). This is a new condition with which Billy cannot initially cope; the very despair which he faces there is not initially bearable. When he exits the embassy, Billy does not know where to go; he has forgotten the name and the address of the hotel two blocks away from the hospital. Then,

*Stupefied by panic, he went into the first cafe he came to, asked for a cognac, and tried to put his thoughts in order. While he was thinking he saw himself repeated over and over and from many different angles in the numerous mirrors on the walls, saw that he was frightened and alone, and for the first time since the day of his birth he thought about the reality of death. (p.184)*

His alienation with the city and his sense of exile, his loneliness and the fear of losing Nena, and his helplessness in his special situation make Billy a subject of ultimate despair. The first glass of cognac, in a symbolic way, paves the way for him to enter his unconsciousness. There he sees himself in fragments in the mirrors, as if his body has broken into parts. In his loneliness, he thinks that he is at an end. According to Heidegger, such fear of death is inauthentic. For Heidegger, it is the affirmation of our “being-unto-death” that focuses our attention on the meaning of existence. Such death or “ending” does not mean “Being-at-an-end, but a *Being-towards-the-end* of this entity.” Death, Heidegger concludes, is “a way to be” (1962, p.289), “Being-toward-death” is thus a phenomenon during the course of life. Being aware of death is essential for human existence and it is related to “an awareness of freedom” and “to the exercise of authenticity” (Michelman, 2008, p.112). But Billy thinks that he is at the end of his life, and that is why he evades this through the second glass of cognac.

*But with the second glass of cognac he felt better, and had the providential idea of returning to the embassy [since he is lost in the region]. He looked in his pocket for the card with its address, and discovered that the name and street number of the hotel were printed on the other side. (Márquez, 1993, p.184)*

He is back to reality then; he cannot stay in that state of agony where he realizes his alienation and loneliness. He has defined himself through Nena, and her absence is what threatens him most. By finding the address of the hotel by chance, he returns back there. He is “so shaken by the experience” of his getting lost that he does “leave his room again for the entire weekend except to eat and move the car from one side of the street to the other.” And he keeps “waiting for Tuesday” (p.184).

Because humankind is basically defined “in-situation”, and because situations are “flowing and ambiguous”, stable identities are not possible (Flynn, 2006, p.69). Freedom is thus the awareness that one has possibilities in future. “We are our future possibilities” (Cox, 2009, p.36), and the authentic individual, on Sartre’s account, is the one embracing such openness and “lives it fully” (Flynn, 2006, p.77). As Sartre says, mankind “is nothing other than his own project. He exists only to the extent that he realizes himself, therefore he is nothing more than the sum of his actions, nothing more than his life” (2007, p.37). And that “there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom” (p.29). “Facticity” or forces beyond our control are always there to restrict us, but we are free to make sense of these circumstances. According to Sartre, “facticity is everywhere but inapprehensible; I never encounter anything except my responsibility” (1956, p.556). Billy is therefore responsible for his present situation: no one has forced him to stay in the hotel, no one has imposed death on him, and no one is pursuing him for any crime. He himself is his own fear. Fear does not exist there in front of us; it is just an interior mood. On the other hand, he is not able to match himself with the new situation in Paris. He even forgets what he was to do because of his initial concerns for Nena’s problem. They were to take a room at the Plaza-Athene, where they had a reservation, in Paris. But Billy has taken “the only free room, a triangular garret on the ninth floor” of a hotel two blocks away from the hospital (Márquez, 1993, p.178). There is a problem with this choice. On the day of her death, Nena had instructed the nurses “to look for her husband at the Plaza-Athenee, where she and Billy Sánchez had a reservation, and giving them the necessary information for reaching her parents”. The embassy had also been informed on Friday, one hour

after Billy's visit, that Nena's parents were on a flight to Paris. But Billy had left no address there, and the ambassador could not locate him. While taking care of the formalities for Nena's burial, the ambassador himself "stayed in touch with the police prefecture in Paris during the efforts to locate Billy Sánchez." He is under pursuit, but no one knows where he is, since he has imprisoned himself out of a fear which has overcome him:

*An emergency bulletin with his [the ambassador's] description was broadcast from Friday night to Sunday afternoon over radio and television, and during those forty hours he [Billy] was the most wanted man in France. His photograph, found in Nena Daconte's handbag, was displayed everywhere. Three Bentley convertibles of the same model had been located, but none of them was his [as his car was parked in a narrow street]. (p.186)*

One may take these circumstances as external forces in which Billy has no role. But we see that all these could happen otherwise if Billy had decided to return back to the embassy or if he had left an address there, if he had not imprisoned himself in his room. And the final strike is Nena's funeral which takes place "on Sunday at two in the afternoon, only two hundred meters from the sordid hotel room where Billy Sanchez lay in agonies of loneliness for the love of Nena Daconte" (p.187).

Billy is an individual who develops changes in an existential sense when he decides to act like an adult to go to the embassy. But his sense of loneliness and fear of death turn his attempts into bad faith; these feelings make him evade the reality of his condition by keeping him as a dependent creature on Nena. Nena's death in fact is Billy's death, he did nothing while Nena was dying. His death in life, which makes his inauthenticity, is manifested in his existential crisis that he thinks he is at an end without Nena. In this regard, authenticity separates the "self's relation to itself" and its "relation to others". For example, Heidegger holds that fear is not authentic because it is intentional, that is, "fear is fear of something, or for someone." But anxiety is authentic, because it relates directly to one's own specific "being-in-the-world" (1962, p.40). To be authentic is to self-consciously realize "one's being-in-situation" (p.84), and then to "be-for" it (Sartre, 1984, p.54). Authenticity is therefore "living without regret" (Cox, 2009, p.88), and not considering oneself to be determined by "heredity, temperament, or social circumstances". Otherwise, bad faith prevents the individual from affirming his/her freedom and responsibility through "strategies of avoidance and self-deception that lie at the root of inauthentic existence" (Michelman, 2008, p.47). And this what Billy does by drinking the second glass of cognac. It helps him avoid "overwhelming anguish" (Cox, 2009, p.94), disregarding his "openness to Being", living inauthentically (Flynn, 2006, p.70).

Billy's bad faith banishes his freedom. His imprisonment manifests de Beauvoir's "conception of reciprocal freedom" (Michelman, 2008, p.53). For Simone de Beauvoir, one's freedom depends on others and is "socially constrained", since others' existence is a freedom that defines one's situation and is "the condition" of one's own freedom (2000, p.91); "no existence can be validly fulfilled if it is limited to itself" (p.67). Accordingly, the authenticity achieved through such freedom is not an individual project; "others reflect back an image of one's own freedom", and "free actions" require others' "participation and acknowledgment" as well (p.56). The reflections of the mirrors in the café where Billy stops to drink cognac reflect back Billy's images to himself, images which threaten him to be the only person in his life, an illusion which threatens him with the fear of death. He is totally dependent on Nena, and that is what makes all his problems. When anxiety befalls mankind, he/she becomes aware of his/her "essential freedom to choose" (Michelman, 2008, p.35). On the other hand, confronting death, the authentic person affirms the absurdity of life, his/her situatedness in time. But he/she makes him/herself responsible based on his/her choices in life. Anxiety is therefore the recognition of the "constantly renewed obligation to remake the Self" (p.35). Evading such consciousness leaves the individual in bad faith, a fate which befalls Billy in his futile attempts at proving his love to Nena.

#### 4. Conclusion

Existentialism is a guideline for proper living, to recognize the situations which happen to us in life, to get conscious over the fact that we are free beings subjected to our own choices and

responsibilities. Existentialism provides us with solutions for the crises that target at our very existence and our relation to it, hence existential crisis. The world as it can be perceived by humankind is full of choices before numerous situations. And mankind is always free to choose otherwise for a better condition. Any doubt about one's position in the universe or any hesitation regarding what to do in due time before the problems that befall us lead us to a state of absurdity, nihilism, or ontological oscillation. Accordingly, it is always necessary to choose wisely even if there are no choices. Sometimes even not to choose is choosing proper. Thus freedom, choice, action, and responsibility play the central role in Existentialism away from an inauthentic way of living and absurdity. Existentialism, in this regard, is exactly a guideline for each human being in order to cope with situations, to get conscious over the freedom that humankind inherently has in any situation, to become conscious that there is always the possibility of choice and action, to get away with escapist strategies in facing reality, to find the best possible solutions for our problems in life.

Gabriel García Márquez, whose works are full of existential concerns, presents us with many existential themes in *Strange Pilgrims*, and particularly "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow". Billy Sánchez is in act each of us in a fictional world where we have been existentially put to test before the catastrophes which may befall us in real life and evaluated based on the coping strategies which we undertake accordingly to face them. Failure or success in this regard depends on us ourselves, regardless of any escapist justification or blaming external forces of any kind. The present article was thus an attempt at interpreting "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow" in this light. This short story presents us with the test of one's will in terrible situations. What happens to Billy is a consequence of his own decision to seclude himself from the agonies that has overcome him in an alien city, intensified by her wife's absence. Until he would could openly accept his situation and cope with it authentically, he remains in bad faith and constantly escapes the reality of his condition.

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