

**Analysis of Three Books' Characters'
Psychological Actions in Light of the
Epidemic's Stereotypical Repercussions
The Days (1926 – 1967)**

**by Taha Hussien, About Birds we Talk (2010)
by Ahmed Khaled Tawfik, and Dreams of
Resurrection (2021) by Mohamed Gamal.**

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Abstract:

This study places literature's response to pandemics in a broader framework to better comprehend literature and its roles within the shifting paradigms of a world tormented by humanitarian catastrophes. Only literary works depicting pandemics can get into the trauma and losses sustained by people worldwide. This is why the world has not returned to normalcy so long after the outbreak of Covid-19 and the availability of vaccines. Hence, in such uncertain times, the study of literature involving pandemics becomes inevitable and requires a humanistic comprehension of the works under inspection. Literary works documenting the effects of pandemics on social, psychological, educational, and cultural spheres are analyzed to learn more about people's reactions to the epidemics, the strategies they developed to survive, and the methods they used to cope with the pain and trauma they experienced as a result of the pandemics. The scope of this article is limited to a few books that all share a common theme, pandemics, and focus on its many consequences, including trauma, tragedy, loss of life, and the following mental anguish. Two of the works cover genuine plagues, such as Cholera and avian flu, and the disasters they caused, while the third one imagines the advent of a lethal pandemic and will be compared to the other two to address these concerns. Taha Hussein's *The Days*, Ahmed Khalid Towfik's *About Birds We Talk* (), and Mohammed Gamal a Gamal's *Dreams of Resurrection* are the three works of literature being compared and contrasted.

Keywords: fear, pandemics, trauma, psychological ordeals, devastation, Covid-19

ملخص:

الانعكاس النمطي للوباء والسلوك النفسي للشخصيات في ثلاث روايات الأيام
(١٩٢٧-٦٧) للكاتب طه حسين، عن الطيور نتحدث (٢٠١٠) للكاتب خالد
توفيق، أحلام القيامة (٢٠٢١) للكاتب محمد جمال

تضع هذه الدراسة استجابة الأدب للأوبئة في إطار أوسع في محاولة للحصول على فهم أكثر دقة للأدب وأدواره ضمن النماذج المتغيرة لعالم تعذبه الكوارث الإنسانية. فقط الأعمال الأدبية التي تصور الأوبئة هي التي يمكن أن تدخل في الصدمات والخسائر التي تكبدها الناس في جميع أنحاء العالم، وهذا هو السبب في أن العالم لم يعد إلى الحياة الطبيعية بعد فترة طويلة من تفشي Covid-19 وتوافر اللقاحات. ومن ثم، في مثل هذه الأوقات المضطربة، تصبح دراسة الأدبيات التي تتطوي على الأوبئة أمراً لا مفر منه وتتطلب فهماً إنسانياً للأعمال قيد الفحص. يتم تحليل الأعمال الأدبية التي توثق آثار الأوبئة على المجالات الاجتماعية والنفسية والتعليمية والثقافية لمعرفة المزيد عن ردود أفعال الناس تجاه الأوبئة، والاستراتيجيات التي طوروها للبقاء على قيد الحياة، والأساليب التي استخدموها للتعامل مع الألم والصدمات التي تعرضوا لها نتيجة الأوبئة. يقتصر نطاق هذه المقالة على عدد قليل من الكتب التي تشترك جميعها في موضوع مشترك الأوبئة، وتركز على عواقبها العديدة، بما في ذلك الصدمة والمأساة وفقدان الأرواح والألم العقلي الذي يلي ذلك. يغطي اثنان من الأعمال الأوبئة الحقيقية، مثل الكوليرا وأنفلونزا الطيور، والكوارث التي تسببت فيها، بينما يتصور العمل الثالث ظهور جائحة قاتل وسيتم مقارنته مع العاملين الآخرين لمعالجة هذه المخاوف. أيام طه حسين، أحمد خالد توفيق عن طيور نتحدث ()، أحلام القيامة لمحمد جمال جمال هي الأعمال الأدبية الثلاثة التي تتم مقارنتها وتباينها.

Objectives:

Several academic publications have explored the topic of epidemics and their profound connections to literature. However, these analyses have yet to reexamine the aforementioned literary figures in light of human psychological behavior. It is not the existence of germs and viruses that unites pandemics throughout time and space. Rather, the human response to a pandemic follows the same pattern regardless of location, history, or culture. The mortality and suffering caused by pandemics like Covid-19 are felt everywhere. This is evidence that the human mind has a role in the spread of pandemics like Covid-19. This study defines a coronavirus and its characteristics. As Covid -19 approaches, why do some individuals and governments advocate for the isolation and closure of social networks? What catastrophic mental impacts does this sickness have on our daily lives? Do works of literature serve a therapeutic purpose, and do they benefit the reader?

Many individuals, as the COVID-19 epidemic swept the globe, looked back in time to see if they could learn anything about how our ancestors dealt with previous crises. Early in 2020, many news sites connected the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1919 and the current COVID-19 outbreak. Literature provides another avenue for research into common human experiences over time. Plagues and epidemics are central themes in several classic works. Both the biblical book of Exodus and Homer's epic *The Iliad* (written in the ninth century BCE) open

with plagues devastating the Greek war camp at Troy. While the plague is a heavenly punishment in both of these books, pandemic fiction covers much ground beyond that. Details on the spread of the disease and its impact on daily life are provided, for instance, in Percival Hunt's 1958 essay on London's Great Plague of 1665 by consulting Pepys's first-hand account in *The Diary of Samuel Pepys (1660-1669)*. Questions of racism, imperialism, and globalization are all part of the larger social and political themes that are often linked. Critics have pointed out that many British people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries confused fear of sickness with a dread of colonial cultures that would challenge British cultural standards. Krystal Iseminger (2017) wrote, "The nature of the disease and the fears related to an infection can, through Stoker's novel, be tied to the social and political concerns of the period, illustrating that the fear of infection in *Dracula* mirrors not only the fear of national degeneracy in late Victorian England but also the dread of invasion." Being a foreigner, *Dracula* brings with him the symbolic sickness of vampirism, which "disturbs the relationship between the individual and God by defying death," as stated by Jens Lohfert Jorgensen (2015) (*Stock, Studying Pandemic Literature*)

Writing about zombie fiction, many critics have zeroed in on the capitalist undercurrents that have been so prevalent in the genre. Sven Cvek examines Colson Whitehead's 2011 novel *Zone One* from this perspective in an article released in 2014. The post points out that the book came out immediately after the 2008 financial crisis. Cvek claims that "the zombie metaphor al-

lows Whitehead to speak about the increasing economic and social instability of the American middle class." The protagonist, Mark Spitz, is a former white-collar worker for a global corporation who now holds a low-level military role in cleansing the Zone One area of zombies so humans can inhabit it again. According to Czek, white-collar professionals like Spitz are increasingly at risk.

Literature on pandemics can also help us get through our collective pain. In the wake of a new pandemic, there is always a resurgence in the reading public's appetite for works on previous pandemics. *A Diary of the Plague Year*, a novel by Daniel Defoe set during the Great Plague of 1665 in London, was hurried to the printer when the disease broke out in France in 1722. Still to be seen is how contemporary authors will approach COVID-19, but until such books are published, there is a wealth of material on pandemics from which to draw.

Methodology

The study compared and contrasted three literary works, *Dreams of Resurrection*, *About Birds We Are Talk*, and *The Days* to demonstrate the psychological consequences of pandemics on humans and how literature conveys the emotions and reactions of those who are trying to survive and face them. The investigation also reveals parallels between the outbreak of Covid-19 and the diseases mentioned above. What exactly is Covid-19 is the focus of this study, and the pain that humanity endures in light of the literature cited.

Introduction:

Literature and pandemics are inextricably linked: There is as much written about pandemics as they have been chronicled in history books and literary works, and with good reason: they are a humanitarian calamity of epic proportions and a subject of study in the Humanities, Biology, and Epidemiology. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about paradigm shifts, and "it has become a frequent comment that the coronavirus outbreak makes it feel like we are living in a dystopian novel right now" (Booker 2005).

Pandemics and literature go back as far as written history goes. Cummins states, "From the earliest days of recorded history, microbes, and viruses have pursued people." This quote is meant to illustrate the relationship between humans and viruses. They hid in sewers, hid on ships, and stowed away in airplanes, waiting for the right moment to strike (Cummins 03). Throughout the beginning of time, pandemics have had a special connection to humanity, sharing many of the same symptoms despite their many different manifestations. To illustrate the historical parallels between the present coronavirus epidemic and past plague and cholera outbreaks, Orhan Pamuk refers to spooky parallels in his writing. All too many parallels can be drawn. What unites pandemics across literature and history is not just the fact that they are caused by infectious agents but rather the similarity of the first reactions of their victims (The Diary of Samuel Pepys 02).

Authors have described how people took every precaution throughout the pandemic, including keeping their distance from one another, not going to people's homes, and instead holding meetings in public places like roadways. Everyone in the present Covid-19 outbreak is adhering to identical routines. Our understanding of health, disease, illness, and our ancestors' internalization of suffering and anguish from pandemics are all shaped by literature about these events, demonstrating a commonality of humanistic concerns. Literature written during pandemics has always served as a window onto cultures afflicted by plagues and pestilences, providing an intimate portrait of similarities and variances, slight and important, in the social, political, health-related, and economic challenges they faced. The similarities between pandemics are more dangerous than the actual diseases themselves. One additional universal and seemingly unprompted response to pandemics has always been the creation of rumors and the circulation of misleading information. Misinformation and the inability to comprehend the big picture fed the fires of rumor during previous pandemics (*The Diary of Samuel Pepys* 08).

Like the Covid-19 case, pandemics inevitably become a breeding ground for disseminating misinformation, prejudice, and religious polarization, thus exacerbating the humanitarian disaster. Although "much of the literature of plague and communicable diseases present the carelessness, stupidity, and selfishness of those in authority as the only initiator of the rage of the

masses," state power exacerbates racial, cultural, and ethnic tensions (The Diary of Samuel Pepys 06).

Covid-19 has ensnared the planet in the chains of a horrific pandemic. The resulting massive loss of life and destruction have transformed humanity into mindless beings desperately seeking to fill the inescapable emptiness of the fatal virus. Studying texts highlighting humankind's reactions to pandemics to determine the parallels in the pandemic literature is unavoidable in such unusually sad times.

Evolving Pandemics:

A Conceptual, Historical, and Etymological Analysis

Despite its current medical connotation, the word "epidemic" was originally used to describe a rapid spread of a phenomenon other than disease. Epidemic comes from the Greek words *epi* (on) and *demos* (people) (people). Although the term has been around for almost 2,500 years, with its first use in Homer's *Odyssey*, it started to be associated with medicine in the fifth century BCE. When Hippocrates adopted it as the title of his medical treatise, epidemics could imply anything from "one who is returned home" to "civil war" (Martin and Martin-Granel 976, 977). The original meaning of the word "epidemic," "on the people," eventually evolved into the current meaning, "which circulates or propagates in a country" (977).

Interestingly, Hippocrates' contemporary Sophocles uses the latter in a distinct connotation. The former can naturally suggest a disease or "a sequence of syndromes," as in Hippocrates' usage. The Greek word "epidemios" is used interchangeably with "fame" and "rumors" in Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King* (977). So, from a linguistic perspective, the spread of sickness and the dissemination of rumors, ideas, or knowledge were not completely separate phenomena. Understanding the nature of an epidemic is aided by the word's semantic development; an epidemic is not just a medical sickness in which viruses propagate but also a channel via which ideas, beliefs, and conceptions spread.

Over time, explanations for how diseases spread have shifted dramatically from gods, polluted air, seedlike entities, and bacteria. At first, people thought conditions were sent from the gods as punishment for sinners, but later, researchers and thinkers tried to come up with more rational explanations. Historically, works of literature expressed the belief that epidemics were a punishment for the wicked. A strange illness strikes certain people in *The Iliad* and *Oedipus the King* as divine punishment for their wrongdoing. Pharaoh's continued defiance against God is shown in the Bible's Ten Plagues of Egypt, and one of the consequences is the abrupt appearance of sores on the body. A first-person account of the Great Plague of London in 1665, Daniel Defoe's *Diary of the Plague Year* (1722) shows that the concept of the epidemic as a retributive punishment persisted throughout

the Middle Ages. The narrator describes how preachers "more sank than elevated the hearts of their hearers" (33) by telling them they needed to repent of their misdeeds because of the disease.

Throughout the Classical period, Hippocrates laid the groundwork for what would later be called the "miasma theory" by correlating the occurrence and symptoms of disease with environmental and climatic circumstances. Miasma theory, with miasma meaning "bad," "polluted," or "night air," was popular from the time of Roman physician Galen (129)until the turn of the nineteenth century. This theory proposed that disease was spread by inhaling poisonous vapors released by decaying bodies or organic matter. This explained the prevalence of infectious diseases in filthy environments, such as Cholera and the plague, but it didn't account for others, like syphilis (Harris JB et al 58). Girolamo Fracastoro (1478–1553) proposed in the 16th century that diseases spread by seedlike creatures or 'germs,' which in his meaning meant chemical substances liable to evaporate or disperse through the air and enter the human body, causing tissue damage. Although his "contagion theory" was not widely accepted in his time, it was the forerunner of the "germ theory" developed 300 years later by Louis Pasteur (1822–1895) and Robert Koch (1843–1910). Scientists did not identify microorganisms as disease-causing agents until the latter half of the nineteenth century (Harris JB et al. 59).

The idea of disease as retribution for sin did not go away entirely, but it took on a new shape as the nineteenth century ended (Saxon 143). Susan Sontag does just that in her works *Sickness as Metaphor* (1978) and *AIDS and its Metaphors* (1989). She says that "[n]othing is more punishing than to give an illness a meaning—that meaning being invariably a moralistic one" about the early use of disease as a metaphor for "bad" (58). Since the patient is now seen as the disease's origin or carrier, he or she must also deal with the stigma of being shunned by society. "Enemy metaphors" emerged after the development of germ theory, which established pathogens as the definitive, material origin of disease transmission. Experts and the press have dubbed microbes "foreign agents" or "invaders" that are invading from "outside" and trying to upset the established order (99). As a result, anti-infectious disease "war on disease" programs emerged and have persisted to the present day. Sontag argues that demonization moves from the disease to the patient when it is portrayed as an "alien other," which is done when a contagious disease is publicized. The patient is considered responsible while essentially a victim since he is harboring these "foreign, intrusive infections" within his body and may transmit them to others (99).

It's not just a linguistic issue, as Sontag points out. Cases or carriers of infectious agents are projected onto society and transformed into social outcasts, or "a community of pariahs," to use her words (113). As her response to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, she wrote *AIDS as Metaphor*, in which she makes the following claims,

Every feared epidemic disease [...] generates a preoccupying distinction between the disease's putative carriers (which usually means just the poor and, in this part of the world [the USA], people with darker skins) and those defined—health professionals and other bureaucrats do the defining—as “the general population.” (115)

Epidemics can have significant political repercussions, and not just in the form of finger-pointing. The person who is the first to be diagnosed with an epidemic is sometimes called "patient zero" (also "Patient Zero" np). There are many unknowns when an epidemic strikes, including who started the wave of disease transmission and where they live. The information has societal and political ramifications, and its importance to public health experts is only one reason for its importance. There was much debate on the origin of the 1947 cholera pandemic. Claims that a resident of the nearby village of al-Korein was the first person to get Cholera have been called into question since numerous British soldiers had recently arrived from India. In this country, the disease was rife (Gallagher 140). While it was never established beyond a reasonable doubt that British forces were responsible for introducing Cholera to Egypt, the fact that the issue was avoided in public pronouncements and reports at the time shows that it may have incited additional hatred and insurrection among Egyptians.

If there were an uprising, it would not be the first time an outbreak has done the same. Al-Wabaa Allazi Qatal 180,000

Masri (*The Pandemic that Killed 180,000 Egyptians*) (2020) by Egyptian physician and intellectual Mohamed Abu al-Ghar uses archival information to demonstrate that the Spanish flu hit Egypt in 1918 contributed to kicking off the 1919 Revolution. During World War I, when Britain conquered Egypt, its troops were given preferential treatment over Egyptians regarding using the country's healthcare and social services. Demonstrations in the countryside sparked the revolution after a sharp decline in social and health conditions led to many deaths among Egyptians. Epidemics have the potential to alter past events. In the same way, epidemics cause social disruption (Jedwab R 58), they draw attention to preexisting societal issues. Historiographer Frank Snowden writes in his 2019 book, *Epidemics, and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*, that "epidemic diseases are not random catastrophes that affect society capriciously and without warning." He argues that "on the contrary," every community creates its unique weaknesses. Researching epidemics offers a window into a society's organization, economic status, and political objectives (7). First, I will provide a brief overview of the history of Cholera in the region, the importance of Egypt's geographical location concerning the spread of Cholera, and the social and political conditions that served as a backdrop for the epidemic before turning to an analysis of various texts.

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 was spread from person to person, as proven by a mission to China led by the World Health Organization on January 22, 2020. When towns and countries were under lockdown, a new set of worries emerged. Because of this, all critical operations, including foreign travel and business, have ceased, and companies have seen their earnings plummet. Until then, residents kept indoors, going outside only when necessary (and then only while wearing a mask) and maintaining a safe distance from their neighbors. Simultaneously, the importance of digital communication, the spark for the new era of globalization, grew. Social media kept families together, whether separated by a few miles or a few thousand; websites became local governments' primary means of communication. Businesses such as restaurants and merchants transferred their sales operations entirely online. The reaction to the threat was slower and more disorganized in other countries. Other people laughed off the pandemic and took the mandate to wear a mask as an affront to their individuality. And others gave the potential for infection equal consideration to the potential for economic collapse. There were marches and even riots in opposition to the public health regulations. Despite measures such as quarantine, lockdowns, social isolation, wearing face masks, and travel restrictions, millions were temporarily infected, and thousands perished. (Simon..., V)

In the same way, people's thoughts, emotions, and responses to global events are reflected in literature. Literature is also a mirror of society. It showed how epidemics had permeated

our society and lives, leaving deep scars on our personalities, emotions, actions, and prospects for the future. As a kind of escape that can also impart useful information, literature has been used to help individuals cope with the effects of recent and historical pandemics. Literature has an impact, as described by Abhik Roy in his piece "Literature and Pandemics," which will appear in the Statement in September 2020.

In the wake of Covid-19, when we are locked inside our houses for our safety, the literature we read can make us feel less alone by bringing us together with people from all over time and space who have gone through something similar (Roy 2020).

Arab writers, like their literary counterparts elsewhere, have utilized literature to depict the spread of a plague that threatens to wipe out humanity and the responses of its inhabitants. Three Egyptian authors, Mohammed Gamal *Dreams of Resurrections*, Ahmed Khaled Tawfik *About Birds We Talk*, and Taha Hussien *The Days*, are the focus of this scholarly investigation.

Dreams of Resurrection

The title, which reflects the actual events and situations, is a selling point and a crucial building block of the story. Unexpectedly, after tens of people vanished in Egypt, 53 bodies were buried beneath a golf course in Gona. Using the hero's dreams and real-world events, Mohammed Gamal links the emergence of

a fatal sickness to the story's unfolding drama. Illegal medical experimentation on low-income persons is the focus of a conspiracy theory mentioned in the novel. The story foretells the global invasion and threat of a devastating flu virus.

Further, it shows how the virus has affected Egypt. Scientists conduct cruel experiments on diseased impoverished people in an attempt to develop a vaccine; the victims are then found dead and buried in unmarked graves. A translator named Sara Mamdouh said, "the characters are so real and visible, the writer drew the psychological sides and physical traits ingeniously to allow the reader see them." (Sara 12)

About Birds We Talk

Ahmed Khaled Tawfik, an Egyptian writer, released a mystery/science fiction novel *About Birds We Talk*. A mystery sickness is affecting the population, he says. In the 40th installment of the "Safari Series," a story narrated by a young man describes a mysterious illness that affects chickens. The protagonist of this book is a young Egyptian doctor named Alaa Abdel Azim. After spending some time in South Africa, he relocates to the town of Angawanderi in Cameroon, which is close to the country's border with Nigeria. There, he works in a unit called Safari, which is "not a place for hunting monsters, but for hunting diseases in the Black Continent," contrary to what the name may imply (Tawfik 4). In 1957, an Austrian Baron launched a project in Kenya that

would become the foundation for the nonprofit organization known as Safari.

Alaa is a member of the whole team "H" at this company, composed of the brightest minds worldwide and various scientific disciplines. There is evidence to suggest a connection between the disease and chickens. Disease transmission, conspiracy theories, and the involvement of pharmaceutical laboratories in studying and marketing vaccinations are some of the themes that set this novel apart. It has much relevance to where we are right now. Where do the pig and the chicken meet?" Tawfik said, implying that China was the likely origin of the pandemic. As stated in (Tawfik 60). There have been shocking influenza pandemics only in Southeast Asia. They were not revealed, "until the word (Asian flu) rang a bell that reminded us of the word plague." Every Chinese farmer keeps deadly laboratory samples for biological studies in his barn. The author explains that a superior new virus that can be transmitted from pigs to humans results from a combination of pig and bird viruses that infect pigs and develop more hazardous capabilities than pig viruses. One character's condition, characterized by anxiety and a dread of being lost, illustrates the psychological implications. In light of the recent Coronavirus outbreak in China, Tawfik has warned of an impending epidemic and a grave threat to humanity.

The Days

Novelist Taha Hussein's *The Days* is a work of biography. *The Days* are divided into three parts, each written at a different time: the first, published in 1929, recounts Taha Hussein's early life; the second, published in 1932, details his time as a student at Al Azhar; and the third, published in 1967, is a collection of Taha Hussein's recollections of his time spent in France. The titles of the three parts give away their contents: he goes from his village in Upper Egypt, where he lost his sight as a child due to disease and medical negligence, to Cairo, where he attends Al-Azhar seminary and the newly opened Cairo University, and then to France, where he receives a second doctorate from the Sorbonne. Part One, in which Hussein details the tragedies that befell his family, will serve as the primary focus of this study. The decline and spread of ignorance in 20th-century Egypt are examined. Here, he discusses the outbreak of Cholera in Egypt and its devastating effects on the country and its people. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist reflects on the tragic loss of his brother, who succumbed to Cholera.

Therapeutic literature for pandemics

When an outbreak spreads over national borders and affects many people, we call it a pandemic. The term "pandemic literature" refers to works that chronicle and disseminate information about people's experiences with a pandemic. Epidemio-

logical literature is cosmic literature of major human groups with their collective imagination and personality included in its collaborative cultural framework. It was formed over centuries and immortalized by human memory in certain literary genres like novels, poetry, prose, legends, and epics. It is the kind of writing that makes every person on Earth seem like a generic model ready to die, regardless of where they were born or their parents' race or ethnicity. The fear of contagious diseases that have plagued humanity since its earliest days is a topic often explored in literature.

How might literature play a part in assisting people in dealing with trauma?

The humanities, and history and literature in particular, can help us make sense of a world where so much is out of our hands by showing us how previous generations have dealt with disasters like pandemics. While historical accounts show how pandemics affect entire populations, literary works provide a more personal perspective. When considering the potential short- and long-term effects of the coronavirus, it is important to remember the historical role of pandemics in shaping the world. The literature shows that this understanding can help people overcome these tough times. Attempts are being made to reconstruct a global community whose fundamental oneness was revealed by the deadliest pandemic in human history.

People worldwide realize that books help them stay in touch with one another and process their feelings about the pandemic. As a result of COVID-19, some of them have lost loved ones, and others have suffered personal hardship. They provide useful context for understanding the humanities in the present day. Books are masterpieces of human creativity. Individuals and communities utilize narratives and plot development to make sense of health and sickness and to construct meaningful wholes from seemingly incoherent occurrences and phenomena. Literacy aids in both personal discovery and making sense of the global pandemic known as COVID-19. Molecular biology major Jason Hong wrote a paper titled "Making Meaning of the Pandemic Through the Lens of Literature".

What bothered me the most while reading Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych" was not the physician's inability to diagnose Ivan's mysterious disease. Rather, the complete apathy displayed by his friends and family made me sympathize with Ivan, who was left to suffer by himself. Reflecting on this story has made me realize that overcoming a novel illness like COVID-19 cannot be done alone. This pandemic requires everyone, whether infected or not, to be fully committed to keeping transmission to a minimum. Ivan may have died alone, but we will defeat this pandemic together. (Saxon 2022).

Literary texts and stories concerning epidemics provided catharsis, emotional processing, and insight into how people react to global health crises. The works of literature largely shape the way people react to the coronavirus. Lebanese author Elias Khoury observed this in a June 2020 zoom webinar titled "Writing Covid19: Prominent Middle Eastern Writers Reflect on the Epidemic."

Literature changes anticipate and enrich history. We have been going through much history, drama, and hardships lately. Human catastrophes were dealt with as a metaphor for life, but at this moment, reality and its metaphor of life, but at this moment reality and its moment metaphor are mingling together.... hence it is now time for literature to find a new approach, which is not using the metaphor of hardships to understand life but to understand the catastrophe itself to understand the fragility of humanity. (Koury 2020).

As a result of Covid-19, many individuals have been forced to stay inside their houses during the pandemic. Literature can serve as a way to reach out to those who have gone through something similar, whether they live in the present or the past. Even more essential, the literature demonstrates to its readers that they have many similarities with people who live in other cultures and eras.

Removing Yourself from Social Contacts, Going into Lockdown, and there will be no longer communicating with other humans.

The coronavirus showed how individuals would act in such a precarious situation and imposed a new way of life on them. Numerous people reported serious adverse effects on their social and psychological well-being due to the government's policies of isolating them. This feeling of loss has been compared to the "grieving" process. These, in turn, resulted in three 'losses' of a psychological and emotional nature: a lack of drive, a sense that life has no meaning, and a lack of confidence. One participant in the study on public views and experiences of social distancing and social isolation during the Covid-19 outbreak describes his isolation after the lockdown and the loss of social connection he experienced.

I have been working at home for the past week and a bit, and it has taken its toll ... because you think social contact is such an essential part of everyday life, and now it is like you walk down the street, and people are almost too scared to walk too close. It is so alien. (Williams 2020).

Others described experiencing depression or anxiety due to social withdrawal or isolation, a state they compared to being "trapped" or "emotionally claustrophobic." "It is all over the news, all over your phone, all over the T.V., it seems like every time you turn, another story pops up about it... and I believe peo-

ple feel trapped in a physical and emotional sense." (2020 William). The year 2019 had the first-ever worldwide epidemic of the Covid-19 virus, as reported by the WHO. This rare situation has once again revealed the forum of Pandemic Literature after many years.

Mohammed Gamal's *Dreams of Resurrection* features Moheb, whose infection worsens and prompts his doctor to order his wife to stay away from him.

The worst incident for her was that the doctors prevented her from staying with him in the same room as a precautionary measure to prevent any possible infection..... his exhausted body was lying on the medical mattress while many medical tubes and wires were coming out of his arms and chest connected to several medical devices. (Gamal 43).

Covid19, like other respiratory viruses, spreads through droplet and aerosol transmission. Thus, people are advised to avoid close contact while they are sick. Nabil El Masry, Gamal's hero, rolled up the sleeves of his jacket to examine the spreading pink spots on his arm and realized he had contracted a virus. He watched the influx and outflow of passengers worldwide, including many Italians. In his mind, people caught viruses because they were always moving about and visiting new cities. How could he become sick in London, he wondered? Alternatively,

"Who infected him when he arrived in Cairo, and what nationality was he?" (Gamal 112). During their encounter, Italian researcher Aurora asked, "Mr. Nabil, forgive me, but why are you wearing this mask on your face?". (Gamal 11). When Nabil left his house at the airport that morning, he was wearing a mask. I am a patient myself, and I will be the first volunteer to test the drug," he said to Aurora. "The reality is... my only condition is to work in Egypt" (Gamal 115). Since the spread of the coronavirus, mask use has become routine. Suppose there is concern that Covid-19 is spreading in your area. In that case, you can protect yourself by following a few basic steps, such as keeping your distance, wearing a mask, keeping rooms well-ventilated, avoiding crowds, washing your hands frequently, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue. Tawfik's *About Birds We Talk* mentions the need to wear a mask when handling infectious material. In light of the global expansion of Covid-19, "without being exaggerated....it is a moment to put on a mask," as the saying goes (Tawfik 59). When Tawfik writes in his story that pneumonia can mutate into a pandemic, he is assuring readers that the virus can spread rapidly among a group of people. More cases will emerge, he said, adding his intuition that this was the case (Tawfik 30).

Despite the gap in time, Taha Hussein's *The Days* depicts a distressing depiction of the pandemic and its tragic results, making it a memorial circumstance of Covid-19. Lockdown, anxiety, social distance, isolation of sick individuals in special camps, and worry that he or a loved one will contract the sickness are all depicted in the story. The author's effort to visualize cancer and its

devastating effects on his community and family is one of the book's most impressive features.

The village schools and town schools were closed, and doctors and the Public Health Department envoys were scattered throughout the land with their instruments and tents to isolate the sick. Souls will fill with anxiety and hearts with fears ... Every family talked about what had befallen the other and waited for their share of disaster. (Hussien 74,75).

People isolated themselves from one another during epidemics to reduce their risk of catching contagious diseases. Several pieces of literature have used data on deaths worldwide and the spread of the disease to illustrate how the catastrophe has touched and brought people together. The popularity of books on pandemics and other biological disasters has risen dramatically in recent years.

Terrible emotional fallout

As pandemics kill millions and have far-reaching emotional consequences, they have occurred frequently throughout human history. Covid-19, the latest pandemic strain, emerged in China and has spread rapidly, killing thousands of people quickly. The relentless growth of the Covid-19 epidemic psychologically impacts the population as death tolls rise daily, normal activities are curtailed, and people feel helpless in the face of the

situation. Patients, their loved ones, healthcare workers, and anybody else vulnerable to disease are directly impacted by pandemics, as is the wider population. Stress and panic brought on by pandemics can profoundly affect people's mental health, and how those minds cope may vary from person to person. Depression, anxiety, dread of death, loss of loved ones, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychotic symptoms, and mourning are among the psychological impacts of pandemics. A select few, however, can keep their negative feelings about pandemics in check and carry on with their lives as usual. Nonetheless, some are unable to manage these emotions without assistance. From its initial outbreak to its eventual containment, the disease's devastating effects on individuals and communities are seen as an unforeseen tragedy.

Mohammed Gamal began his story, *Dreams of Resurrection*, with a terrifying, terrible, and shocking event. The Egyptian resort of Lagoon on the Red Sea has ripped apart geometrically into dozens of large holes, each exposing a decomposing body. These victims of a fatal illness have already paid the ultimate price for their suffering. The victims of the epidemic and their loved ones are the most vulnerable to its effects. Pain, dread, and loss emerged when the disease's symptoms became intolerable. In Gamal's tale, Moheb wakes up from a coma and, after mumbling a few words to his wife about how much he loves her, he collapses entirely and falls backward onto the floor. Afraid and isolated, she hoped her partner would get healthier. Awake and smiling in front of her, she wished the moment would stay forev-

er (Gamal 55). When Gamal's character Amin comes to Berket Al Sabaa Central Hospital in a life-or-death situation, the fear of death appears. The institute was situated on the outskirts of town, next to the graves. This saddened him because it reminded him of his illness "Mr. Amin caught sight of the grave markers as he approached the institute and immediately began reciting the Al-Fatihah. His mouth was shaking" (Gamal 85).

Once Alaa's companion gets afflicted with an unknown virus, and the doctors start examining him, Alaa says, "I loathe these sights....I hate doctors even though I am one of them," displaying worry and fear of losing him (Tawfik 22). The patient describes his anxiety as his health rapidly deteriorating, saying, "from a minute, I was in a haven out of these mystery viruses...but now I am inside terrible lethal disease" (Tawfik 23). People's mental health and prospects for the future are both negatively impacted by pandemics. To prevent the spread of the disease, doctors decided to slaughter all chickens within a one-kilometer radius. With a tone of exasperation, the former owner declares,

Do you want anything else...? You have burnt my chicken; are you want to burn me too.....there is no difference. I am destitute and will have to start again."(Tawfik 73).

The farmer's outlook is reminiscent of that which prevailed after the worldwide spread of the coronavirus when millions worldwide lost their jobs and means of subsistence—those who

lost money because of the Covid-19 outbreak will suffer the most physiologically. The narrative centers on Tawfik's repeated utterance of the phrase "Be terrified, be extremely scared," which reflects his underlying uneasiness (Tawfik 17,27,38). There is widespread concern that a global flu pandemic will kill millions of people, and he talks about that.

By looking at the community as a whole, it is clear that patients, their loved ones, healthcare workers, and anyone else vulnerable to disease are all impacted by epidemics. The Days, a novel by Taha Hussien, tells the story of the narrator's family's tragic experiences with the deaths of his sister, aged four, and his brother, aged eighteen, due to Cholera. In the interim, we lost two more close relatives. In this excerpt, the narrator describes the day his older brother died of Cholera: "At last came a horrible day, the like of which the family had never encountered, and which imprinted its life with permanent anguish" (Hussien 74). Cholera swept across the narrator's towns like wildfire, killing everyone from babies to grandparents. Each clan patiently awaited its turn to contract the disease and perish. Cholera picked him at his prime, and he was infected when he volunteered to accompany the doctors of his village on their rounds, even though his older brother was assigned to the medical school in Cairo. Then, the young man began to feel ill and left his job. "Thus the youngster was stricken down, the plague had found its way into the house, and the young man's mother knew on which of her sons the misfortune would fall" (Hussien 77). Covid-19 was a reoccurrence of this scenario, with the patient's family slowly watching

their son die in front of their eyes - meanwhile, the youngster's frightened mom (Hussien 77). The author paints a vivid picture of the murder scene so the reader can feel the tragic and terrible events unfolding as the family spent a dark and miserable morning together.

A dark and silent morning, in which something was alarming and terrifying...at last the young man threw himself down on the bed and could not move. He just uttered a groan which occasionally died down. (Hussien 78).

In Hussien's novel, the narrator sits alone in the corner of the room at the time of death, mute, perplexed, downcast, and grieving. All around the home, sadness had been settling since that fateful day. We can practice dealing with those feelings in real life by reading about the many feelings people experience during a pandemic. All the books share a common thread of anxiety, bafflement, despair, and loneliness. Reading novels exploring these themes can help readers process their own difficult emotions and get the tools they need to overcome tough times.

Conclusion

Covid-19 is like any other pandemic in that it has devastating results for human life. It inhibits communication, makes individuals feel isolated, and causes widespread disruption. To prevent the spread of Covid-19, governments have been forced to

quarantine their whole populations and keep people inside. By comparing and contrasting these three Egyptian books, it becomes clear that they all deal with the same new virus, Covid-19, despite their varying historical periods, cultural contexts, and geographical locations. They talk about worrying about getting sick or losing loved ones to the pandemic. Mohammed Gamal discusses the emergence of a lethal virus and its quick spread from one person to another in his book *Dreams of Resurrection*. Several individuals died during Covid-19, the fear of contagion, and their bodies were buried without proper mourning or burials, as discussed in the text. In his book *About Birds We Talk*, Ahmed Khaled Tawfik creates a fictional narrative about the spread of a virus from birds to pigs.

Furthermore, he explains how the virus jumps species from birds to people. In addition, he details the anguish the hero felt at the thought of losing his best buddy. Cholera is a subject that Taha Hussein addresses in his book *The Days*. There is also an emotional outpouring about the family's tragic experience of losing a son or brother to Cholera. The psychological impacts of the epidemic are described in all three works, including the pain mentioned above, fear of contagion, isolation, and dread about the end of the world. These works demonstrate the profound power of literature to unite and soothe the human spirit in the face of adversity.

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