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**THE SENSE OF FUTILITY IN THE NOVEL “A MAN CALLED  
OVE”**

**Thesis Submitted to Obtain the Bachelor in English**

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## Abstract

The book "A Man Called Ove" describes the story of a man without a sense of purpose after losing the most important person in his life. Moreover, the feeling of waking up every morning without feeling useful for something led Ove to try to end his life. From suicide attempts at a train station to trying to kill himself with a rifle were some of the ways Ove tried to end his life. Today, suicide cases have increased in society and studies have shown that one of the main causes is the feeling of futility that leads people to think that life can continue without them with no problem. Therefore, this research paper analyzes answers the question "how is futility the main theme in the novel? Such question is answered by analysing Ove's life story several times using the psychological approach as a lense to study the character's hidden motivations. Moreover, the method implemented to carry out this research project is the "qualitative" method as the results can be assessed as biased by the researcher using as instruments the "Formalistic Approach" to analyze the literary work and the "Interview" to support the arguments. This interview is conducted by the researcher and the questions are answered by expert Fabiola Zelédon graduated in psychologist with a master degree in 2018. The researcher's findings show how suicide is inspired by different patterns of thought and repressed emotions from painful episodes such as the loss of a loved one. However, it is mainly concluded that having a community support system can help the person to overcome obstacles and heal.

## Resumen

El libro "A Man Called Ove" describe la historia de un hombre sin un propósito después de perder a la persona más importante de su vida. Además, la sensación de despertarse cada mañana sin sentirse útil para algo llevó a Ove a intentar acabar con su vida. Desde intentos de suicidio en una estación de tren hasta intentar suicidarse con un rifle, fueron algunas de las formas en que Ove intentó acabar con su vida. Hoy en día, los casos de suicidio han aumentado en la sociedad y los estudios han demostrado que una de las principales causas es el sentimiento de futilidad que lleva a las personas a pensar que la vida puede continuar sin ellos sin problemas. Por lo tanto, el análisis de este artículo de investigación responde a la pregunta "¿cómo es la futilidad el tema principal de la novela? Esta pregunta se responde analizando la historia de vida de Ove varias veces utilizando el enfoque psicológico como una lente para estudiar las motivaciones ocultas del profesional. Además, el método implementado para llevar a cabo este proyecto de investigación es el método "cualitativo" ya que los resultados pueden ser evaluados como sesgados por el investigador utilizando como instrumentos el "Enfoque Formalista" para analizar la obra literaria y la "Entrevista" para sustentar los argumentos. . Esta entrevista es realizada por la investigadora y las preguntas son respondidas por la experta Fabiola Zelédon, licenciada en psicóloga con maestría en 2018. Los hallazgos de la investigadora muestran cómo el suicidio se inspira en diferentes patrones de pensamiento y emociones reprimidas de episodios dolorosos como la pérdida de un ser querido. Sin embargo, se concluye principalmente que contar con un sistema de apoyo comunitario puede ayudar a la persona a superar obstáculos y sanar.

# Chapter I

## Introductory Framework

This chapter will provide the reader with a summary of what the investigation is going to deal with. It will set the context for the research and what is known about the book. It will also provide a brief explanation of the problem, followed by the general and specific objectives, the justification, antecedents, and finally, the scope of the investigation. The investigation will be conducted during the III quoter of 2021, starting in May.

### 1.1. Problem Statement

This part mentions a brief description of the problem, its background, and its significance in words. It will provide the reader with an overview of the problem and how it will be solved, and the research question this investigation will answer at the end.

Furthermore, this study will answer the following question: **“How is futility the main theme in the novel?”**

Suicide rates have been increasing lately around the world. According to the World Health Organization, “Every year close to 800 000 people take their own life, and there are many more people who attempt suicide. Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families, communities and entire countries, and has long-lasting effects on the people left behind.” (2019, World Health Organization). Suicide is proved to be one of the most common causes of death nowadays—the majority of people attempting suicide experience mental health disorders, mainly depression.

In addition, many attempts are impulsive and caused by strong feelings of anger, confusion, sadness and are associated with related problems. However, futility is the main reason people end up their lives. Therefore, this investigation will focus on the feeling of futility and its role in Ove's story, which leads him to depression and try to kill himself several times.

Moreover, studies have shown that futility is closely related to depression and suicide. Many people who commit suicide feel that their life is futile initially and find no reason to keep living, which is also a strong characteristic of depression. Suicide often stems from a deep feeling of hopelessness. The inability to see solutions to any type of problem or face challenging life circumstances may lead people to see taking their own lives as the only solution to a temporary situation.

Additionally, society and culture play an enormous role in dictating how people respond to and view mental health and suicide. Therefore, discussing this problem through Ove's eyes will have practical benefits for people and contribute to understanding a global problem. Ove is a great example of a person who survived and overcame depression thanks to a community of people who surrounded him. These people were there every time he tried to take his life and stopped him from making the biggest mistake of his life.

In addition, social support is exceptionally important for maintaining good physical and mental health. It is wise to start discussing ways to cope with futility or depression as soon as it appears. Hence, having a network of family, friends, neighbors, or community members available in times of need can help the person dealing with suicide thoughts develop resilience and cope

with those feelings of futility from the beginning. This is exactly what Ove experiences and the reason why he failed several times to kill himself.

Consequently, "A Man Called Ove" is rich in themes about futility, suicide, aging, friendship, loss, and how immigration can change a community for the better. It presents these issues in a way that opens the discussion and helps us see our blind spots as a society and individuals. Suicide is a social transgression, so the novel breaks with the social rules of the imperant ideology. A suicidal person comes to be a criminal that breaks with the social structure. All citizens have to live to maintain a balanced unity. Life has to be seen as a valuable possession, as the maintenance of unity, and the desire to fight and continue living as a social value that all citizens have to respect in society.

Moreover, the value of life is the value of the central ideology. That is why futility has to be fought against by other ideological weapons like psychology to make the suicidal subject see value in his life. At the same time, all the suicidal inclinations have their ideologies. Do it now, do it without waiting would be some of the rules of suicide. However, in Ove, we see that even suicide gets confronted with transgression. In this case, the lack of opportunities to commit suicide and the consequential enforcement to continue living. Therefore, the text confronts two ideologies: the desire to live and continue producing as a human and, per se, the capitalist society that needs the labor and cooperation of all its members (centered political ideology), and the ideology of self-destruction that is self-centered and compulsive egotistic at the same time. These two forces re-create Ove's life from the beginning to the end of the text.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Investigation**

This paper needs to clearly describe what the researcher's intentions are and what she hopes to achieve. The objectives will summarize the thesis's goals that the writer will reach about the topic through the story of Ove.

### **1.2.1 General Objectives**

To prove through the psychological approach how the sense of futility and the implied forces of transgression and social balance in the novel "A Man Called Ove" may lead an individual to suicide and how resilience may help him rise again from uncertainty.

### **1.2.2 Specific Objectives**

- To demonstrate how the sense of futility is presented through the character's story.
- To show the negative impact of feeling futile in life and how it leads to depression and suicide.
- To analyze Ove's character from the character's specific circumstances.
- To discuss the importance of a support system when coping with loss.

## **1.3 Justification of the Study**

This project aims to examine the sense of futility in the novel through Ove's personal life story and demonstrate how futility is the main theme in the novel and how futility, depression,

and suicide are linked. In Ove's story, various events in his life are later manifested in a variety of forms. For example, a difficult childhood, absence of a motherly figure growing up, being orphaned at a very young age, loss of a baby, having wife suffering from a life-altering accident, losing the friendship of a close friend, losing his wife, and a series of failed attempts of taking his own life. This section aims to demonstrate the relevance of discussing the consequences of futility and raise awareness about how psychology may give solutions to this situation.

An article called "Futility: The Whats and Hows" written by Marty L. Cooper explains the definition of this feeling in the following way. "Futility is a state in which a goal cannot be realized given the existing circumstances of reality" (Cooper, 2020, para.1). Futility is what depression arises from; due to those negative feelings. People start questioning if it is worth it to keep living, and they end up taking their lives. Furthermore, consequences naturally follow one's refusal to accept that futility: embarrassment, frustration, depression on the former, death, or maiming with the latter.

Nowadays, many people can relate to Ove's story and, therefore, start feeling this futility that leads to depression and attempts to kill themselves. Moreover, this investigation looks not only to analyze Ove's story through literary analysis but also to place the researcher's analysis within the context of existing literature. All of this, by telling Ove's story and how he overcame those feelings of futility and depression by having a support system or community around him.

The study and analysis conducted through this research project can raise awareness of suicide concerns. Also, it will provide information for organizations to create or improve prevention plans and practical workshops by using Ove's story as an example. These pieces of training can be adapted depending on the population for a better understanding. Furthermore, the paper results

may provide organizations or institutions with information that can address the mental health needs in our country and modify current methods used since several practical examples will be illustrated through the novel.

Specifically, the research project will focus on Ove's character and his life story's events. The character will be analyzed through the book "A Man Called Ove." Also, interviews will be performed along with previous studies that will be used to achieve the goal of this investigation and support the theories. These interviews will allow the researcher to ask additional questions to clarify or gather further information related to futility, depression, and suicide in the book. Moreover, previous studies by professionals will support every point of this research project and previous literature commentaries about the book. Also, a literary analysis will be done to examine Ove's character and the book's narrative using literary devices and through the psychological approach.

The final part of the project will be some researcher's opinions and conclusions based on the literature analysis done overall project research, and the accumulated learning from the researcher's analysis of the book and Ove's life experiences.

Experts can use the conclusions regarding the book analysis in literature to enrich their opinion about the book with experts in the psychology area. Through this analysis, they can provide practical examples for their patients using a fictional name. In other words, to have a fictitious testimony that can express or explain a world problem such as suicide. Therefore, this will help to address the mental health needs associated with suicide rates among the population.

Finally, the results can also be used by scholars to support their investigations.

## 1.4 Antecedents

The Man Behind "A man Called Ove," Sweden's Latest Hit Novel, is an article that was written by the New York Times writer Alexandra Alter on October 28, 2016. The article tells a little bit of the author's biography. The writer not only tells the story about how the book was published and became a bestseller, but he also mentions that Fredrik Backman got tepid responses when he sent out the manuscript for his debut novel, "A Man Called Ove." Most publishers ignored him, and several turned it down.

A few years after publication in 2012, the novel was published in English in 2014, reached the New York Times Best Seller list 18 months after its publication, and stayed on the list for 42 weeks.

In September 2019, the World Health Organization wrote an article to educate the world population about suicide. This article was written to inform and analyze the key facts, who is at risk, and the most common methods of suicide around the world.

Additionally, they provide several measures that can be taken at population, sub-population, and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts with the challenges or obstacles that come with them. It also explains the stigma and taboo attached to this mental disorder. It finishes by sharing data quality based on 80 Member States with good-quality vital registration data to estimate suicide rates.

In September 2020, professional Marty L. Cooper, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist from San Francisco, California, worked on an article called "Futility: The Whats and Hows." It explains how futility is a core element in depression; moreover, it is the dead center in

what depression is about. It provides meaning and examples as to how futility can be perceived at the beginning. Since the novel is a transgression, the acceptable and unacceptable concepts are also present socially speaking. For example, when our loved one has passed away, and we are powerless to change that. Most importantly, he states that there is confusion between futility as a subjective feeling and as an objective state. Therefore, the article clarifies each one with some examples and definitions.

“Explaining Suicides” is a particular book written in 2017. It talks about the history and theories of suicide, along with its patterns and motivations. Four professionals wrote it, Cheryl L. Meyer, from Wright State University School of Professional Psychology Dayton, located OH, the United States, Taronish H. Irani SUNY from Buffalo State The Counseling Center, Weigel Health Center Buffalo, NY, United States. And Katherine A. Hermes from Central Connecticut State University Department of History New Britain, CT, United States. The book is organized around motivations and how the identification of them can lead to more successful prevention and intervention. It consists of 10 chapters. They examine suicide ranges in time from historical material beginning around 1600. Furthermore, they propose a national agenda and some innovative changes that can be made to suicide prevention and a simpler typology for determining whether someone needs an intervention.

Certain researchers attach great importance to patients' feelings of despair or futility to predict future suicide. Professional Yoshitomo Takahashi, the Chief, Department of Suicidology, located in Tokyo Institute of Psychiatry, worked on a short investigation written in 2001 called “Depression and Suicide.” Here he states that patients aware of feelings of despair, hopelessness,

and worthlessness also require special attention. This investigation aims to outline the importance of treatment and the role of access to psychiatric care for proper treatment.

"Suicide Rates go up!" is a piece of news written in 2019 By QCosta Rica. It looks to provide an introduction on the rate of the number of people per 100,000 inhabitants who commit suicide in Costa Rica and start a discussion. The news states the suicide in Costa Rica is increasing; both attempts and completed suicides. Therefore, it provides a brief introduction to an issue becoming more and more common every day. It also stresses that depression is not the only reason that leads to suicide. However, it does generate greater risk and economic and social problems, among other causes. From a professional's point of view, it also affects the fact that people do not talk about suicide or their desire to consummate this act.

Another piece of news called "An average of 315 Costa Ricans commit suicide every year, report says" written by The Tico Times in 2014. It is an informative piece of news that includes data from other official organizations such as PAHO (The Pan American Health Organization), which looks to perform studies and collect data on suicide rates in Costa Rica and worldwide. Additionally, it shares the most common reasons why young people commit suicide in Costa Rica. Among the most common reasons it mentions, psychological and sexual abuse, social exclusion, and cyber-bullying are included in the list. Moreover, it cites a recent case involving a high school teenager who killed herself after two classmates created a Facebook page with her name claiming that she was available for sexual acts.

By providing this informative data and real cases, they look to educate the population and find a solution by starting at home than in schools and providing more access from health professionals' perspective.

## 1.5 Scope

The investigation will consist of a deep analysis of the book "A Man Called Ove," to explain how futility is the main theme in the novel. All of this by using Ove's life story as the main resource. Therefore, this study is expected to achieve the following goals by the end of the research:

- To explain how futility is the main theme in the novel.
- To determine how futility and suicide can break the social ideology and become a transgression and a subversion of social expectations.
- This research will enable the researcher to gather in-depth insights on futility, depression, and suicide through the book "A Man Called Ove."
- To demonstrate how important and relevant it is for people to have a support system around them that helps them be more resilient in times of need.
- The analysis will incorporate information from recent biographies, previous studies, and scholarly interpretations focusing on Ove's life story.
- This research style will be qualitative because it will be expressed in words through a literature review that will explore concepts, theories, and observations.
- The research will also include comparisons between Ove's character and society nowadays.
- From the book "A Man Called Ove," some sentences or quotes will be analyzed to show how futility is presented throughout the book and how futility, depression, and suicide are linked.

- It will provide several measures that can be taken to help people going through depression and those who confront futility in life.
- This analysis will also show the importance of a network system of people and the positive role when helping those who feel depressed in life.
- The investigation will examine the reasons why Ove always failed to commit suicide.
- All of this will be achieved by analyzing Ove, and his suicide failed attempts throughout the story.

## **Chapter II**

This chapter will provide the reader with a definition of literature, theory, and literary theory. Also, it will include a detailed overview of the literary theory and the approach this investigation will be based on. Additionally, it will set more of the research context and explain what the book is about. At the same time, it will provide a brief explanation of literary devices used for a better understanding of the story, such as theme, symbols, and motifs and followed by the general and specific examples for each one of them and some of the author's biography and a summary of how the book was published. Finally, a very punctual description of the plot will be shared.

### **2.1 Literary Theories and Approaches**

#### **2.1.1 Literature**

It is common to think that literature is about reading novels, poetry, short stories, and getting into the magical world of fantasy, mystery, or romance. We have all heard about the importance of it and its benefits. It does not only help to upskill your critical thinking and spoken language knowledge; it also helps to improve your writing skills, stimulates your intellectual curiosity, and encourages you to be critical. However, there is more about literature that we need to know and understand. Therefore, it is important to answer the following questions: Do we know the definition of literature? What is literature? Thus, let us read the following definitions to clarify their meaning.

Firstly, in his article "Literature," written by Kenneth Rexroth, he mentions that this is a word that derives from the Latin "littera," which means "a letter of the alphabet." After this, he states the following, "literature is first and foremost humankind's entire body of writing; after that, it is the body of writing belonging to a given language or people; then it is individual pieces of writing." (Rexroth, 2021, para.1). In other words, literature represents the culture and tradition of a language or people. At the same time, expert Kenneth Rexroth provides his definition of literature and provides his opinion about it,

Literature is a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to that imaginative poetry and prose works distinguished by the authors' intentions and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. Literature may be classified according to various systems, including language, national origin, historical period, genre, and subject matter. (Rexroth, 2021, para.1)

Simply put, this definition reinforces the idea that literature is kind of like a blueprint of human society. Moreover, it can vary depending on one generation to another

because it can be affected by time. Most importantly, literature is strongly influenced by societal changes, struggles, injustices, differences, stereotypes, advances in technology, and different ways of thinking, from the origins of the Bible to William Shakespeare to Jane Austen to Maya Angelou. All their works provide insight into different societies worldwide and set a perspective on how society looks like at those times. Thus, the reader must get familiar with the historical background before analyzing any literary work to understand it better.

At present, the 11th edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary considers literature to be "writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest." (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2021). This definition presents the central meaning of literature clear enough. It supports the idea that the reader already knows or has a small idea about literature because it is self-explanatory. It also suggests that literature is a form of expression but not any kind. Instead, a kind is constructed using different techniques, approaches, or writing styles depending on the author. Therefore, for writers to reach a high level, they have to study and go deeper in composition and different writing styles.

Another definition of literature can be found in "The Singularity of Literature," published in 2017 and written by Derek Attridge. The author states that

Literature always seems to present itself in the final analysis as something more than the category or entity it is claimed to be (writing that has a particular function say or writing

with particular relation to truth), and as valuable of something other than various personal or social benefits that are ascribed to it. (Attridge, 2017, p.6)

This definition perfectly describes the purpose of literature. Literature is a means of communication, and therefore, it seeks to convey a message. This message can be universal or personal. It means that literature is important to human beings because it speaks to them, is universal, and deeply affects them. Most importantly, literature is a way to promote education and raise the levels of knowledge and speech in society. Thus, we can say that the purpose of literature is meant to entertain and give aesthetic pleasure and to change or convince the reader. Accordingly, as per Attridge, the power of literature should not be underestimated but should be emphasized in society.

### **2.1.2 Theory**

It is commonly said that theory is like a guess without supporting evidence except for scientists. They say that theory has a well-sustained explanation if it is a theory about an aspect of the natural world. Nevertheless, what is theory exactly? According to the 11th edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, a theory is defined as "a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena." (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2021). In simple words, this definition defines theory as a belief or hypothetical set of facts that can be used to prove a point. This point does not necessarily have to be scientific; it can be within the literature, psychology, biology, letters, laws, history, etc. Also, this definition suggests that theory accompanied by ideas proposes something that has not

been proven, studied, or confirmed yet. Nevertheless, thanks to it, people can generate a discussion about that and start doing research.

Furthermore, theory can also be defined from different perspectives depending on the area of study. An article written by the University of Standford called “Theory: A Scientific Concept” states that theory has acquired various definitions. Moreover, it provides a good statement that defines the role of theory in education, "Theory in education, however, has the same role as theory in physics, chemistry, biology, or psychology – that is, providing general explanations and guiding research.” (University of Standford, 2016, para.1). To be more specific, a theory has a purpose in education. It helps to explain complex issues, predict future solutions and theories. They are a great opportunity for further investigation or improvement. They provide a space to discuss any specific assumption that later becomes a fact if well defended.

An additional comment can be found in an investigation performed by Dr. Charles Kivunja from the School of Education, University of New England. In his investigation called "Distinguishing between Theory, Theoretical Framework, and Conceptual Framework: A Systematic Review of Lessons from the Field." He states the following: "one of the things I have found problematic for many students is the inability to articulate differences between theory, theoretical framework and a conceptual framework for a proposed research project." (Kivunja, 2018, p.44). Consequently, Dr. Charles Kivunja explains the following about theory:

A theory usually emerges from a long process of research that uses empirical data to make assertions based on a deductive and inductive analysis of the data. Over time, and based on clearly stated assumptions, the observations from the research produce results that converge on findings of relationships. These enable the researcher to formulate the core propositions from which the abstract theory is then generalized. (Kivunja, 2018, p.45)

All that being said, Kivunja's comment about theory explains how any theory at the beginning cannot be confirmed without an investigation that allows the investigator to find evidence. Nevertheless, the process involves collecting and analyzing data, later turning the assumptions into evidence to propose and defend their theory. This research process will allow the person to test and gather supporting evidence to explain their theory. Finally, a theory is not just an explanation but a series of ideas accepted by a small or big community of people in a certain field to enrich their knowledge. Moreover, theories enable researchers to name what they think or observe to understand or explain a point or relationship that makes sense for them. This is how a discussion leads to an investigation.

### **2.1.2 Literary Theory**

Therefore, now that literature and theory have been defined, it is necessary to define "Literary Theory." In the past, literary theory has been described as decoding a literary text. In addition, this decoding is often carried out through literary theory using different approaches to understand better the context, work's depth, and the author's intentions. However, there is another definition given by the Collins Dictionary that defines literary theory as follows, "the systematic analysis and study of literature using general principles," (Collins Dictionary, 2021). In simple words, it is a group of ideas and methods we use when reading or analyzing literature. This definition says that literary theory refers to the meaning of a work of literature and the theories that reveal what a literary work can mean when it has been analyzed.

Similarly, Dr. Celena E. Kusch wrote a study guide in 2016 named "A Guide to Basic Literary Theory: What Every English Major Should Know," in which she shares her definition of Literary theory in English studies as follows:

The literary theory does not mean making hypotheses or guesses about literature. In English studies (and most academic disciplines), the theory studies the underlying assumptions we make about the nature of language, authors, readers, texts, narrative, aesthetics, power, culture, and other major elements of literary production and reception. (E. Kusch, 2016, p.1)

A person might say the tools by which we attempt to understand literature. According to this definition, literary theory can be defined as a school of thought. Based on this definition, literary theory is a description of the existing principles. It gives readers the tools to exercise judgment on a literary work. At the same time, readers apply their interpretation regarding the piece of literature. As a final result, readers can critique, evaluate, or analyze work and compare it. Also, share specific topics to provide a personal interpretation or formulate a relationship between the author and the literary work being read.

An additional definition strongly related to the previous one can be found in a book published in 2017 written by English professor Mary Klages. This book is called "Literary Theory: The Complete Guide." Professor Mary Klages stresses the following about literary theory:

Literary theory, in the broadest sense, is an explanation or idea about what "literature" is, how "literature" is different from other kinds of writing, and how "literature" functions within a cultural context. We all know that a "literary" text is different from just words on a piece of paper—literary theories are conjectures and hypotheses about those differences. (Klages, 2017, p.1)

According to this definition, literary theories function depending on the culture. Much of the analysis that we can make of a literary work depends on its cultural or sociological background that influences the writer. It also emphasizes that literary theory can show us the power of literature and how it is different from other types of writing. Since it can change the human being somehow, it also helps the reader compare, analyze, express, and describe the meaning of what the reader as a recipient is interpreting. In addition, it explores the author as a creative genius and the emotions of the story. Thanks to literary theories, a broad appreciation of literature can be developed by both the reader and the author, improving the quality of the literary work.

To sum up, all these three definitions have in common that all of them present. They agree that literary theory is a process and hypothesis used to interpret and analyze a literary work. Moreover, they compare literary theory with a tool that contributes to understanding the literary text and the author's intention as a whole. Besides, it reinforces that a text is attached to the writer and, at the same time, the author is influenced by sociological and cultural contexts. Finally, based on the previous definitions, readers can deduce that a literary theory is necessary depending on what they want to analyze to provide support and tools during the analysis process.

### **2.1.3 Psychological Approach**

The approach that will be used for this investigation is the “psychological approach.” Many studies have shown that this approach reflects modern psychology's effect upon literature in the last decades. Some of the actual figures in psychological criticism are Sigmund Freud,

whose psychoanalytic theories have changed our opinions and perspectives of human behavior. Furthermore, Carl Jung, whose theories about the unconscious are also a key to explore psychological criticism. Nevertheless, the main figure for this investigation will be Sigmund Freud, as he is a scientist. He proposed and wrote the psychoanalytic theory that will be used in this research paper.

Briefly, let us share an introduction about Sigmund Freud's biography. According to BBC news in one of his sections called "History Figures" that includes Freud's biography and it was written in 2014, the following is stated about Sigmund Freud,

Freud was an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, who created an entirely new approach to understanding the human personality. He is regarded as one of the most influential - and controversial - minds of the 20th century. (BBC, 2014)

In addition, he was born on May 6, 1856, in Freiberg, Moravia. In 1873, Freud began to study medicine at the University of Vienna. After graduating, he worked at the Vienna General Hospital. He was an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis. As per Martin Evan Jay, a renowned professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, he wrote an article for the Encyclopedia Britannica in 2021 in which he says the following about Sigmund Freud:

Freud may justly be called the most influential intellectual legislator of his age. His creation of psychoanalysis was at once a theory of the human psyche, a therapy for the relief of its ills, and an optic for the interpretation of culture and society. (Martin, 2021, para.1)

On the other hand, regarding the relationship between literature and psychology, as Emir Badegül Can from the Karadeniz Technical University, located in Turkey, there is a close relationship between literature and psychology. In his thesis "Literature and Psychology in the Context of the Interaction of Social Sciences," he states the following: "It is well known that

literature is an important source of inspiration for the science of psychology which tries to explain human emotions, behaviors and mental processes from a scientific perspective." (Emir, 2016, p.1). Therefore, according to Emir (2016), it is possible to approach literature and to analyze literary works with the resources of psychology. All of this is through the psychological approach.

In addition, thanks to the psychological approach, it is also possible to consider literary works based on psychology and discover psychological facts in literature. This is why writers have considered the relationship between literature and psychology in the last few decades. Furthermore, the psychological approach provides a wide range of tools that allow readers to evaluate literary works and reach a psychological nature without being a psychologist. As a result, it helps the readers understand the writer's motivations and the characters through the psychological lens. The ultimate argument of this approach is to show readers how a literary work is a manifestation of the author's imagination.

Additionally, when talking about the origins of the psychological approach in the literature, expert Santhosh Kareepadath Rajan from Christ University of Bangalore wrote in his thesis called "An Approach to Psychological Literary Criticism by means of Frommian Humanistic Psychoanalysis" the following explanation: "Psychological literary criticism had its base in the psychoanalytical thoughts put forwarded by Sigmund Freud." (Kareepadath, 2017, p.1). Hence, all of this proposes that the theories and practices of Sigmund Freud provided the foundation for psychoanalytic criticism in literature. In particular, since the origins of the psychological approach have been attributed to Sigmund Freud, it is important to explain the role of the psychoanalytic theory in literature to understand how this concept is used and will be used throughout this research project.

As per expert Md Mahroof Hossain, "Psychoanalysis is one of the modern theories that are used in English literature. It is a theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality that guides psychoanalysis." (Hossain, 2017, para.1). The psychological approach has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of interpretation to find hidden meaning in literary texts. It will play a critical role in helping understand the main theme in the novel for this research paper. Nonetheless, it is important to answer the following questions for complete understanding: what is psychoanalysis? How will the psychoanalytic theory be used in this investigation?

First of all, it is important to mention that the psychoanalytic theory in literature began from the concept of psychoanalysis created by the psychologist Sigmund Freud. Based on Freud, all psychological problems are originated from the unconscious. Nevertheless, what else can be said about Freud's psychoanalytical theories? Let us mention some of Freud's theories that can be applied to literature: Freud is well-known for theories such as the unconscious, dreams, infantile sexuality, libido, repression, and transference. Nowadays, all of them continue to influence the field of psychology in many ways. However, from all of them, the most relevant for this investigation is Freud's theory of repression; thus, this leads to the following question, what is repression?

A very simple and clear definition was provided by the official website "Psychology Today." They say the following about repression: "Repression is a defense mechanism in which people push difficult or unacceptable thoughts out of conscious awareness. Repressed memories were a cornerstone of Freud's psychoanalytic framework." (Psychology Today, 2021). It is imperative to emphasize Freud's theory specifically not only because he thought that repressed

emotions are responsible for our psychological problems, but also because in terms of the book “A Man Called Ove” this is the main reason why Ove, as a grown man, tried to kill himself several times in the story.

In addition, according to an investigation published by Oxford University Press in 1999 and written by Michael Billing, “Freud believed that people repress or drive from their conscious mind, shameful thoughts that, then, become unconscious” (Billing, 1999, p.1). This suggests that repression prevents painful thoughts from entering conscious awareness. This is why many people find themselves feeling futile, anxious, and depressed. Therefore, Freud's psychoanalysis therapy looks to free those repressed thoughts, feelings, or impulses to heal the person. In order to do this, the therapist needs to allow the patient to re-tell their story, express it, or let it out. In regards to this research paper, this is exactly what will be done. Ove's story will be narrated, explained, and described to provide the reader with his background and a detailed overview of his life. In this way, readers will understand Ove's actions and motivations to find answers finally.

After that being said, let us now define what psychoanalysis is. Psychoanalysis is a form of therapy. To define psychoanalysis, let us read a definition provided by Saul Mcleod. He is a qualified Psychology teacher with over 17 years of experience. In his article "Psychoanalysis," he shared the following definition: “Psychoanalysis is defined as a set of psychological theories and therapeutic methods which have their origin in the work and theories of Sigmund Freud.” (Mcleod, 2019, para.1). He also adds that” The primary assumption of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories.” (Mcleod,

2019, para.1). Thus, psychoanalysis therapy looks to release repressed emotions and experiences in patients by getting to know the patient's past experiences and fears.

Another definition is found in one of his articles, named "Psychoanalysis:" Brian Duignan gave a simple explanation "Psychoanalysis, method of treating mental disorders, shaped by psychoanalytic theory, which emphasizes unconscious mental processes and that this is sometimes described as "depth psychology." (Duignan, 2020, para.1). Therefore, it is imperative to mention how important the role of psychoanalytic theory is in modern literature to understand reading, meaning, and the relation of literature to culture. Therefore, psychoanalysis is firstly a type of therapy to treat mental disorders. It looks to understand the human mind as all.

It is for this reason that this theory will be used in this research paper. When Ove's personality is analyzed, it is remarkable that throughout his story and during his life, he did not have people to show him how to deal with his emotions. Thus, developing defense mechanisms is how he managed to go through life without expressing what he felt. That is why sooner or later, Ove learned to let his emotions out in the wrong way, expressing himself badly about people and towards people. Even his wife used to tell him that he was always arguing about everything and complaining about others. Thus she always tried to remind him to take everything easy and relax for a bit.

Moreover, this is important to keep in mind when using the psychoanalytic theory to analyze literature. All the tools this theory provides will better understand the literary text and the writer's intentions. All that said, the psychoanalytic theory will be used to analyze and explore Ove's life, his hidden motives, and his past; through re-narration of Ove's events in order to

make the reader understand why futility became the main theme in this novel, more specifically, how the sense of futility and the implied forces of transgression and social balance in the novel “A Man Called Ove” may lead an individual to suicide, but also how resilience may help him rise again from uncertainty.

## **2.2 Themes, Symbols, Motifs**

In literature, several themes can be found within the text in a book. These themes usually influence or give an idea about the storyline and provide clues into the plot or conflict occurring. In order to build and explain the theme, the author will use symbols and motifs. However, not all readers know the definition of a theme. At the same time, they do not understand the difference between symbol and motif. Moreover, not everyone is familiar with the difference between these two. It is important to mention that both help us understand what we read. Furthermore, both are crucial in helping us get our attention on the story; thus, it is critical for this investigation first to define each of them for a better understanding and explain how they can be used in literature.

Firstly, every story, play, poem, or literary work contains at least one theme: loneliness, success, sadness, suicide, redemption, freedom, grief, melancholy, love, loss, futility, or so. Furthermore, it is said that themes are the most abstract thing in a text. They can be interpreted differently depending on the perspective or emotion felt. In addition, in most stories, the theme is not stated directly. Thus, it is necessary to answer the following questions: what is a theme, and how can themes be identified in literature?. As per J.T. Bushnell, who wrote an article for Oregon State University in 2021, the definition of a theme can be explained as follows:

A theme is a central, unifying idea. It is the bigger issue that emerges as the characters pursue their goals. It has less to do with whether they will win the race, get the date, or find the treasure and more to do with the deeper questions about identity, philosophy, or morality that arise during their attempts. (Bushnell, 2021, para.1)

This definition suggests that a theme is not mainly a moral message but how the problem is formulated in the story. Also, it is the idea on which the story is built. The rest of the story flows around that specific human concern with ideas that reinforce the main theme and clarify the characters' experiences. Additionally, it is a universal statement, and a story can contain more than one theme. For example, in the book "A Man Called Ove," several themes such as loss, grief, suicide, social support, and most importantly, futility will be studied and developed throughout the investigation.

A more specific example of a theme can be found in the story written by J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Hobbit," which tells the tale of a homely hobbit who sets off on an important quest. He lived a quiet and peaceful life in his comfortable hole. However, one day, his life was interrupted by an older man who brought an invitation that will later change his life. After thinking about it, he bravely accepted the invitation and adventure to help those in need. He had to fight monsters during his journey, leave his warm home, starve, risk his life to help others, and finally face a dragon. Therefore, what is the story's theme? The main theme in the story is courage because this hobbit had to leave his comfort to go on an adventure that changes his life. This decision creates a story that inspires someone else to push through the next challenge in life.

Secondly, every story has a symbol. Symbols can be found in everyday life. A symbol can be an object, person, place, mark, or even a location representing something else. In addition,

symbols are not limited to a single meaning. Moreover, there are two types of symbols in literature. The first type can be categorized as "universal symbols." As the word suggests, these symbols are understood across culture and time; they can be widely recognized no matter the country or age. For example: when people think of a pine tree, what is the first thing that usually comes to their mind? Perhaps they think how amazing they smell and how beautiful pine trees look in the forest, or perhaps their mind goes somewhere else. They relate this kind of tree to Christmas Eve for decoration. Why would they do this? If a pine tree is a simple tree. The reason is that this pine tree has been used as a symbol for Christmas time over the years. Almost every house uses this tree for decoration honoring the special season that is happening during December.

Moreover, the second type can be defined as "personal symbols." These symbols have a special meaning for an individual. They can be developed by our experiences, fantasies, landscapes, dreams, and other things. For example, in a love story, couples have different experiences that generate attachment to certain places. Some couples experienced remarkable things in a specific mountain. Every time they visit that mountain, they re-live their emotions. Only they can understand what each one feels because they lived it together. On the other hand, that mountain may be indifferent to another couple because nothing special happened in that place to them. Therefore, it all depends on the significance given by the couple.

All that said, a symbol is something easy to recognize. However, it represents something abstract because it depends on the meaning given by someone specifically or society. To better illustrate what a symbol means, let us take a look at the poem "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost:

Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice. (Frost, 1920)

In the poem, fire symbolizes destructive and consuming emotions such as jealousy, desire for power, anger, and impulsivity, all kind of negative emotions. On the other hand, in the case of ice, it symbolizes destructive and withholding emotions such as hate, indifference, loneliness, and isolation. These objects are only objects that belong to nature. However, within a literary work, personal meaning is attributed by the author to communicate a message. Therefore, this is a good example of a symbol's meaning depending on the author's personal experience or society's perspective because symbols can be better interpreted through the author's eyes sometimes. Moreover, this is also an example of how symbols paint a picture into the reader's mind through imagery, words, actions, and other things.

Finally, and on the other hand, every story has a motif. A motif is another literary term that can be an object or an idea that constantly appears throughout a specific piece of literature. A motif can be found in the power of repetition and expressed by a group of symbols. In short, it is a recurring narrative or idea with symbolic significance within a piece of literature. Additionally,

it is said that a motif can be closely related to the theme. However, experts say that it can be considered a supporting idea for the theme in this case. It means that motifs are strongly related to the main idea of the literary work, and they reinforce the author's main idea. Also, it is important to mention that symbols and motifs can have different meanings depending on the culture.

Similarly, writers Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy, in their book “Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature” published in 2016, share a comment regarding how a motif’s meaning can vary depending on the culture as follows:

In studying the distribution of motifs, one finds that the same object in different cultures may hold vastly different meanings. For example, snakes are found in mythology and folktales of many cultures. While in Judeo Christian tradition, the snakes usually symbolize evil, in India, it is a sacred creature that plays “a major role in folklore and in many Buddhist, Jaina, and in Hindu legends...” (Garry and El-Shamy, 2016)

The meaning of something can be influenced by a whole stream of thought and experiences living in a community. Consequently, motifs and symbols can change their meaning depending on the individual and the culture. This is the importance of analyzing the symbols and motifs of each literary work since these can be misperceived due to people’s different backgrounds. More specifically, the meaning of a symbol or motif depends largely on its usage, history, and purpose. Readers need to look at the cultural background when looking to understand symbolism or motifs. Additionally, when we analyze these literary devices, we must consider the social, economic, or any other situation that the specific society was experiencing when the writer wrote the literary work. Doing this helps us understand the intention and meaning of each word.

In addition, a good example of the difference between a motif, theme, and a symbol can be illustrated as follows. In a story, the theme can be "the monarchy," and a series of symbols that can represent the motif of the story can be:

- Queens
- Kings
- Castles
- Medieval customs
- Knights
- Wizards
- Swords and crowns

We do not understand what is meant by a word, a thought, an act, or a thing. This is why we need other things to describe them in order to understand their meanings properly. Therefore, this is why themes, symbols, and motifs are created: to help us understand. Throughout this investigation and analysis of the book "Man Called Ove," all that being explained, these three literary devices will be used to provide a deeper explanation and analysis of the character and the story. The symbols and motifs observed upon reading this research paper will lead to a better and detailed understanding of the overall theme found in this book. As explained above, the theme will be found by identifying the main issue; symbols will be found as objects of any type to express a meaning. Finally, motifs will be expressed by a collection of related symbols.

### **2.3 Author's Biography**

Fredrik Backman is a Swedish author, blogger, and journalist who voted Sweden's most successful author in 2013. It is said that Backman grew up in Helsingborg, studied comparative religion but dropped out and became a truck driver instead. When the free newspaper Xtra was launched in 2006, the owner reached out to Backman to write for the paper when he was still a truck driver. After a test article, he continued to write columns for Xtra until today.

Furthermore, according to Fredrik's official website,

Fredrik Backman is the #1 New York Times best-selling author of *A Man Called Ove*, *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, *Britt-Marie Was Here*, *Beartown*, *Us Against You*, and *Anxious People*, as well as two novellas and one work of nonfiction plus he is a Swedish writer and blogger. (Fredrik Backman, 2021, para.1)

In regards to his personal life, Backman married in 2009 and became a father the following year. He blogged about preparations for his wedding in "The Wedding Blog" and about becoming a father on the "Someone's Dad" blog. Additionally, during the 2010 Winter Olympics, he wrote the Olympic blog for the Magazine Cafe website and continued as a permanent blogger. According to Alexandra Alter from The New York Times, who wrote an article called "The Man Behind "A Man Called Ove." Fredrik Backman got several rejections when he sent out the manuscript for his debut novel, "A Man Called Ove." Most publishers ignored him, and several turned it down. In Alexandra's words, "Four years later, "A Man Called Ove" has sold more than 2.8 million copies worldwide, making the book one of Sweden's most popular literary exports since Stieg Larsson's thriller "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo." (Alexandra Alter, October 2016, para.1).

## 2.4 Plot

A Man Called Ove is a fiction novel that was originally published in 2012. It is written by Fredrik Backman. According to a review of the book written by the Friends of Words website: "The novel revolves around a 59-year-old man whose name is Ove. It tells the story of love, friendship, compassion, grief, and friendship and community in coping with loss." (Swati, January 6, 2020, para.1). Due to all the suffering he has experienced throughout his life. He starts feeling futile. And then, he tries to take his life several times but fails thanks to various reasons that will be explained throughout the investigation.

Regarding the main character, Ove is described as a curmudgeon, a bad-tempered person, and an older man who had a difficult childhood growing up without a motherly figure. He became an orphan when he was sixteen years old. Additionally, he lost a baby and his wife. As a result, sadness in his life and a sense of futility led him to end his life several times. At first sight, Ove seems to be a grumpy man who is about to hit everyone if he thinks something wrong. He walks around the neighborhood where his house is located in the mornings to do his neighborhood's daily inspection. He likes things organized, and he thinks someone has to do it.

He does not understand how people wake up late. Ove dresses in a costume, and any disorder or small trash makes him furious, like an abandoned cigarette butt, an improperly parked car, or toys scattered in the sandbox. He constantly finds fault with his neighbors or a person passing by when they do something wrong. However, behind all this cranky exterior, a story and a sadness explain it all. It was all changed by unexpected things that happened to him one day.

One day, a chatty couple arrived in his neighborhood. His new neighbors, settling in the house across the street, cannot park their trailer with things. Ove does not stand, removes the loop, and goes to park the car. Patrick and Parvaneh are a husband and wife who have two daughters, and they are waiting for the third child. They interrupted Ove when he was trying to kill himself several times. Patrick works as an IT consultant, and his wife takes care of the girls. They play an important role in Ove's recovering process throughout his story. At the end of the story, Ove could never take their own life for several reasons discussed throughout the investigation. After all the difficult things that he went through, he was able to die in peace as he had always wanted and with a group of friends who helped him live a little longer as he never expected and could have imagined.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodological Framework**

This chapter will present a deep description of the method the researcher will employ throughout the investigation. Hence, the first part will be dedicated to discussing the qualitative method. At the same time, this chapter will also talk about the selected research design for the investigation. The primary, secondary, and tertiary sources will be described, along with examples. Moreover, it will summarize the definition of the psychological approach and a detailed description of the instruments implemented to conduct this research project. Finally, the last part of this chapter will explain how the data will be collected and analyzed.

### 3.1 Research Approach

The method implemented to carry out this research project will be the "qualitative" method, as the researcher can assess the results as biased. In a short definition, qualitative research is more about analyzing non-numerical data such as a video, book, or text. On the other hand, this is the opposite of "quantitative research" that has to do with numbers for statistical analysis. This research approach matches the objectives for this investigation as it allows the researcher to prove a point based on experiences, opinions, and free interpretation of the book "A Man Called Ove."

In 2016, the Oxford University Press published an article written by social scientists K. Hammarberg, M. Kirkman, and S. de Lacey explaining the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. According to the article, "'qualitative' methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. Hence, if the correct techniques are used, they can generate valuable insight for the investigation. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring." (Oxford Academy, 2016, para.1).; Nevertheless, this section will focus on qualitative research since this is the one that will be used for this project.

In addition, to better understand the qualitative method and how it is used, it is useful to provide examples of techniques usually used to collect and analyze data. Some techniques to gather data are small-group discussions, interviews, commentaries from experts on a specific area, comparisons, previous studies, personal opinions, experiences, books, etc. These techniques have to be strategically chosen to help the research come to the expected conclusions. For this

project, some of the techniques previously mentioned will be used. However, they will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design provides the overall strategy that will be conducted throughout the research paper. There are different types of research designs; nonetheless, the type used for this investigation is the "descriptive" one. Furthermore, a descriptive research design looks to describe the situation or issue already formulated. This design is chosen in relationship with the problem statement, objectives, time, and so. In addition, descriptive research design helps others better understand the need for the research. Moreover, this type of research design allows the researcher to collect information that explains or evaluates the cause of an issue or phenomenon.

To support what was said before, the USC (University of Southern California) worked on an article called "Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper" that looks to explain the difference between each type of research design. When they refer to the descriptive style, the article states the following:

Descriptive research designs help answer who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem; a descriptive study cannot conclusively ascertain answers to why. Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the phenomena' current status and describe "what exists" concerning variables or conditions in a situation. (USC, 2021, para.1)

Thus, the subject is observed in its natural environment, and the limitations are understood. In this case, as previously stated in the quote, this research design does not guarantee

to provide answers to the hypothesis because it describes what exists only, and based on what already exists, provides the conclusion. Consequently, this design seeks to observe how futility is the main theme of the novel in order to demonstrate how the hypothesis that will be presented in this analysis makes sense. At the same time, this research design is useful to analyze the character of Ove through observation, using previously tested studies for proper support, and with the help of instruments that will be explained later. Finally, the analysis will carry out a description of Ove's life and his suicide attempts. Also, their life experiences will be analyzed to reach the respective conclusions. Therefore, the descriptive research design will play an important role throughout this research paper to explain the main theme in the novel.

### **3.3 Information Sources**

This part will describe the three types of sources included in this investigation along with examples to differentiate them and their utility. However, it is important to answer the following question: why is it critical to include sources of information in a research paper? The first reason is to show the reader that proper research has been done regarding the topic. Therefore, the research paper will show that the researcher has the right backing to defend each point. The second reason is that when sources are cited, it gives credit to the original author, protecting the researcher from committing plagiarism. Furthermore, within the field of research, there are three types of sources of information; primary sources, secondary sources, and tertiary sources.

Let us start by defining primary sources. Primary sources present raw data, original information, new interpretations, original documents, or new observations from professionals in the area. In simple words, information that has not been manipulated apart from the original

author. Examples of sources that fall under primary sources can be books, studies, or scientific theories. An example of a primary source that will be used in this investigation is the book called "Literary Theory: The Complete Guide." This book is four years old; it was published in 2017 and written by the renowned English professor Mary Klages. This book is an introductory guide to literary theories. It explains the essence of literary theory and the importance of literature. Furthermore, it shows why literature has transcended culturally.

Secondly, let us define the secondary sources. Secondary sources are usually interpretations or commentaries of primary sources. These secondary sources are found or taken from primary sources. It means they are not the original text but a revised work, for example. Examples of sources that fall under secondary sources can be magazines, newspapers, commentaries, criticism, and biographical works. An example of a secondary source included in this research paper is an article written on October 28, 2016, by Alexandra Alter. She wrote a commentary of the author of the book "A Man Called Ove for The New York Times. This article provides some biographical insight about the author and how he became a bestseller. It also provides general information about the book that is useful for future analysis.

Finally, let us define the tertiary sources. Some studies define tertiary sources as the collection or distillation of primary or secondary sources. In simple words, is information already manipulated several times. The following are examples of tertiary sources: almanacs, chronologies or timelines, dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, databases, indexes, abstracts, among others. An example of some tertiary sources that are part of this investigation is the definitions for literature and theory found in Merriam-Webster's dictionary. Also, the definition of literary theory is provided by the Collins Dictionary.

### 3.4 Analysis Categories

As previously mentioned in Chapter II, the approach selected for investigation is the psychological approach. Therefore, writers consider this approach to analyze characters or the authors' intentions. Furthermore, the psychological approach has its origin in Sigmund Freud's theories on the unconscious. Thanks to his theories, it is now possible to analyze emotions, thoughts, and impulses from a psychological perspective in the literature. In addition, thanks to the psychological approach, it is also possible to consider literary works based on psychology and discover psychological facts in literature.

An example of a symbol found in Ove's story is the very mentioned "Saab" It was the first motorcar that Saab had ever manufactured. The car was given to his father in gratitude for having helped one of his bosses. When his father received the car, Ove witnessed his father's pride and emotion. In chapter 5, the book expresses it as follows "Ove had never seen a man as proud as his father was that night. He was eight years old and decided that night he would never drive any car but a Saab." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.41). So how can this approach be applied to this part of the story? It is just an old car for many people, but for Ove, it was an inheritance from his father when he passed away. A way to remember your father, connect and recognize your father through an object. Ove even learned how to assemble and disassemble a car, thanks to his Saab. Therefore, Ove has an emotional connection to this type of car; moreover, it has meaning.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

In order to reach conclusions and analyze the literary work, the researcher will first use an instrument called the "Formalistic Approach." What is the Formalistic Approach? The formalistic approach to literature examines a text by its "organic form." By analyzing its title, characters, plot, settings, literary devices, theme, scene, narrative, ending, irony, images, symbols, and among other things. Moreover, the formalistic approach aims to analyze merely the text itself. Thus, it focuses on the text. Furthermore, in general, the Formalistic Approach studies the text to find its own opinion. It does not include any external information, such as the author's biography. Therefore, all interpretations must be supported by shreds of evidence found in the text.

Moreover, the researcher selected this instrument since it is a resource that will help the researcher start understanding the story. Also, it provides tools to deeply contact every detail of the literary work that will allow the researcher to reach the respective conclusions to demonstrate how futility is the main theme in the story. This is because the text must be read to analyze each point that the Formalistic Approach includes. So it allows the reader to get acquainted with the story in a deeper way because it involves a careful analysis of the text. As a result of all this process, the reader will provide their point of view of the story.

The second instrument that will be used for this research paper will be the research interview. To put it in simple words, an interview is a conversation with a subject matter expertise to gather information. This information will support every theory throughout the investigation. As per professional Nick J Fox in her book "Using Interviews in a Research Project." She says the following regarding this technique "The interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject.

Interviews are commonly used in survey designs and in exploratory and descriptive studies.” (Fox, 2000, para.1).

The purpose of using the research interview as an instrument is to be an appropriate method when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people’s opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Since the approach used for this investigation is the psychological approach, it is important to count on an expert to bring clarity to various topics. In this case, the research interview will be conducted face-to-face with a psychologist to have an opinion from a professional point of view and thus support the theories that demonstrate how futility is the main theme in the novel. However, it leads to depression and suicide attempts. Therefore, the interviewer must ask relevant questions to gather useful information.

### **3.6 Collection Data Process and Data Analysis**

Data collection will be carried out by reading the book several times, using the formalistic approach as the main instrument to find and create a personal opinion. Also, the interview will provide important elements to support the theories that will be established in the investigation. Additionally, during the book's reading, the examples that can demonstrate how futility is the main theme in the story will be highlighted and developed later using the psychological approach. In addition, it will be noted that he tried to kill himself. The reason that led him to stop demonstrates how a support system is vital to face moments of depression. Finally, certain circumstances will be analyzed to get a better perspective on the story.

## **Capítulo IV**

## Data Analysis

This chapter will include a detailed explanation of the investigation approaches and the relationship between the theories and the literary work. The instruments that will support the arguments and theories will be included in this chapter: the formalistic approach and the interview. In addition, triangulation will be used between literary work, opinions of an expert in psychology, and the analysis of the researcher to analyze the information. Finally, some examples of symbols, motifs, and themes will be provided to illustrate the meaning of each.

### 4.1 Approaches to the Investigation

What are approaches in literature? Approaches in literature are intended to study and criticize a literary piece. Furthermore, we use a specific approach to analyze, evaluate, read, interpret and judge a particular literary work. Every time we use an approach, we see through different lenses that allow us to analyze certain things from a specific perspective to come to conclusions. The other lenses also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important; therefore, the approach must be chosen depending on the goal or theory the critic wants to reach at the end of the analysis. In addition to that, in an article written by experts of Purdue University they provide the following example to keep in mind before choosing an approach:

For example, if a critic is working with certain Marxist theories, s/he might focus on how the characters in a story interact based on their economic situation. Suppose a critic is working with post-colonial theories. In that case, s/he might consider the same level but look at how characters from colonial powers (Britain, France, and even America) treat characters from Africa or the Caribbean (Purdue University, 2021).

Therefore, the previous quote emphasizes that readers must first be clear about what they are looking to analyze and then select an approach that adapts and helps them achieve their objectives or prove their theories. Thus, choosing an approach early on will allow us to re-read literary works and formulate the reader's arguments. That being said, to fulfill the objectives for this research paper, analysis the approach that better suits the investigation is the psychological approach. Therefore, the following paragraphs will explain how the psychological approach and the book are related.

Psychological criticism uses psychoanalytic theories, especially those of Freud, to understand the text more fully. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, the psychoanalytic theory will be used to analyze and explore Ove's life, his hidden motives, and his past through the narration of Ove's events to make the reader understand why futility became the main theme in this novel. More specifically, how the sense of futility and the implied forces of transgression and social balance in the book "A Man Called Ove" may lead an individual to suicide, but also how resilience may help him rise again from uncertainty.

Why is the psychological approach the best option for this investigation? That is because critics use psychological approaches to explore characters' motivations and the symbolic meanings of events, behaviors, intentions, feelings, thoughts, among others. Since this research paper will deal with topics and emotions such as futility, depression, and suicide, it is necessary to take advantage of the psychological approach and its theories to carry out the analysis. Also, the psychological approach has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of interpretation to find hidden meaning in literary texts. It will play a critical role in helping the researcher understand the main theme in the novel for this paper.

## **4.2 Theories vs Literary Work**

This section will be included the specific parts of the literary work that will be analyzed and the theories of psychology that will support the arguments to be developed throughout the research project. An analysis of the plot, title, incipit, theme, characters, settings, point of view, atmosphere, irony, and the ending will later conclude. Finally, the researcher will interview to have an opinion from a professional point of view, providing more support to the findings.

### **4.2.1 Formalistic Approach**

#### **4.2.1.1 Plot (Synopsis)**

The story is about an adult over 59 years old who had a difficult childhood. His name is Ove. Ove is one of a kind; He likes clean things, logic, numbers, loyalty, and is very organized. Moreover, the story tells about Ove's life story, from his childhood to his death. Ove lost his mother when he was a 7-year-old child and his father when he was 16-years-old. She worked at a chemicals plant, and Ove's father worked for the railways. This is a description of his father according to the book,

The palms of his hands looked like someone had carved into the leather with knives, and the wrinkles in his face were so deep that when he exerted himself, the sweat was channeled through them down to his chest. His hair was thin and his body slender, but the muscles on his arms were so sharp that they seemed to cut out of a rock (A Man Called Ove. 2012. p.38).

Furthermore, Ove and his father never talked excessively; especially, when his mother passed away. However, they got along pretty well. In the evenings, they had sausages and

potatoes. Then they played cards. According to the author's words, "They never had much, but they always had enough." (Backman, 201, p.39). They lived in a little house out of town, and Ove's father managed to raise him without a motherly figure. As time passed by, Ove became quieter and quieter. Although he was not unhappy, he soon stopped being happy for several years when his father died. He had only just turned sixteen when he passed away in an accident; To be more specific, a hurtling carriage on the track. Ove could never explain what happened to him the day his father died, but he was sure about one thing, he came back to life when he saw her for the first time.

After his father's death, Ove dropped out of school and worked for five years for the railways. One morning, he saw her for the first time, and his life was never the same. Ove's shift had already ended on that day, so he was supposed to be taking the train back home the other way but instead, he got back on the outbound train immediately. According to the book, "He had never been spontaneous before in his life. But when he saw her it was as if something malfunctioned." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.128). Her name was Sonja. When Ove met Sonja, she was studying to become a teacher, so she used to take that train to get to her college. She came every day. It was a one-and-a-half-hour journey. She said it was boring, so she was happy to find someone to talk to, but it was the wrong direction for Ove. On the same day, Ove waited for her on the way back home a couple of hours, and he repeated the whole thing the day after and the day after that, and finally every day for three months.

After those three months, Sonja grew up tired of him never inviting her out for dinner. So she invited herself and told him she was expecting him tomorrow at eight o'clock in a suit. Thus, that's how it all started to take shape in their relationship. Sonja brought joy and spontaneity to Ove's life. For Ove, it was the only color he had. According to the author, "that laughter of hers,

which, for the rest of his life, would make him feel as if someone was running around barefoot on the inside of his breast.” (Backman, 201, p.79). After some time of dating, they decided to live together. During that moment, Sonja got pregnant, and that brought more joy into Ove’s life.

One day, they decided to take a trip to Spain. During their journey home, Sonja took Ove’s hands and placed them on his belly. That was the happiest day of Ove’s life because he could feel his baby kicking inside. Unfortunately, he did not know that it would also be one of the saddest days of his life in a few minutes. Ove wiped away his tears and got up quickly to the bathroom. At that precise moment, the bus crashed, and all he could hear were screams. Ove knew there and then that he would never forgive himself for having got up from his seat at that exact moment because he could not protect them. Days after the accident, the doctors told Ove that they could not save the baby and that she was never going to wake up; however, Ove believed the opposite, he sat by her bed every day until one day she opened her eyes, and Ove took her hand into his. That day she slept until the next day.

Consequently, Sonja miscarried and became paralyzed from the waist down. Ove insisted on rebuilding the house himself to make it wheelchair accessible. No matter her physical limitations, Sonja decided to take a job teaching troubled students, and she was able to teach them all to read Shakespeare. During that time, Ove fought with “men in white shirts” over his wife’s health until Sonja made him stop. After Rune’s baby boy was born, Ove and Rune began fighting over everything. The feud spanned nearly forty years, and the last straw was when Rune bought a BMW. A few times later, Rune was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. Four years before the present, Sonja was diagnosed with cancer. She worked as long as she could, and Ove continued to fight to make everything easier for her, but she died anyway.

After all of these events, six months after Sonja's death, Ove's boss at the housing office forced him to retire. As a result, he started to feel useless and saw no point in continuing living. Therefore, he decided to commit suicide and join Sonja. Nonetheless, things did not go as planned due to a group of people appearing at the right time and moment.

#### **4.2.1.2 Title Analysis**

"A Man Called Ove" is a title that plays two different roles; the first one gives a compact summary of whom the book will talk about. Secondly, it catches the reader's attention to read the book. This title announces that the book is going to be about Ove and possibly his life. When the reader reads the title, it generates an interest in knowing who Ove is. Moreover, in this case, the book tells the life of Ove in detail and profoundly describes his personality. At the same time, the title introduces the main character's name and allows the reader to be familiar with him from the beginning.

#### **4.2.1.3 Incipit**

In the case of incipit, the first paragraph of chapter number one clearly defines how the story will be developed. It begins by describing Ove's personality, his age, the type of car he drives and talks about his fondness for pointing out people as if they were burglars, "Ove is fifty-nine. He drives a Saab. He's the kind of man who points at people he doesn't like the look of, as if they were burglars and his forefinger a policeman's flashlight." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.1). The first paragraph tells us whom the story will deal with and what kind of personality we will face throughout the story. Therefore, this allows us to connect with the story from the beginning and have a bigger picture of what the reader is about to read.

#### 4.2.1.4 Theme

In general, it tells the story of loss, love, friendship, judgment, compassion, grief, and the importance of a support system when coping with loss. However, the story centers on the theme of futility that the writer can illustrate several times when he describes the internal dialogues Ove has with himself when something reminds him of Sonja. The only thing he wanted in life was to join Sonja. Similarly, this can also be seen by analyzing the times he tried to kill himself.

Therefore, let us re-tell those moments and how he failed to end up his life:

The first try happened as soon as his boss forced him to retire. After that, he tried to install a hook in his ceiling to hang himself, but his new neighbors backed their moving trailer right into Ove's house at that specific moment. Ove, very mad, went outside to yell at them and helped them park the trailer for them. Hence, he could not kill himself that day but decided to wait until the next one. The next day he tried to hang himself, but his rope broke. The next morning, Ove continued with his plan to kill himself using a car exhaust. As he sat in his car and let the fumes fill it, he heard an ambulance and then someone banging on the garage door. He was so irritated but finally opened the garage door, and to his surprise, she was Pavarneh, asking him to take her and her daughters to the hospital to see Patrick, who fell off the ladder. He had no option but to help...

Consequently, he waited until the next morning to go to the train station. Ove thought it was good to let the train hit him because it would be quick; thus, he studied the trains and the schedule. As the train approached, he was ready to jump on; however, a businessman fainted and fell onto the track at the precise moment. Ove pulled the man off the track and stayed there for the train to kill him, but he never expected to make eye contact with the young conductor whose

face was full of anxiety and anguish. This touched Ove's heart, so he decided that it would be terrible to ruin the young boy's day, and he moved off the track. Later that week, Ove considered killing himself using Sonja's painkillers. He was about to drink a bunch of pills when he heard the cat screaming outside because Blond Weed was trying to kick him, so he went to rescue it. Ove gets a rifle to kill himself a few days later but is interrupted when Parvaneh asks to use Ove's bathroom. A few minutes later, she then put him on the phone with Lena, the journalist.

The next day for the last time, he thought he was going to be able to shoot himself finally, so he took his clothes off and got ready to die, but Mirsad and Adrian appeared at Ove's door and asked whether Mirsad could stay over because Mirsad had come out to his father, Amel. However, he kicked him out of the house. One more time, Ove's attempt to end up his life did not work out. Instead, his community gave him a reason to be busy and help stop Rune's transfer into care for the next few days.

#### **4.2.1.5 Characters**

1. Ove: Ove is the main character. He is described in the story as a curmudgeon, a bad-tempered person, and an old man who had a difficult childhood. He is characterized by judging people and always criticizing actions that he considers are not correct.
2. Sonja: Sonja is Ove's wife. She is described as being expressive. He loves books, color, and abstract things. His personality was the opposite of Ove's, and he was the object of happiness for Ove. She is described in the novel as a beautiful and kind woman. She was involved in a crash that paralyzed her from the waist down and caused her to miscarry her baby; even though all these events happened, she tried to live her life positively.
3. The cat: This creature becomes Ove's pet against his will, and it was with Ove until his death. Ove rescues the cat from the Blond Weed's dog, and Parvaneh insists that Ove

keep the cat. The animal accompanies him everywhere, and according to Ove's perspective, the cat's facial expressions are always judgmental.

4. Parvaneh: Parvaneh is an Iranian young pregnant woman who moved in next to Ove's house. She is stubborn and very talkative. She played a very important role in Ove's recovery and came to see him as a father figure. Thanks to her, Ove could not take his own life several times and gave him reasons to continue living.
5. Patrick: He is called by Ove in the book "The Lanky One." He was Parvaneh's husband and worked as an IT consultant. From Ove's perspective, he was useless, foolish, and weak.
6. Anita: Anita is not only a neighbor, but she is Sonja's best friend. They spent much time together as far as their husband's relationship allowed them. Something Anita said that reached Ove's ears caused Ove to find a reason to fight and to start a war against the man in the white shirt at the end of the story.
7. Rune: Rune is Anita's husband and the closest thing Ove had to a friend. There was a time when they got along really well until Rune bought a BMW, which changed the way Ove saw him forever. At the end of the story, he has Alzheimer and cannot always correctly remember what happened between them.
8. Tom: Tom was a tall, noisy man with fists as big as flatbed carts and eyes that always looked for troubles. He was the only person at the railway Ove did not like. Since Ove's promotion to foreman, they became enemies, and he took every opportunity to make Ove's life as difficult as possible.
9. Lena: She is the journalist who persecutes Ove for days to give him an interview for the newspaper. She wanted to present Ove as a hero for saving a man's life on the train lines

when he tried to commit suicide. Thanks to this event, he ended up saving a life instead of ending his own life.

10. Mirsad: The cafe owner lived with Ove since he revealed to his father that he was homosexual and his family kicked him out of the house.
11. Adrian: Adrian is a teenager in love with a girl who lives on Ove's street. He was one of Sonja's students before her death. He was very grateful to her for teaching him to read.
12. Jimmy: A fat young man and Ove's neighbor, Sonja, and Anita, helped his mother raise him and get her out of a toxic relationship where she suffered physical aggression. At the end of the story, he marries Mirsad, and they adopt a girl.
13. The Man in the White Shirt: this particular white-shirt-man is the Škoda-driving man who wants to place Rune in assisted living. He refuses to follow Ove's neighborhood rules and drives his car through the residential area, leaving cigarette butts when he does it. Ove hates this man.

#### **4.2.1.6 Settings**

The story mainly takes place in Sweden regarding the physical settings, specifically in Ove's neighborhood, where he makes his early inspections every day. On the other hand, the psychological environment takes place in the community and Ove's house. Every detail of his house reminds him of Sonja, and he lives immersed in emotions such as nostalgia, pain, and melancholy. This is illustrated in the book as follows "You miss the strangest things when you lose someone. Little things. Smiles. The way she turned over in her sleep. Even repainting a room for her." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.56). Sonja asked Ove to repaint one of her rooms every six months; thus, every time he would enter that room, it reminds him of her.

#### **4.2.1.7 Point of View**

The story is told in the third person, limited by the author of the book. Fredrik Backman, the author, describes the main character's thoughts, attitudes, emotions, personality, and tastes in detail, and the narrative is very easy to understand. Moreover, his writing allows the reader to see the world through Ove's eyes, and therefore, it is easy to understand what is going on inside his mind.

#### **4.2.1.8 Atmosphere**

Each chapter of the book has a similar length; therefore, it makes it more readable. At the beginning of the book, you can perceive emotions such as sadness, pain, the hatred that Ove feels towards certain attitudes of people who do not respect the rules. At the same time, it is very easy to sense the lack of purpose to continue living that dominates and inspires the main character's motivations to end up his life. Speaking of lack of ambition, this can be illustrated through sentences the author includes within the story. The author expresses how much he misses Sonja and how unnecessary it is to continue living for Ove. An example of these dialogues is: "Something inside a man goes to pieces when he has to bury the only person who ever understood him. There is no time to heal that sort of wound." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.325).

#### **4.2.1.9 Irony**

In this case, it can be said that the irony can be observed in the following scenarios:

- Firstly, Ove hates abstract things, but he married a woman who loves abstract things and is described as emotional.

· Secondly, Ove wants to die because he thinks there is no reason to keep living, and he believes idiots surround him; however, he decided to put off his plans to kill himself to defend a cause for others.

· Finally, Ove made up his mind to never speak to Rune again, but in the end, he was the reason that motivated him to keep fighting and feel useful. Thanks to this, Ove came out of his cave and lived a few more years after winning the battle against the white shirt man.

#### **4.2.1.10 Ending**

According to chapter 39, which is the last chapter, the story describes a closed ending. Four years passed after the last time Ove had a heart attack. That moment he almost died, but both medical treatment and the care from his community now considered as friends that enabled him to live a few more years until he finally died, calmly in his sleep. He left behind a family of friends and a powerful legacy. This happened one morning that Ove was found by Pavarneh in his house, with the cat's head resting on the palm of his hand. Ove was finally able to die in peace. Parvaneh and her daughters inherited Ove's money, and the rest was divided among various people in the community. Ove wrote his will before he died, and many people attended his funeral. In the end, Parvaneh comes to take the place of an adult daughter that Ove never got to have, while Ove takes the place of Parvaneh's father. She was his chosen family.

#### **4.2.2 Interview**

This section includes a series of questions about the book, and the novel's main theme asked the psychologist Fabiola Zeledón Badilla who graduated from UNIBE (Universidad de Iberoamerica). The interview took place on 08/07/2021 at 3:00 pm. This, to give professional support to the arguments mentioned in this investigation.

### **1. What is the relationship between the feeling of futility and depression?**

Both are highly connected. Based on the book, the story describes a person who is depressed from the start. Ove has no connection with joy or fulfillment but with emotions such as melancholy and shame. Upon meeting Sonja, he finds satisfaction in being through her, and she represents him and finds the voice he always wanted to have through her. Hence, he experiences spontaneity, joy, and love through her. He didn't need to strain because she was the one who planned, the one who spoke, and did all the things that he was unable to do for himself. As a result, when she dies, he reverts to the same individual he was before he met her, full of pent-up emotions and no connection to joy.

For this reason, throughout the novel, the book shows how Ove had a structured and busy life. He attached great importance to his work and used it as a defense mechanism to escape from reality. The moment Sonja dies and is forced to retire from work, the only two things that made him feel useful are not there anymore, and that is when his sense of usefulness disappears, opening space for depression. Additionally, the lack of understanding of usefulness led him to try to kill himself, and he saw death as a solution to all the frustration he felt for years due to his repressed emotions.

### **2. What negative consequences do repressed emotions provoke?**

When there are repressed emotions in the unconscious states, the body does not stop reacting, and one of the consequences that this causes is the defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms can be positive because they exist to protect us, but they can be negative because they compromise our functionality as social beings if they are not executed correctly. Another negative consequence is that emotions exist to be processed, and if they are not processed freely

or correctly, this leads to frustration and denial of the self. Finally, a repressed emotion takes away introspect to provide insight and make changes or readjustments in our living.

As can be seen in the case of Ove, he had very few emotional tools, and much of that can be attributed to the lack of a motherly and fatherly figure present during his childhood. It seems that he got used to dealing with the loss through his obligations and criticizing others. He projects his frustration by being bitter and criticizing every action that others do. Moreover, the structures his life to ignore all the pain he feels inside by keeping himself busy.

### **3. Based on Ove's story, how can a community of people benefit a person who attempts suicide?**

The role that a community plays in Ove's case was vital to the point that he changed his sense of usefulness by giving him reasons not to kill himself, and he changed his death desire to a life desire. He lacked social skills but had social needs like any other human being, and this is reflected in his relationship with Sonja and later with his neighbors. Every suicide attempt was postponed because someone needed him. This is how the community ended up being the answer he needed to overcome his grief and depression. Consequently, his frustration was directed positively by helping others, and he found the meaning he had lost. In addition, in these cases of suicide, the community provides opportunities to generate a sense of usefulness and positive emotions that can help the individual to feel alive and question his functionality in life.

#### **4.3 Themes, Motifs, and Symbols**

### 4.3.1 Themes

As previously explained in chapter two, it is said that themes are the most abstract things in a text. They can be interpreted differently depending on the perspective or emotion felt. In addition, in most stories, the theme is not stated directly. Additionally, the theme is not mainly a moral message but how the problem is formulated in the story. In this case, the three main themes that prevail in the novel "A Man Called Ove" are futility, grief, and love. In the case of futility, as previously mentioned in the formalistic approach, Ove stopped feeling useful for many reasons, multiple loss of people who were key figures in his life, he was unemployed, lonely, he had no friends or one more reason to continue living; therefore, in one occasion complaining about how his boss asked him to retire he thought something like, "What did they know about waking up on Tuesday and no longer having a purpose?" (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.13). This statement clearly shows what Ove felt about living on. It describes life without motivation or reason to keep fighting.; fortunately, at the end of his story, things took a turn.

Similarly, in the case of grief, no death meant so much pain and left a void as great as Sonja's death. Ove describes Sonja as the person who brought color to his life, and her laugh gave him back the will to live. Some of the dialogues in which this theme can be understood explicitly are the following: "I miss you, he whispers. It's been six months since she died. But Ove still inspects the whole house twice a day to feel the radiators and check that she hasn't sneakily turned up the heating." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.35).

This is an example that illustrates the void Sonja left in Ove's life. Another example that emphasizes this theme is the following dialogue "You miss the strangest things when you lose someone. Little things. Smiles. The way she turned over in her sleep. Even repainting a room for her." (A Man Called Ove, 2012, p.56). All that being said, Ove was having a natural

response to loss, and he was emotionally suffering because his favorite person in the world was taken away.

Finally, in the case of love, the novel narrates the story of love between Ove and Sonja, how they overcame obstacles and helped each other grow. If there is one event that marked Ove's heart, it was meeting Sonja. Ove didn't know the meaning of love until he met her. She was the reason why he fought, sacrificed, surrendered himself. He learned to love and be loved by someone for the first time.

Moreover, this theme can be found in Ove's unconditional support to Sonja when she became paralyzed. Another specific example of love in the novel can be seen when the story describes the relationship Pavarneh had with Ove until the day of his death. Although it is true, Ove did not have children, Pavarneh was like a daughter to him, and Ove the father she did not have. Throughout his story, Ove lost many important people, but he had much company before he died.

#### 4.3.2 Symbols

Symbols can be found in everyday life. A symbol can be an object, person, place, mark, or even a location representing something else. In addition, symbols are not limited to a single meaning. In the novel *A Man Called Ove*, the following objects can be considered symbols since they appeared several times throughout the story and had a universal and personal meaning for Ove:

**1. Pink (Color):** It was Sonja's favorite color. This color represents life and love for Ove. The author states that Ove lived in a black and white world before he met Sonja. She brought only beautiful things into his life; thus, this color represents life and love, his connection to Sonja, and the positivity she meant to him. This is why every week, he visits Sonja's grave. He brings pink

flowers. Pink flowers remind him of the love and life he once felt and experienced with Sonja when she was alive.

**2. Cars:** Throughout the book, Ove expresses how much he appreciates and prefers to own a Saab kind of car. He shows a deep attachment to this type of car for several reasons. For instance, Saabs not only have a universal meaning because they are a type of car but a personal meaning because when Ove's father dies, one of the only things he leaves for his son is the Saab his boss gave him at the railroad, which a reward for helping him and his good character. Ove and his father spent many Saturdays working on the car together, and Ove remains loyal to that particular car manufacturer for the rest of his life, buying and using only Saabs. He is deeply attached to this brand as it is like a connection to the beautiful memories he has from his father.

#### **4.3.3 Motifs**

On the other hand, a motif can be found in the power of repetition and expressed by a group of symbols. In short, it is a recurring narrative or idea with symbolic significance within a piece of literature. An example of a motif in the novel can be observed when the author repeatedly refers to "men in white shirts." This character does not have a specific name related to insensitive and inhuman people. There are many of them in different periods of Ove's life. For Ove, they represent the heartless bureaucracy. They caused Ove much stress on several occasions, but at the end of the story, Ove manages to face them and wins a battle on behalf of Rune, the only person who could have been considered a friend to Ove.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

## **5.1 Purpose of the Conclusion**

The purpose of the conclusion is to restate the main argument of the research paper. Moreover, it functions as a closure for the reader, and at the same time, it summarizes the opinions and the findings of the investigation. According to the Sacred Heart University, the conclusion can be defined as follows:

The conclusion is intended to help the reader understand why your research should matter to them after reading the paper. A conclusion is not merely a summary of your points or a re-statement of your research problem but a synthesis of key issues. One well-developed paragraph is sufficient for a conclusion for most essays, although a two-or-three paragraph conclusion may be required in some cases. (Sacred Heart University, 2020)

That being said, that conclusion is a very important part of the research paper because it reminds the reader why the investigation should matter and be done in the first place and how effective the process to support the arguments was. As a result, the conclusion serves as a reminder using supportive arguments and findings of the importance of researching a specific topic to better approach it.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

### **5.2.1 To demonstrate how the sense of futility is presented through the character's story**

The novel tells the story of Ove as the main character. Furthermore, it describes his struggles, his thoughts, and his losses throughout his entire life. With proven results, it is no wonder that each event, in particular, leads Ove to feel useless, with no sense of purpose to go on living. Therefore, this leads Ove to try to respond to life feeling futile, and it leads him to see no other solution to his sadness and grief other than death. In conclusion, futility is highly connected

with depression, and it provides a space for intrusive thoughts. The sense of futility is the trigger for Ove's suicide attempts demonstrated and proven throughout the novel through personal dialogues, ideas, and actions specified by the author.

### **5.2.2 To show the negative impact of feeling futile in life and how it leads to depression and suicide.**

In conclusion, futility is proved to be the main reason people end up their lives; therefore, this investigation focused on the feeling of futility and its role in Ove's story, which led him to depression and to try to kill himself several times. In addition, many of Ove's attempts to kill himself were impulsive and caused by strong feelings of anger, confusion, sadness, and disappointment. He was dealing with grief, but nobody prepared him for this moment. Additionally, the last thing motivating him to continue living was his job, but he was forced to retire. Consequently, it is no wonder that he found himself alone, with no purpose to continue living, and with no cause to fight for. Moreover, this feeling led him to consider death, and it made him ignore everything he had in front of him to fight and be thankful for.

### **5.2.3 To analyze Ove's character from the character's specific circumstances.**

To sum up, the novel deeply describes Ove's life. The situations he goes through, his losses, emotions, and thoughts. Every detail explained in the book reveals the intentions of Ove's heart, the reasons why he created defense mechanisms, and how circumstances led him to become a person who showed only his toughness and was unable to express or to show kindness to anyone but to his wife Sonja while she was alive. As a result of the literature analysis, it can be said that the writer provides the necessary information to find the answers to questions that give more support to the investigation. Moreover, such questions as, what happened in Ove's

childhood? Where does it come from? Who were his father and mother? How did you live after the loss of your father? How did you meet Sonja? Who thinks of certain attitudes, among others.

#### **5.2.4 To discuss the importance of a support system when coping with loss.**

In conclusion, it is common to feel unsure how to navigate these feelings alongside friends, family, or others. In the case of Ove, he felt unsure how to ask others for support. As a result, the only way out he thought he had to stop dealing with the pain was death. Fortunately, little by little, people came closer, which finally allowed him to open his heart. Therefore, it can be said that a relationship with others can help people heal. Nurturing a relationship with others is a key component when coping with grief. As seen in Ove's story, having more social support provided him with more favorable conditions for change, activities, distractions, and reasons to stay away from the idea of killing himself.

#### **4. 3 Re-statement of the Research Question**

The question was not changed because strong arguments were found that supported the investigation, and those arguments also gave an answer to the question. Furthermore, it was shown in various ways how futility is certainly the main theme of the novel. Thus, the following question was used throughout the research paper: "How is futility the main theme in the novel?"

#### **5.4 Unexpected Results**

No unexpected results were experienced.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

The first recommendation mentioned is regarding the type of approach used to analyze a literary work. As mentioned before, selecting the correct approach will help you support the arguments and find the answer to your research question. Before choosing the approach, it is

necessary to be clear that you want to investigate and that the question is clear. Once the question is in place, we proceed to choose the approach to carry out the investigation. In the case of this research, given that we wanted to analyze emotions, intentions, and the impulses of the main character, the psychological approach needed to be used to have the tools that help to understand the mind and human impulses.

Another recommendation would be that in case of using the psychological approach is necessary to involve a professional in the area since we are not psychologists. This will provide better input to the research paper and support the arguments since the opinion comes from a professional on the subject. Thus, a professional's opinion helps have a limited perspective and opens the opportunity to diverse inputs. This, along with articles and a deep or thorough reading of the novel, help achieve the objectives. Additionally, a literature analysis involving a psychologist enriches the theories and helps to reach better conclusions.

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