

Analysis of the Five Stages of Death Acceptance in the Novel *Anyab Rajul Wahid* (The Fangs of a Lonely Man) by Ghada Samman Based on Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Theory

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Introduction

Death, as one of humanity's most fundamental existential concerns, has always been profoundly reflected in world literature. This study aims to explore the process of accepting death in contemporary Arabic fiction by examining Ghada Samman's novel *The Fangs of a Lonely Man* (*Anyab Rajul Wahid*) through the lens of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five-stage theory of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). The research is situated at the intersection of literature and psychology, seeking to demonstrate how literary texts can embody and enrich psychological models. While Kübler-Ross's theory provides a systematic framework, this study also acknowledges its limitations, particularly its presumed linearity and clinical origins, which may not fully capture the non-linear, culturally-inflected experiences of death in narrative fiction. The novel's existentialist worldview and specific social context are considered crucial factors shaping the protagonist's unique journey. The primary research questions are: 1) How are the five stages of death acceptance reflected in the novel? 2) What intra-textual (psychological, social, philosophical) factors influence the protagonist's transition between these stages? The initial hypotheses posit that the protagonist experiences all stages but likely arrives at an "acceptance" distinct from the classical model, shaped by existentialist philosophy and profound social isolation.

Methodology

This research employs a descriptive-analytical method within an interdisciplinary framework. A systematic content analysis was conducted, coding textual evidence from the novel according to the definitions of Kübler-Ross's five stages. Key passages depicting the protagonist Bassam's psychological states were selected from critical moments in the narrative, such as his initial diagnosis, social interactions, and solitary reflections. The analysis focused on how Samman uses advanced literary techniques, narrative actions, and artistic imagery to manifest each psychological stage. The application of the theory was critically examined, with its limitations addressed by integrating cultural and existentialist perspectives to provide a more nuanced literary analysis.

Conclusion

The findings confirm that the protagonist, Bassam, undergoes all five stages of grief, but this process is distinctly non-linear and complex. The stages often overlap, recur, and intermingle, reflecting the intricate psychological turmoil of confronting imminent death. Denial: This stage is manifested through Bassam's unconscious refusal to accept his fate. He seeks refuge in distractions, such as his fascination with the dancer Anwar, whom he perceives as a "shield" against the darkness of non-existence, vehemently asserting, "He will live and not waste a single day of his life." Anger: Bassam's denial gives way to a virulent, destructive rage. This is depicted through powerful metaphors, such as his wish to transform into a "gigantic devilish foot" to crush the city and its indifferent inhabitants. His hatred is directed not only at his fate but also at the continuing life around him. Bargaining: This stage is portrayed through subtle, symbolic actions rather than explicit deals with God. His fastidious preparation of his grave—selecting marble and a tall headstone—represents an unconscious attempt to control and aestheticize death, a desperate bid to impose order and dignity on the inevitable. Depression: As reality sets in, Bassam is engulfed by profound despair and isolation. He wanders the city aimlessly, described as a "wounded, homeless beast," pathetically touching sidewalks and stones, begging for a connection to life. This stage highlights the deep sorrow of severing ties with a world that continues indifferently. Acceptance: The final stage in the novel diverges significantly from Kübler-Ross's model of peaceful acquiescence. Bassam's acceptance resembles a state of "conscious surrender" or existential resignation. It is not devoid of bitterness, as seen in his calm yet poignant anticipation of his death amidst the blossoming spring, a moment that acknowledges his place within the natural cycle while underscoring his personal extinction.

The analysis concludes that the protagonist's journey is profoundly influenced by the novel's existentialist themes and his absolute loneliness.

The final form of acceptance is less about inner peace and more about a lucid, albeit weary, capitulation to an absurd fate.

This study successfully demonstrates the applicability of Kübler-Ross's five-stage model as a valuable analytical tool for deconstructing the psychological progression of a literary character facing death. However, it also highlights the model's limitations when applied to a nuanced literary work, revealing that the stages are not strictly sequential in lived (or narrated) experience. Ghada Samman masterfully portrays these stages through sophisticated narrative techniques and rich imagery, moving beyond a clinical model to explore the philosophical dimensions of mortality. The protagonist's ultimate "acceptance" is reinterpreted through an existentialist lens, emerging as a conscious surrender rather than a tranquil resolution. This research underscores the capacity of literary fiction to complicate and enrich psychological theories, presenting death not as a mere clinical event but as a complex existential phenomenon shaped by worldview, society, and narrative art.

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