

## Navigating the Five Stages of Grief in Amador Daguio's the Wedding Dance

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored the application of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief namely: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance to Amador Daguio's *The Wedding Dance* through the lens of psychoanalytic literary theory. The narrative centers on Lumnay, a woman grappling with the dissolution of her marriage due to cultural expectations surrounding childbearing. Employing a qualitative textual analysis, the research examined how Lumnay's emotional journey mirrors the stages of grief, revealing the psychological and cultural complexities of her experience. Denial is reflected in her refusal to accept Awiyao's departure and her clinging to shared memories. Anger emerges as she confronts feelings of betrayal and societal injustice. Bargaining surfaces in her desperate pleas for reconciliation, while depression is evident in her emotional withdrawal and sense of emptiness. Finally, acceptance is symbolized by her decision to move forward, signifying emotional resolution. This analysis highlights how grief is both a deeply personal and socially structured process, offering insights into the interplay between individual emotions and cultural norms in literature.

**KEYWORDS:** Psychoanalytic, Literary Theory, Grief, Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance, Literature.

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### INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalytic literary theory applies the principles of psychoanalysis to the interpretation of literature, drawing on the insights of Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalytic thinkers. This approach examines the text, author, and characters through a psychoanalytic lens, revealing hidden motivations, repressed desires, and psychological conflicts. Psychoanalytic criticism seeks to uncover the latent meanings embedded within a text by analyzing symbols, recurring themes, and character behaviors. It posits that literature, like dreams, can provide insights into the human psyche, reflecting both conscious and unconscious processes (Holland, 2022; The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature, 2021).

The intersection of psychoanalysis and literature, emphasizes the importance of early childhood experiences, sexuality, and defense mechanisms in shaping human behavior and artistic expression (Bonpote, 2022). For instance, psychoanalytic perspectives on grief and denial highlight how this defense mechanisms can influence literary characters' emotional journeys, as seen in the exploration of denial as a natural response to overwhelming loss (Harvard Health, 2025)

Grief is a universal human experience often explored in literature as a deeply personal yet socially structured process. The Kübler-Ross model (1969) which is popularly known as the Five Stages of Grief that identifies denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance as sequential emotional states that help individuals cope with profound loss. Literature, especially works rooted in cultural conflict and emotional dilemmas, offers a lens to examine how these stages manifest within fictional characters. This is evident in studies that explore the intersection of cultural identity and emotional dynamics in literary narratives (Ding et al, 2021), as well as recent analyses of affect theory, which illuminate psychological and emotional complexities in texts involving cultural conflict and shame (Ahern, 2024).

This study analyzes Amador Daguio's *The Wedding Dance* through the lens of psychoanalysis, specifically applying the Five Stages of Grief framework. Drawing on Keogh and Gregory Roberts' (2024) psychoanalytic insights into loss, her inability to fully mourn reflects the tension between unresolved relational bonds and societal pressures. The short story revolves around Lumnay, a woman whose marriage ends due to her inability to bear children which is a decision shaped by tribal expectations rather than personal

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choice. The analysis explores how Lumnay's dialogue, thoughts, and actions mirror the complex process of grieving, from denial to acceptance, providing a psychological perspective on her emotional journey.

### METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research applies literary and textual analysis through the lens of Psychoanalytic Literary Theory. Specifically, the study centers on Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance as a framework for interpreting the emotional and psychological journey of the characters. Amador Daguio's *The Wedding Dance* serves as the primary text for this analysis and exploration of grief, loss, and emotional conflict shaped by cultural expectations.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the principles of Psychoanalytic Theory were applied to uncover the underlying emotional and psychological struggles experienced by the characters in Amador Daguio's "The Wedding Dance". Through a close reading of the text, the research adapted Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief, Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance as a framework for examining the internal conflicts and behavioral responses to loss and separation depicted in the narrative. The analysis focuses on tracing the progression of these grief stages, as reflected in the characters' thoughts, dialogues, and symbolic actions throughout the story.

**Table 1. The stages of grief in the Textuality of The Wedding Dance**

| Stage of Grief | Evidences / Quotation                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Underlying Theme                                                |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Denial         | <i>"You are not going away. You cannot."</i>                                                                                                                                                                            | Clinging to hope and Emotional rejection of loss                |
|                | <i>Lumnay sat unmoving, as if her world had not just changed.</i>                                                                                                                                                       | Emotional numbness<br>Rejection of reality                      |
|                | <i>"I cannot believe this is happening. You are not leaving me."</i>                                                                                                                                                    | Resistance to reality and Refusal to accept the loss            |
| Anger          | <i>"You were never really mine."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    | Bitterness and betrayal                                         |
|                | <i>"What is the use of this wedding dance? You will dance with another woman while I stand here watching, helpless."</i>                                                                                                | Powerlessness against social norms                              |
|                | Awiyao: <i>"The beads are for her now. I want her to have them. We have been married, but she has not yet been given what she needs."</i><br>Lumnay: <i>"What is the use of your beads? They are no longer for me!"</i> | Anger at betrayal                                               |
| Bargaining     | <i>"If I could only do something so you could keep me, I would do it."</i>                                                                                                                                              | Desperation and powerlessness in love                           |
|                | <i>"I prayed hard, Awiyao. I hoped the gods would make it different for us."</i>                                                                                                                                        | Faith and helplessness in the face of fate                      |
|                | <i>"Let us run away from here, Awiyao, and never come back."</i>                                                                                                                                                        | Desperate desire for change and seeking an alternative solution |
|                | <i>"Please, don't leave me. We can make this work. Let's try again."</i>                                                                                                                                                | Plea for reconciliation and avoiding the finality of separation |

|                   |                                                                            |                                                             |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Depression</b> | <i>"She sat unmoving on the floor, feeling the cold wind on her face."</i> | Emotional isolation and numbness                            |
|                   | <i>"The house would be hers — she could stay, but it would be empty."</i>  | Loneliness and emptiness                                    |
|                   | <i>"Why did the gods not give us a child?"</i>                             | Regret and mourning for lost dreams                         |
|                   | <i>"Everything is meaningless now."</i>                                    | Loss of purpose and emotional withdrawal                    |
| <b>Acceptance</b> | <i>(She stood up slowly and walked toward the hills.)</i>                  | Moving forward as a form of symbolic healing                |
|                   | <i>(She stops asking Awiayao to stay.)</i>                                 | Closure and emotional readiness to let go                   |
|                   | <i>"I have to let go. I can do this. I will be alright."</i>               | Reconciliation with reality and Acceptance of the situation |

### DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study is to explore the grief process experienced by Lumnay in *The Wedding Dance* by Amador Daguio, through the lens of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief. The Five Stages of Grief including Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance that are typically associated with reactions to terminal illness and death, but this study demonstrates how they can be applied to relational and emotional losses as well. In this context, Lumnay's grief is not only a reaction to the end of her marriage but also to the societal forces that force her and Awiayao to separate.

The analysis shows that Lumnay's emotional journey closely mirrors the Five Stages of Grief. Throughout the story, her internal struggle with the separation evolves as she experiences different emotional responses, demonstrating how grief is often complex, non-linear, and fluctuating. Lumnay's path through grief illustrates how the human psyche works to protect itself from overwhelming emotions, while also showing the deep-seated pain that such a loss causes.

### Denial through The Rejection of Reality

Lumnay's initial response to Awiayao's decision to marry another woman is one of the denial stage. The stage of denial involves an individual's refusal to accept the reality of a loss, often as a defense mechanism to avoid the pain associated with it (Fang et al., (2020a). Lumnay's reaction to Awiayao's departure is a clear example of this stage. Early in the story, she repeatedly rejects the idea that their separation is final:

*"You are not going away. You cannot."*

This quote exemplifies Lumnay's inability to face the finality of the situation. She does not want to accept the loss, so she refuses to acknowledge it. Her dialogue also suggests a glimmer of hope that Awiayao might change his mind, indicating her inner resistance to the loss.

Lumnay also experiences emotional numbness, a hallmark of the denial stage. After hearing the news of Awiayao's decision to marry another woman, Lumnay sits "unmoving" as if the world around her has ceased to exist. This moment is an indication of how denial operates on an emotional level, manifesting as an inability to feel or act in the face of devastating news, (Bonpote, 2022). Denial acts as a buffer, preventing Lumnay from immediately confronting the emotional reality of her loss.

Denial is also reflected in Lumnay's refusal to let go of Awiayao and their shared memories. She wishes to hold on to the belief that things can still work out, despite the clear evidence to the contrary. This internal conflict, between the desire to deny and the reality that Awiayao is leaving, contributes significantly to the emotional complexity of Lumnay's character.

### Anger: The Emotional Explosion

As Lumnay begins to process the reality of her situation, anger emerges as a dominant emotion. Anger, according to Kübler-Ross (1969), often follows denial and is a reaction to the perceived injustice or unfairness of a loss. For Lumnay, her anger is not only directed toward Awiayao but also at the societal forces that have placed her in a situation where her choices are limited.

One of the clearest expressions of Lumnay's anger comes in the form of her harsh words to Awiayao:

*"You were never really mine."*

This statement reflects her deep sense of betrayal and frustration. Lumnay feels that Awiyao's decision is a rejection of the love they shared, which contributes to the bitter emotional outburst. Anger, in this case, is an emotional response to feeling wronged, her entire identity and future are tied to her relationship with Awiyao, and now that is being torn apart.

Lumnay's anger is also directed at the cultural norms that enforce such separations. She is angry at the notion that a man like Awiyao can simply choose to remarry and move on, while she is left behind. Her frustration with the cultural expectations is evident when she states:

*"What is the use of this wedding dance? You will dance with another woman while I stand here watching, helpless."*

In this moment, Lumnay's anger is not just about Awiyao's decision but about the sense of powerlessness she feels. The societal norms that govern her life force her into a position of emotional helplessness, and she resents the injustice of the situation.

Furthermore, the exchange about the beads which symbolizes marital connection that heightens Lumnay's anger. Awiyao gives the beads to his new wife, and Lumnay's response is sharp and filled with bitterness:

*"What is the use of your beads? They are no longer for me!"*

The beads, which once symbolized Lumnay's connection to Awiyao, now represent the end of that bond. Lumnay's rejection of the beads reflects her deep sense of loss and her anger at Awiyao's new relationship. The beads become a physical manifestation of the betrayal she feels, adding a layer of symbolism to her emotional outburst.

### **Bargaining: The Search for Solutions**

In the bargaining stage, individuals attempt to reverse or mitigate the loss by making deals with a higher power or by proposing changes to the situation, (Avis et al., 2021). Lumnay's attempts to bargain with Awiyao and the gods reflect her desperate desire to restore her relationship. Her bargaining comes in the form of pleas for change and promises of sacrifice. She tells Awiyao:

*"If I could only do something so you could keep me, I would do it."*

This plea shows Lumnay's deep sense of helplessness that she cannot change the situation, but she is willing to do anything if it means they can be together again. This willingness to do anything to reverse the separation is a classic bargaining strategy, where individuals try to find a way to restore what they have lost.

Lumnay also turns to the divine, as evidenced by her prayer:

*"I prayed hard, Awiyao. I hoped the gods would make it different for us."*

Here, Lumnay's belief in a higher power reflects her hope that forces beyond her control can intervene to change the course of her life. She is caught between accepting the situation and hoping that the gods will provide an alternative.

### **Depression: The Weight of Loss**

As Lumnay begins to accept the reality of her situation, she enters the depression stage. In this phase, individuals experience profound sadness, hopelessness, and emotional isolation (Moreira, et al., 2022). Lumnay's depression is reflected in her physical stillness and withdrawal from the world around her. She sits "unmoving," feeling the "cold wind on her face," as if she is emotionally frozen in the aftermath of her loss. This imagery symbolizes how Lumnay is cut off from the world, unable to move forward due to the heavy weight of her grief.

Lumnay's emotional isolation is further highlighted when she reflects on her empty future:

*"The house would be hers — she could stay, but it would be empty."*

This statement reveals how Lumnay views her future without Awiyao: empty and devoid of meaning. The house, once a symbolism of their shared life and future together, now becomes a tomb of loneliness and unfulfilled dreams. Lumnay's mourning for the loss of their potential life together shows the depth of her depression, as she realizes that everything she had hoped for has been shattered.

### **Acceptance: Coming to Terms with Loss**

Finally, Lumnay enters the acceptance stage, where she begins to let go of the hope of reconciliation and comes to terms with the loss. Acceptance does not mean the absence of pain; rather, it signifies the ability to face the reality of the situation and move forward with emotional strength (Silva, 2024). Lumnay's acceptance is demonstrated by her decision to stand up and walk away from the scene:

*(She stood up slowly and walked toward the hills.)*

This act of moving forward symbolizes her readiness to let go of the past and begin the process of healing. While the pain of her loss may not completely vanish, Lumnay's decision to leave the area marks her first steps toward emotional recovery.

Her final resolution is expressed in her quiet affirmation:

*"I have to let go. I can do this. I will be alright."*

This statement signals Lumnay's readiness to accept her reality and move forward, a crucial step in the grieving process. By acknowledging her pain and expressing her ability to cope, Lumnay's character demonstrates that acceptance is not an end but a new beginning a journey toward emotional healing.

### CONCLUSION

This study illustrates how Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief framework can be applied to literary analysis, particularly in understanding complex emotional responses to loss. Lumnay's grief in *The Wedding Dance* reveals the intricacies of human emotion, from the denial of a painful truth to the acceptance of a harsh reality. The Five Stages of Grief provide a helpful lens through which to examine Lumnay's character development and emotional journey, revealing not only her struggles but also her resilience. Through this analysis, the researcher gained deeper insight into the universal experience of grief, not just in the context of death, but in all forms of profound loss.

The following titles are recommended for future researchers seeking to expand the literary criticism on *The Wedding Dance*: (1) A Feminist Analysis of *The Wedding Dance*, and (2) A Cultural and Historical Analysis of *The Wedding Dance*.

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