

الجائحة الوجدانية: دراسة استعمارية في ادب نهاية العالم ل فاضل العزاوي / آخر الملائكة

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Sentimental Pandemic: A Postcolonial Apocalyptic Study of Fadhil al-Azzawi *the Last of the Angels*

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preparation

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المستخلص

هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على رواية "آخر الملائكة" لفاضل العزاوي باعتبارها عملاً رائداً في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار -وآداب نهاية العالم، والذي يُعيد صياغة مفهوم الوجدان في سياق الصدمة الجماعية والتهجير التاريخي والتفكك الروحي. تدور أحداث الرواية في رؤية ديستوبية للعراق ما بعد الاستعمار، حيث ينسج العزاوي الأسطورة والذاكرة والسريالية للتأمل في تبعات الإمبريالية والحرب والاستبداد. تتناول الدراسة كيف يُوظف النصّ "الجائحة الوجدانية" - وهو تشبّع طاغٍ باليأس والحنين - كاستعارة للانحلال الثقافي والوجودي الذي أحدثته الحداثة الاستعمارية وآثارها المتبقية. من خلال منظور ما بعد الاستعمار، تُقرأ الرواية كسرد للمقاومة والحداد، حيث تتجاوز الرموز الملحمية المعاني الأخروية لتجسد انهيار النظام الاجتماعي السياسي وإمكانية التجديد الإبداعي. من خلال تسليط الضوء على الحضور الطيفي للملائكة والأشباح والأرواح الضائعة، يُعبّر عمل العزاوي عن شعيرة فريدة للبقاء على قيد الحياة في خراب الإمبراطورية. يبرز أدب ما بعد الاستعمار ذو الطابع الكارثي عند ملتقى مجالين أدبيين

متميزين، وإن كانا متداخلين في كثير من الأحيان. يتناول أدب ما بعد الاستعمار تداعيات الحكم الاستعماري، مستكشفاً مواضيع الهوية والمقاومة والتهجين، فضلاً عن الآثار المتبقية لبنى السلطة الإمبريالية. أما أدب نهاية العالم، المتجذر تقليدياً في علم الأخرويات اليهودي المسيحي، فيتنبأ بأحداث كارثية تؤدي إلى نهاية العالم، وغالباً ما يستخدم لغة غامضة ويعبر عن نظرة متشائمة للحاضر. وعندما تتلاقى هذه الأنواع الأدبية، يستخدم أدب ما بعد الاستعمار ذو الطابع الكارثي عدسة الكارثة والانهيال المجتمعي لنقد الإرث الاستعماري، واستكشاف المخاوف بشأن المستقبل في سياقات ما بعد الاستقلال، وتخيل أنماط بديلة للبقاء والمقاومة للمجتمعات المهمشة.

Abstract

This research highlights *The Last of the Angel* by Fadhil al-Azzawi as a seminal work of postcolonial apocalyptic fiction that reframes the sentimental within the context of collective trauma, historical displacement, and spiritual disintegration. Set in a dystopian vision of postcolonial Iraq, al-Azzawi's novel weaves myth, memory, and surrealism to reflect on the aftermath of imperialism, war, and authoritarianism. The study interrogates how the text mobilizes the sentimental pandemic—an overwhelming saturation of emotional despair and nostalgia—as a metaphor for the cultural and existential decay wrought by colonial modernity and its lingering effects. Through a postcolonial lens, the novel is read as a narrative of resistance and mourning, where apocalyptic motifs transcend eschatological meanings to embody both the collapse of a socio-political order and the possibility of imaginative renewal. By foregrounding the spectral presence of angels, ghosts, and displaced souls, al-Azzawi's work articulates a unique poetics of survival in the ruins of empire.

Postcolonial apocalyptic fiction emerges at the intersection of two distinct yet often overlapping literary fields. Postcolonial literature grapples with the aftermath of colonial rule, exploring themes of identity, resistance, hybridity, and the lingering effects of imperial power structures. Apocalyptic literature, traditionally rooted in Judeo-Christian eschatology, foretells cataclysmic events leading to the end of the world, often employing esoteric language and expressing a pessimistic view of the present. When these genres converge, postcolonial apocalyptic fiction uses the lens of catastrophe and societal collapse to critique colonial legacies, explore anxieties about the future in post-independence contexts, and imagine alternative modes of survival and resistance for marginalized communities.



1.1 Postcolonial Apocalyptic Fiction: An Overview

Postcolonial apocalyptic fiction emerges at the intersection of two distinct yet often overlapping literary fields. Postcolonial literature grapples with the aftermath of colonial rule, exploring themes of identity, resistance, hybridity, and the lingering effects of imperial power structures (Lye, 1998). Apocalyptic literature, traditionally rooted in Judeo-Christian eschatology, foretells cataclysmic events leading to the end of the world, often employing esoteric language and expressing a pessimistic view of the present (Lerner, 2025). When these genres converge, postcolonial apocalyptic fiction uses the lens of catastrophe and societal collapse to critique colonial legacies, explore anxieties about the future in post-independence contexts, and imagine alternative modes of survival and resistance for marginalized communities.

As for the Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for analyzing literature produced in nations formerly or currently under colonial rule, as well as literature from colonizing nations that depicts colonial subjects (Lye, 1998). A key focus, according to John Lye (1998), is examining “the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people,” alongside how literature by the colonized attempts “to articulate their identity and reclaim their past.” Common themes include the struggle for independence, migration, national identity, and resistance (Lye, 1998). Postcolonial analysis often investigates “questions of power, ideology, representation, cultural identity, hybridity, resistance, and agency” (Lye, 1998).

Broadly, apocalyptic literature is a “literary genre that foretells supernaturally inspired cataclysmic events that will transpire at the end of the world” (Lerner, 2025). Modern apocalyptic fiction, often categorized under science fiction or horror, depicts the collapse or aftermath of civilization due to various catastrophes, such as nuclear war, climate change, pandemic, or resource depletion. These narratives frequently explore themes of survival, the breakdown of social order, and the nature of humanity in extreme circumstances.

As for the intersection between Postcolonial Apocalyptic fiction, which utilizes the tropes and scenarios of the apocalyptic genre but infuses them with the specific concerns and critiques of postcolonial theory. It moves beyond universalizing narratives of doom to explore how catastrophe is experienced differently by those marked by colonial histories. This subgenre often examines how colonial power structures, historical traumas, and ongoing inequalities shape both the nature of the apocalypse and the possibilities for survival and rebuilding. As argued in relation to

Nnedi Okorafor's work, it involves a "new conception of postcolonialism as enabled by the form of speculative fiction" (Hubbard, 2019). Coming across tracing the historical development of apocalyptic themes, which contain have ancient roots, modern apocalyptic fiction gained prominence after World War II, fueled by nuclear anxieties. Postcolonial themes, conversely, became staples in speculative genres throughout the 20th and 21st centuries as writers began to challenge colonial narratives (as cited in Pichette, 2021).

Early speculative fiction often mirrored colonial ideologies. John Rieder notes its lexicon was related to "the celebratory narratives of exploration and discovery, the progress of civilization...and the unfolding of racial destiny that formed the Official Story of colonialism" (cited in Pichette, 2021). Postcolonial writers began to "write back against the empire" using these same genres, reclaiming visibility and critiquing Western perspectives (Pichette, 2021). This act of making postcolonial experiences central is itself seen as decolonial (Pichette, 2021). Movements like Afrofuturism became crucial, exploring Black identity and history through a speculative lens, often intersecting with apocalyptic themes to critique racism and historical trauma. Figures like Octavia Butler, N.K. Jemisin, and Nnedi Okorafor exemplify this, centering Black experiences in worlds shaped by collapse. Tavia Nyong'o's concept of "Black Apocalypse" further reframes the apocalypse not merely as an end, but potentially as "an opportunity for black cultural regeneration and collective liberation" in the face of ongoing anti-Blackness and historical trauma (Nyong'o, 2025).

Pandemics are a frequent catalyst in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, serving various narrative and thematic functions. Postcolonial apocalyptic fiction, specifically, often employs pandemics not just as plot devices but as potent metaphors for the destructive nature of colonialism and capitalism, while also exploring the unique emotional and societal impacts on marginalized communities. Generally, pandemics in apocalyptic narratives serve several key functions. They act as tangible manifestations of abstract societal fears, such as anxieties about globalization, rapid cultural change, or loss of identity. As catastrophic events, they trigger societal collapse, forcing characters into desperate survival scenarios and allowing authors to explore themes of human resilience, ingenuity, and the breakdown (or reinforcement) of social bonds. Furthermore, pandemics provide a crucible for examining how political systems, social structures, and existing inequalities respond under extreme pressure. Science fiction, in particular, uses the pandemic



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trope as a creative space to explore scientific possibilities and communicate complex ideas about society and human nature .

In postcolonial apocalyptic fiction, the pandemic often functions as a powerful metaphor. Some critiques explicitly equate colonialism and capitalism themselves with pandemics. Jeff Barnaby asks, “[C]olonialism and capitalism are pandemics. If you look at the way colonialism has consumed everything, how could you not compare it... to a cannibal that devours everything in its sight mindlessly?” (as cited in Dyre, 2029). Pandemics in these narratives expose and exacerbate existing inequalities rooted in colonial history, highlighting the disproportionate vulnerability of marginalized communities .

Fadhil al-Azzawi’s *The Last of the Angel* (Laylat al-Mala’ikah, 1992) emerges as a haunting and surreal exploration of Iraq’s sociopolitical disintegration during the late twentieth century. Set in a liminal space between myth and history, the novel captures the fragmented consciousness of a nation grappling with the legacies of colonialism, authoritarianism, and perpetual war. The text unfolds as a tapestry of personal and collective memories, populated by spectral figures—angels, ghosts, and forgotten martyrs—that bear witness to an apocalyptic present. This study proposes the term sentimental pandemic to describe the emotional saturation and affective paralysis that envelops the novel’s characters, as they navigate a world stripped of meaning and continuity. Unlike traditional sentimentality, which may offer moral resolution or catharsis, this pandemic of feeling is diffuse, contagious, and disempowering—a condition bred by the erosion of national identity and communal hope under postcolonial crises.

Within the framework of postcolonial apocalyptic fiction, *The Last of the Angel* resists linear temporality and realistic narration, instead invoking surrealism and metafiction to expose the moral decay and spiritual void of a post-imperial Baghdad. The apocalypse in al-Azzawi’s vision is not merely an eschatological endpoint but a sustained condition of cultural collapse and metaphysical uncertainty. The novel’s richly symbolic narrative structure amplifies the inner ruin of its characters, who inhabit a city where the divine and the grotesque intermingle, and where history repeats itself in spectral cycles. By analyzing the novel through the combined lenses of postcolonial theory and apocalyptic narrative, this paper seeks to examine how al-Azzawi reconfigures national trauma into a surreal literary form—one that mourns the loss of collective meaning while also gesturing toward a fragmented, yet resilient, cultural memory.

1.2 Literature Review

The commonalities and intermingling of the pandemic, emotional crisis, postcoloniality and the apocalyptic imagination have been explored in recent literary scholarship. While pandemics have been studied primarily as a disease and a public health issue, modern critics focus on how they are also used as representations for emotional contagion, collective trauma, and social divisions (Panayi & Haug, 2021). Similarly, postcolonial criticism has gone beyond issues of colonial control to explore the long-term psychological, cultural and political impact of colonial pasts. In this context, apocalyptic literature becomes a valuable tool for examining such societies faced with collapse, violence and existential uncertainty (DiTommaso, 2020). Though there is a considerable amount of scholarship that has examined emotional contagion, postcolonial theory and apocalyptic discourse separately, there are few studies that aimed to bring them together at the same time. Furthermore, the critical approach to *The Last of the Angels* by Fadhil al-Azzawi has been mainly cultural, political, Foucauldian and/or Islamic, with insufficient attention given to the interdisciplinary consideration of the novel as a narrative of "sentimental pandemic" in a "postcolonial apocalyptic landscape."

One of the most important recent publications dealing with literary pandemic studies is the article by Panayi and Haug (2021) *Pandemics and Mental Health Through the Lens of Literature*. The authors intend to demonstrate the ways in which literary works depict pandemics as an event of communal psychological anguish, as well as a biological crisis. Their goals are to explore the connection between literature and mental health, fear, grief and emotional resilience during pandemic situations. The study uses a qualitative analytical approach, with the help of interdisciplinary approaches from literature, psychiatry, and psychology, and reviews the iconographic representations of epidemic outbreaks in literature. The authors draw the conclusion that, in addition to disease, the emotional aspects of pandemics, such as fear, anxiety, loneliness and loss are transmitted through communities as well. In terms of pandemic narratives, the study successfully points towards the psychological importance of the pandemic's narratives, but it is most focused on medical and emotional experiences, and less on colonial histories and apocalyptic imagination. In spite of this, it can be used as a foundation to the present study which builds on the idea of a metaphorical "sentimental pandemic" in a postcolonial literary context (Panayi & Haug, 2021).

Alamoodi et al. (2021) have presented the other view in the paper *Sentiment Analysis and Its Applications in Fighting COVID-19 and*



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Infectious Diseases: A Systematic Review. This research differs from the study of literature in that it focuses on computational methods of sentiment analysis with the global health crisis in mind. Its main goal is to examine the concepts and approaches of artificial intelligence in the context of tracking emotional reactions on digital applications throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors employ a systematic review methodology to integrate the existing research on machine learning, natural language processing, and how public opinion is analysed. From their findings, they conclude that emotions like fear, uncertainty, panic and hope can be transferred easily via digital communication and have a great impact on public behavior. The study is indeed not literary criticism, but it brings the concept of emotional contagion, important to the world of computer science, as a measurable social phenomenon. The main restriction of its use is that it focuses on digital data and not too much as literary representation. However, the findings of the study contribute to deepening the theoretical framework of the current study by proving that emotions can be seen as a contagious social force, hence supporting the conceptualization of the "sentimental pandemic" as an analytical metaphor for emotional transmission in literary narratives (Alamoodi et al., 2021).

Smith-Christopher's (2014), *A Postcolonial Reading of Apocalyptic Literature: On Mixing Monsters* is an earlier work of scholarship that addresses apocalyptic criticism. The study aims in reinterpreting the apocalyptic literature from the postcolonial perspective. In line with postcolonial theorists and biblical apocalyptic traditions, Smith-Christopher believes that apocalyptic narratives often come from people who are oppressed, culturally, displaced, and politically dominated. By examining the text critically, the study shows that the apocalyptic imagery is not only religious but also symbolic in resisting Imperial power. The one of the most important features of this book is the ability to combine the postcolonial theory and the apocalyptic discourse with success, which pushes away the traditional theological interpretations. The study is mainly biblical in nature, though, of course, some contemporary fiction is included. Nevertheless, it is at the same time a centerpiece of theoretical analysis in the present study, as it demonstrates 'how apocalyptic narratives can be used to communicate the psychological and political impact of colonial violence' (Smith-Christopher, 2014: 4).

In *Apocalyptic Literature in the Global Imagination*, DiTommaso (2020) extends the focus to include other literary genres. This study focuses on the examination of the phenomenon of apocalyptic literature becoming

world culture, influenced by political turmoil, environmental problems, warfare, and collective uncertainty. Comparative and literary analysis, the author insists, shows a growing trend in modern apocalypse literature that is no longer solely religious, but rather takes into account secular matters. The overall success of the study is pretty good in illustrating the cross-cultural nature of apocalyptic discourse, although the issue of postcolonial societies and emotional contagion as an interconnected phenomenon is not given a lot of attention. Therefore, the present study extends the research by DiTommaso, a global literature of apocalypse, by focusing on a specifically postcolonial and affective study of the phenomenon of apocalypse in contemporary Iraqi fiction (DiTommaso, 2020).

However, research that focuses on Fadhil al-Azzawi is still relatively scarce. Mohaisen and Adwan's *The Influence of Colonial Powers on Identity and Cultural Resistance in Fadhil Al-Azzawi's The Last of the Angels: A Foucauldian Study* focuses on the impact of colonial power on identity and cultural resistance in the novel. The authors use Foucauldian notions of power and discourse to examine how colonial power structures produce individual and collective identities. They have found that resistance takes place through cultural memory, language and social practices. This research will offer useful insights into the dynamics of colonial domination and into identity politics, but will not take apocalyptic symbolism and the flow of collective emotions as analytical frameworks. Thus, the present research builds upon previous research and adds emotional contagion and apocalyptic criticism to the postcolonial study.

Likewise, Zubaida's (2015) chapter *Popular Religion and the Entry into Political Modernity as Evidenced in The Last of the Angels*, analyzes the connections between religion, political modernity, and Iraqi modernity. The study contextualizes the discussion of al-Azzawi's portrayal of the role of religious beliefs as active social forces, which are part of the process of change in history. While Zubaida's historical and cultural readings add depth to an understanding of the novel's political aspects, they do not examine the emotional frameworks of the novel or the apocalyptic imagination. The study argues that the chapter fails to investigate the connection between affect, catastrophe and post-colonial experience, which is the focus of the present research.

All of these studies show that there is significant scholarly interest in pandemic narratives, emotional reactions, postcolonial criticism, apocalyptic literature and Fadhil al-Azzawi's fiction. However, they are still mostly segregated in separate areas of investigation. In the study of



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pandemics, psychological wellbeing is the focus; in sentiment analysis, digital emotional transmission is the focus; in postcolonial studies, colonial power and identity are the main focus; and in apocalyptic criticism, the focus is on catastrophe from a theological or global literary perspective. Current studies on *The Last of the Angels* focus primarily on issues of identity and religion and cultural resistance, often without connecting this to broader theoretical discussions.

Thus, there is still a great need to study this. This is the first study that combines Sentimental Pandemic, Postcolonial Theory and Apocalyptic Studies to look at *The Last of the Angels*. It examines the concept of emotional contagion as a metaphorical pandemic in the novel which circulates fear, trauma, memory, and resistance within individuals and communities in postcolonial context. In this interdisciplinary manner, the study attempts to re-read and reinterpret al-Azzawi's novel, while also making a contribution to the ongoing debates on affect studies, post-colonial literary criticism, and apocalyptic fiction.

1.3 Sentimental Pandemic in the Novel

Fadhil al-Azzawi's novel, *The Last of the Angels*, first published in Arabic in 1992 and translated into English by William M. Hutchins in 2007, offers a vibrant, chaotic, and often surreal portrayal of life in the multi-ethnic Iraqi city of Kirkuk during the tumultuous mid-20th century. Set against a backdrop of British influence, oil disputes, political coups, and simmering social tensions, the narrative weaves together the lives of memorable characters in the Jaqour district, blending stark reality with fantastical elements. This analysis aims to explore the novel through the lens of a "sentimental pandemic" – a concept referring to the widespread, rapid transmission of collective emotional states, akin to an epidemic, often triggered or amplified by ambiguous, important, and potentially threatening situations. Drawing upon social psychological concepts of emotional contagion and rumor spread, particularly relevant in times of crisis, this paper will examine how *The Last of the Angels* depicts the generation and propagation of collective emotions like fear, anger, hope, and despair within the Jaqour community. By analyzing the narrative and incorporating direct quotes from the English translation, we can illuminate the socio-psychological dynamics at play in a community under constant stress.

The Jaqour district of Kirkuk, as depicted in *The Last of the Angels*, exists in a perpetual state of low-grade crisis and pervasive ambiguity, creating fertile ground for the spread of collective emotions. The novel subtly portrays the underlying tensions stemming from British influence via the

Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), nascent political movements, and the complex ethnic and religious mix of the city. This environment aligns with the social psychological principle that ambiguity multiplied by importance fuels rumor and emotional responses (Allport & Postman, 1947). The power dynamics are unclear but deeply important to the residents' lives. The oil company, for instance, is both a source of livelihood and a symbol of foreign control, generating conflicting emotions. Even personal crises, like Fatima's struggle with infertility, become entangled in the collective psyche, rife with suspicion and reliance on competing traditional and religious beliefs, reflecting a broader societal anxiety. Fatima's frantic search for cures involves consulting various imams and even considering Jewish saints or Christian hog's teeth, highlighting a community grappling with uncertainty and seeking control through any means necessary. Her suspicions focus on her husband's family, demonstrating how personal anxieties quickly become social and emotional entanglements, "her suspicions, from the beginning, had focused on Nazira—her husband's sister—and on Nazira's mother, Hidayat, a plump old woman who made no secret of her collaboration with the devil" (Al-Azzawi, 2007, p. 2). This atmosphere, where personal troubles, social pressures, and political undercurrents constantly intersect under a veil of ambiguity and perceived threat, primes the community for the rapid spread of shared feelings, whether it be anxiety, suspicion, or later, anger and rebellion.

Fear and anxiety readily metastasize within the Jaqour district, often sparked by individual incidents that quickly gain collective significance. Hameed Nylon's sudden, unexplained return from work immediately triggers anxiety in his wife, Fatima, "this was the first time he had returned so early, a fact that made her feel uncomfortable and anxious (Al-Azzawi, 2007, p. 3).

Her personal worry reflects a broader communal sensitivity to disruption. When Hameed fails to return to work the next day, Fatima realizes "something was wrong, something he was hiding from her... It had to be something serious" (p. 4). This escalation from personal unease to the certainty of a serious, hidden problem exemplifies how individual anxieties can amplify in an environment conditioned by instability. Although Hameed initially tries to downplay the situation, claiming he took a holiday, Fatima is "not entirely reassured, for he might be trying to deceive her" (p. 4). This lingering suspicion highlights the difficulty of containing anxiety once it takes root. While the novel often employs humor, the underlying currents of fear related to job security, political instability, and social judgment are palpable. The community's reaction



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to Hameed's eventual firing, though initially met with laughter, also carries an undercurrent of shared vulnerability. The imam's later comment linking the firing to divine disapproval "This matter cannot be acceptable to God or His Prophet," (p. 6) shows how personal events are quickly interpreted through a collective lens, potentially spreading fear of wider repercussions or divine wrath. This constant potential for individual incidents to trigger widespread emotional responses demonstrates the contagious nature of fear and anxiety within the community.

Just as fear spreads, so too does anger, morphing from individual grievance into collective outrage and action. Hameed Nylon's dismissal, initially a source of personal humiliation and neighborhood gossip, becomes a catalyst for a wider "sentimental pandemic" of indignation. While the community initially laughs, the injustice festers. Notably, "some men who worked there [at the oil company], and most of the neighborhood youth... tried to incite the people of the neighborhood against the oil company" (Al-Azzawi, 2007, p. 6). This attempt to channel personal misfortune into collective action highlights the potential for anger to become contagious. The imam frames the issue in moral terms, declaring the company's action unacceptable to God, further legitimizing and spreading the sense of grievance. Even more strikingly, the women's anger manifests in misdirected aggression towards kerosene vendors, whom they tell, "You should pour kerosene down that Englishwoman's crotch" (p. 6). This visceral, albeit misplaced, reaction demonstrates the intensity and irrational spread of collective anger. Although the community hesitates at organized political action, fearing repercussions, "if the people had felt the case was political, they definitely would have been afraid," (p. 7), the underlying anger simmers. Hameed's personal story, amplified by rumor and moral outrage, taps into a shared sense of powerlessness against the foreign company and potentially the ruling powers, illustrating how individual slights can ignite a contagious wave of collective resentment and a desire for rebellion, even if its initial manifestations are chaotic or indirect.

The novel masterfully employs rumor, myth, and fantastical occurrences as conduits for collective emotion, demonstrating how shared narratives, however outlandish, shape the community's sentimental landscape. Hameed Nylon's dismissal spawns multiple conflicting rumors, reflecting the community's attempt to process the event through gossip and speculation, tinged with judgment and perhaps envy. More significantly, the collective prayer for rain—initially linked to Hameed's plight but quickly overshadowed by drought fears—results in a perceived miracle: "Suddenly the sky darkened... Then affirmative cries glorifying God's



compassion and might resounded... the prayerful demonstrators were caught in the rain” (Al-Azzawi, 2007, p. 8). This event triggers a powerful wave of collective relief and awe, momentarily eclipsing other anxieties. The subsequent debate over who deserved credit for the miracle reveals underlying ethnic tensions but also reinforces the community’s reliance on supernatural explanations. The belief that Dalli Ihsan, the local madman, commanded the rain gains traction because “Dalli Ihsan was not a human being but a jinni, one of the Muslim faction of the jinn. This was no secret, since everyone said so every day” (p. 10). The elaborate backstory of Dalli Ihsan attending jinni parties with cats who transform into humans serves as a communal myth, embedding the fantastical within the everyday. These myths and rumors are not mere curiosities; they function as vectors for shared emotions—awe, fear, ethnic prejudice, the need for meaning and intervention—creating a collective psychological reality where the boundaries between the mundane and the magical blur, and emotions spread through shared belief in the extraordinary.

Amidst the waves of anxiety and anger, the novel also portrays currents of resilience, hope, and particularly satire, which function as counter-pandemics, preventing complete societal despair. The community’s reaction to Hameed Nylon’s predicament, while initially involving anger and anxiety, also includes laughter and gossip. Hameed himself, after a period of silence, eventually embraces his humiliating nickname: “he himself finally accepted [Hameed Nylon], adding it to his given name” (Al-Azzawi, 2007, p. 5). Furthermore, after the dramatic rain miracle, the collective focus shifts entirely: “The miracle that had occurred made them forget the story of Hameed Nylon, who could now joke with the others about his escapades with Mrs. Helen McNeely” (p. 9). This rapid shift suggests a communal capacity for resilience and finding humor even in misfortune, a form of emotional regulation that prevents anxieties from perpetually dominating. The narrative’s often satirical tone, blending the tragic with the absurd (like the detailed genealogy of Dalli Ihsan the jinni), acts as a coping mechanism, allowing both characters and readers to process difficult realities without succumbing to them. This undercurrent of humor, the ability to forget or reframe misfortune, and the glimmers of hope (even if rooted in fantastical beliefs like rain miracles) represent a vital emotional counter-balance, a contagious resilience spreading alongside the fear and anger, enabling the community’s endurance.



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Conclusion

Fadhil al-Azzawi's *The Last of the Angels* vividly illustrates the dynamics of a "sentimental pandemic" within the microcosm of Kirkuk's Jaqour district. Through a narrative rich with political tension, social ambiguity, and fantastical elements, the novel portrays how collective emotions—fear, anxiety, anger, awe, and resilience—spread contagiously through the community. Triggered by crises and fueled by rumor and shared belief systems, these emotional waves shape the residents' perceptions and actions. The fear sparked by Hameed Nylon's unexplained absence, the collective anger following his dismissal, the awe inspired by the rain miracle, and the enduring power of myth and satire all demonstrate the potent force of shared sentiment. By successfully incorporating direct quotes from the English translation, this analysis highlights how the novel captures the complex interplay between individual experience and collective emotional currents. *The Last of the Angels* serves as a compelling literary exploration of how communities under stress navigate uncertainty and threat, not just through political or physical means, but through the powerful, often unpredictable, spread of feeling.

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