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Contemporary Literature's Depiction of Pandemic in José
Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*

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Submitted by:

Ms. ZIANE BOUZIANE Latifa

Supervised by:

Dr. BOUKHELEF Faiza

Board of Examiners:

- Pr. SENKADI Abdelkader	University of Chlef	President
- Dr. BOUKHELEF Faiza	University of Chlef	Supervisor
-Dr. BABOU Amna	University of Chlef	Examiner
-Pr. KHALADI Mohamed	University of Tlemcen	Examiner
-Dr. FALI Wafaa	University of Oran 2	Examiner

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“Without literature, life is hell.” — Charles Bukowski

Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that the substance of this thesis is entirely the result of my investigation. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the research report contains no material already published or written by another researcher except where due reference is made.

Latifa Ziane Bouziane

Dedication

In the memory of my dear father,

In the memory of my dear brother Fethi,

To my wonderful mother, the fairest of them all.

Inexpressible appreciation goes to my beloved brothers and sisters:

Omar, Mahfoudh, Djamel, Fatima Zahra and Leila.

To my gorgeous niece Iness and all my nieces and nephews.

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Abstract

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has dispersed the population around the world, literature has been a source of comfort for many. At a time when so many people are geographically separated, literature helps to promote a sense of community. The aim of this thesis is to investigate how contemporary literature represents, portrays, and depicts the world during pandemics. Following a comparative approach, this thesis sheds light on two contemporary works attempting to compare the impact of the pandemic through an analysis of *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. This thesis uses reader response theory to interpret the reception of pandemic literature. The thesis also applies the theories of trauma and resilience to analyse the novels. Trauma and resilience theory explores how individuals and communities cope with and respond to traumatic events, such as the pandemic, and examines into the psychological and emotional aspects of survival and resilience in the face of adversity. By employing these theories, the thesis aims to understand the behaviour of the characters and the impacts the pandemic has on their lives, shedding light on the experiences and responses of individuals during challenging times. These two sources discuss the impact and effects of the pandemic on various aspects of society. The analysis of contemporary literary depictions of pandemics, as illustrated in the novels *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, reveals compelling insights into the human experience during such crises. Both narratives seek into the psychological and emotional toll of a pandemic on individuals and societies, shedding light on the challenges of socialization, mental health, and the dynamics of collective action in the face of an invisible threat. The portrayals in these works provide a nuanced understanding of the complexity of human responses to pandemics and offer poignant reflections on the resilience and fragility of the human spirit amidst pandemic traumas.

Key words: Comparative Literature, Contemporary, Pandemic, Portrayal, Reader Response, Resilience, Trauma.

Summary in Arabic

لقد أدى أثر وباء كوفيد-19 إلى طفرة في الأدبيات التي تلتقط التجارب والمنظورات المحيطة بهذا الحدث بنظرة غير مسبوقة. يعكس الأدب المجتمع، العواطف، الثقافة، المعتقدات، والتقاليد، ويقدم الارشاد حول كيفية الإبحار في مختلف جوانب الحياة. وقد تزايدت شعبية هذا النوع من الوباء، متجاوزة حدودا مكانية وزمنية لاستكشاف مستقبلات فوضوية، ومصيرية، لما بعد نهاية العالم، وما بعد المستقبل، وما أبعد من ذلك. يهدف المؤلفون إلى توفير الراحة والتعبير الفني في أوقات الكوارث. من خلال دراسة المؤلفات الوبائية المعاصرة ومن خلال تطبيق نظرية التلقي، تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى استكشاف كيفية استخدام الأدب في التعلم، والترفيه، والتأقلم في الأوقات الصعبة. وترتكز الدراسة على عمليتين معاصرتين أساسيتين، وهما العمى لخورسيه ساراماغو و صندوق طير لجوش مالرمان، اللذين يتعمقان في قدرة البشرية على التكيف في مواجهة الصدمات الوبائية. وتستكشف الروايتان كلتاها الانهيار المجتمعي والتكيف في أعقاب وباء، مما يعكس أفكارا نفسية عميقة لا تقهر والتي تزدهر داخل الفوضى. وفي دراسة أدبية مقارنة، تهدف الأطروحة إلى تسليط الضوء على وصف المؤلفات المعاصرة للجوائح والتنبؤ بها. تهدف الدراسة لإبراز كيفية تصوير الصدمات والقدرة على التكيف من خلال هذه الروايات. وتستخدم الأطروحة نظرية الصدمة ونظرية المقاومة لتحليل النتائج النفسية للصدمة الوبائية في كلا المؤلفات. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تقييم الكيفية التي تعكس بها المؤلفات الوبائية حياة البشر وتهيئة الأفراد لمواجهة أوضاع مماثلة. كذلك تسعى هذه الأطروحة، من خلال مقارنتها لروايتي العمى و صندوق الطير، إلى استكشاف ظروف ونتائج الأوبئة على المجتمع والإنسانية. فضلاً عن دراسة الكيفية التي يمكن بها للأدب أن يعمل كمصدر للقدرة على التكيف أثناء الأزمات. من خلال تحليل متعمق لنوع الجائحة في الأدب المعاصر ودراسة مقارنة للروايتين المختارتين، تقدم الأطروحة نظرة متعمقة حول كيفية عكس الأدب للتجارب العالمية وتلخيصها وانعاشها خلال أوقات الوباء. من خلال كشف النسيج المعقد الذي نسجه ساراماغو وماليرمان، يهدف البحث إلى الكشف عن رؤى أعمق حول استجابة البشرية للصدمات والقدرة على الصمود في مواجهة الأحداث الكارثية. تسعى الأطروحة، من خلال تطبيق نظرية الصدمة والمقاومة إلى مقارنة تصويرها القوي للأوبئة وأثرها العميق على الأفراد والمجتمع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب المقارن، المعاصر، الوباء، التصوير، نظرية التلقي، المقاومة، الصدمة.

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General Introduction

“It is the poets, artists, and musicians that will carry us through the pandemic attacks into a new reality. They are the ones who tell us how to navigate, breathe, feel, think, enjoy, and fully live our lives.” Pevernagie, Erik. “Because the world had Corona.”

In the hallowed hall of human imagination, literature stands as a resolute sentinel, bearing witness to the unfolding dramas of existence, both those orchestrated by humankind and those wrought by the indifferent forces of nature. Literature reflects society and its mannerisms. Human emotions such as pleasure, happiness, rage, bravery, jealousy, ego, valor, and pride are explored in literature. The foundation of humanity's culture, beliefs, and traditions is literature. Literature instructs us on how to live our lives. The reader travels to different locations through literature, learning about different cultures, religions, languages, cuisines, customs, and traditions. People who desire to communicate their thoughts and beliefs in life, whether in politics, education, or health, can do so through literature. While writing literature, we must remember that literature has a strong and direct connection to human existence and its realities. In the creation of good and bad literature, both humans and society contribute their share.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on global society, prompting a surge of literature that seeks to capture the vast array of experiences and perspectives surrounding this unprecedented event. Through this exploration of pandemic literature, this thesis aims to shed light on the various dimensions and complexities of pandemics. By examining the literature on previous pandemics, the research contextualises and makes sense of the COVID-19 global crisis. The literature on pandemics provides a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives that have shaped our understanding of the COVID-19 crisis. By contextualising the recent global crisis within the broader historical and literary framework of pandemics, this

thesis deepens our understanding and gleaned lessons that can inform our response to the current and future crises. This review underscores the importance of literature in capturing the diverse narratives and complexities of pandemics, ultimately contributing to our collective knowledge and resilience in the face of such challenges.

This study finding came to light during the December 2019 quarantine, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. The world locked its doors out of dread, and the prospect of the end of the world emerged. As a result, the pandemic genre has grown in popularity. Pandemic literature has mainly transcended its readers' spatial and temporal limitations to traverse a chaotic, fatal, dystopian, and occasionally utopian imagined future. However, the pandemic genre provided a utopian ideal for readers seeking peace and comfort. The pandemic genre, as established by its authors, is intended to be utopian, efferent, and artistic during times of catastrophe. It is a diverse collection of stories illustrating human perseverance in the face of turmoil. All of these factors have been considered in order to formulate a research question on the pandemic genre's modern depiction and how readers respond to and interact with it.

The negativity surrounding this genre of literature influenced my decision to conduct research on pandemic literature, specifically focusing on contemporary depictions. Thus, this work attempts to read these pandemic narratives through the lens of reception theory. As a literature major, the primary goal then and now is to demonstrate how we can utilize this genre for learning and entertainment, even during challenging times, and mitigate its psychological impact.

In the realm of contemporary literature, a profound exploration of humanity's resilience in the face of overwhelming pandemic trauma has been masterfully depicted. José Saramago's *Blindness* serves as a luminous beacon, delving into the abyss of sudden affliction and societal collapse. Similarly, Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* weaves a gripping narrative tapestry that

blindsides the senses, inviting readers into a world where sight betrays and darkness becomes sanctuary. Both texts stand as seminal works that challenge the psyche, inviting an intricate examination through the prisms of trauma and resilience theory. This thesis endeavors to voyage through the tumultuous seas charted by these narratives, interpreting the characters' odysseys not merely as stories of survival but as profound testaments to the indomitable spirit that thrives within chaos. The research explores how contemporary literature portrays, depicts, and predicts the world during pandemics. Following a comparative framework applied to the selected books that present a mirror to and pre-shadow the situation of the pandemic that recently hit the globe, in his novel, the Portuguese Saramago published his world-class novel in 1995. This novel gives him fame, popularity, and identity throughout the world. He became the first Portuguese writer to win the Noble Prize for literature after successfully completing the novel *Blindness*. Saramago demonstrated the fragility of human society by using allegory to show that basic human decency, according to him, is an illusion and would largely vanish if society collapsed. He predicted and portrayed, through his novel, humanity's behaviour facing a sudden, unexpected pandemic and how society deals with and highlights its circumstances and outcomes.

Like the former, *Bird Box* is a novel written by American novelist Josh Malerman in 2014 in which he tells the story of the arrival of mysterious creatures. He fictionalizes the pandemic in the form of a virus that speared among people by a single look at these creatures and led them to savage behaviour; killing each other or committing suicide. Malerman describes this incident as a global pandemic. Both books tackled the pandemic from different perspectives and angles, but the purpose and the objective are the same: how society and human beings would behave in such situations. Both contemporary works represent society under a pandemic facing a post-apocalyptic world.

The focus of this thesis is to examine how pandemic literature reflects the population's lives. This work argues that it is helpful for people to read such literary works, as it will prepare them and help them to face similar situations. This thesis, following a comparative approach, focuses on two contemporary works attempting to compare and contrast the traumatic impact of the pandemic through an analysis of *Blindness* and *Bird Box*.

In narratives, trauma is a result of psychological and cultural encounters with suffering. Before engaging with trauma narratives, we need to map the course of trauma and suffering. We often describe suffering as difficult and impossible to explain because of its universality. While this holds true to some extent, trauma acts as a divisive influence that may silence its victims or hinder their progress. Traumatic events that endured either collectively or individually burdened the victims as they resurfaced unexpectedly in recurring patterns in the present. The concept of trauma encompasses diverse and vivid interpretations. Therefore, this thesis does not adhere to a singular interpretation of trauma as dictated by contemporary scientific knowledge but rather explores various literary perspectives on trauma. Moreover, the work brings to discussion resilience as a principal outcome of pandemic trauma. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back or recover from adversity, challenges, or trauma. It is a psychological and emotional strength that enables individuals to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of challenging circumstances. In the context of pandemic trauma, resilience plays a crucial role in helping individuals overcome the negative impacts and find ways to rebuild their lives.

The objectives of this thesis are to:

- Evaluate the depiction of pandemics in contemporary literature.
- Investigate the purpose of pandemic depictions and portrayals in world literature.
- Explore how pandemics inspired world literature.

- Examine how trauma is reflected in pandemic literature through the works of José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*.
- Examine how literature works as a source of resilience during pandemics.
- Compare and contrast the depiction of the pandemic and the post-apocalyptic world in Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*.

To demonstrate the pandemic's effects and reflections on literature, the following research questions will guide the investigation:

1. How does contemporary literature represent, portray, depict, and predict the world during a pandemic, and how does it reflect the population's life?
2. How does contemporary literature depict and predict the pandemic environment, shading light on José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*?
3. How has the pandemic been inspired and represented in literature and critical theories?
4. What are the psychological outcomes of the pandemic portrayed in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*?
5. How can people benefit from pandemic literature?
6. What are the circumstances and outcomes of the pandemic on society and humanity through literature?
7. How does contemporary pandemic literature represent and enact trauma and resilience through Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*?
8. What shapes and functions does trauma take on in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*?
9. How human beings reacted to the sudden, unexpected pandemic through contemporary narratives *Blindness* and *Bird Box*?

To seek evidence and answer the controversial research questions, the following hypotheses are set:

- The experiences of facing a pandemic and an apocalyptic state of living are represented in José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* from a contemporary writer's point of view.
- These provide a more accurate and relevant portrayal and depiction of society through literature.
- The artistic depiction of pandemics through literary works can work beyond its artistic limits; it provides the efferent reading as well as the aesthetic one. Such literature works as a source of education, teaching, and entertainment.
- Such predicted literary works reflect the population's life and teach humans how to survive in the face of pandemics.
- Literary works that depict pandemics gain popularity and positive social responses from society.

The study considers the two novels from two different cultural backgrounds and eras that challenge static ideas of place and time to articulate the challenges and facts that they faced in a similar situation. In an attempt to answer the research questions as well as reach the aims of this research, this thesis relies on four main chapters.

Chapter one, entitled *Pandemic Through the Lenses of Literature*, provides an introduction to the study of pandemics in literature, discussing the significance of portraying such events in literature and the different approaches writers take. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background that can be used to understand the thesis's theoretical concerns in order to identify continuities and highlight its particular concerns. In doing so, this chapter heralds an odyssey into the heart of narrative alchemy, where pandemics become a central

theme. It looks at how pandemics have shaped literature, from the plague of the Middle Ages to today's COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it examines how authors have used pandemics to explore themes of death, loss, and resilience and to reflect on the changing nature of society. It also looks at how pandemics have shaped readers' perceptions of reality and our sense of belonging in the world.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework under which the thesis operates, including relevant literary theories and concepts. It embarks on a quest through the intricate theoretical framework that underlies this dynamic realm. The chapter probs into the rich soils of literary theories and criticisms, unearthing the roots that nourish our understanding of narrative webs. Comparative literature casts a wide net, seeking connections across cultures as an academic discipline that intertwines with the psychology of literature. Thus, navigate the complex interdisciplinary relationship between psychology and literature, exploring how each informs and reshapes the other. The subtle dance between the reader and the text is elegantly delineated through reception theory, which spans from aesthetic rapture to efferent analysis. It probs into an elegant solution, where psychological lenses reveal deeper meanings within the reception of literature. The chapter examines the progress of trauma theory. The concept of trauma unfolds with poignant clarity; a brief history lays bare its tendrils as it dissects the psychological states that emerge from the shadow of trauma. Here lies a spectrum stretching from post-traumatic stress disorder to collective trauma, a shared pulse of human experience echoing through time and text. Trauma theory in literature beckons us further, displaying its evolution in contemporary narratives through a diorama featuring Sigmund Freud's foundational insights, Jacques Lacan's structural edifice, and Cathy Caruth's poignant contributions. At the zenith of this chapter is resilience theory, a construct that examines historical and cultural progression while seamlessly integrating into literary studies, a testament to humanity's indomitable spirit, eternally rising from adversity's ashes.

Chapter Three focuses on a detailed analysis of the pandemic genre, with a specific focus on José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malemran's *Bird Box* as representative works. In this luminous chapter, the thesis embarks on a journey into the darkened heart of pandemic literature, traversing the chasm of human experience as depicted in the evocative narratives of Saramago and Malerman. Through the veil of fiction, these tales distill the essence of societal collapse and regeneration, deftly weaving dystopian threads alongside utopian yearnings. As it unravels their rich tapestries, each setting, character, and motif serves as an intricate allegory for humanity's fragility and resilience amidst the overwhelming tides of calamity.

The analysis reflects on how these works mirror the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic spirit of the times, delving into the profound implications of decay and rejuvenation. The representation of the pandemic within these pages transcends mere narrative; it becomes an almost prophetic tableau, reflecting our collective anxieties and deeper truths. As we read further into reflection and analysis, these textual mirrors shape our perceptions of both artistry and apocalypse. This chapter is an invitation to perceive pandemic portrayals not as distant scenarios but as intimate examinations of existence: warnings transformed into wisdom, stories molded into stepping stones towards understanding our present reality in the throes of COVID-19.

The last fourth chapter is entitled *A Literary Exploration of Trauma and Resilience in Blindness and Bird Box*. This chapter conducts a comparative study of both novels, examining how trauma and resilience are portrayed and explored in these narratives. The analysis incorporates trauma and resilience theories. It incorporates the post-traumatic growth theory, which dredges into the positive psychological changes that can take place after a traumatic event, and resilience theory, which focuses on individuals' capacity to rebound and adjust to adversity. These theories provide a framework for comprehending the characters' experiences

and reactions to the challenges portrayed in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. The pandemic genre in such novels allows readers to gain a deeper understanding and empathy for the experiences and emotions associated with trauma and resilience. This section invites readers to immerse themselves in narratives that depict the aftermath of a pandemic. As a result, readers are exposed to the struggles, coping strategies, and resilience of individuals in the face of extreme adversity. This exposure can enhance readers' perceptions of trauma and resilience, fostering a greater appreciation for the strength of the human spirit and the potential for personal growth in the face of adversity.

The theories mentioned, such as trauma theory and resilience theory, have the potential to be applied in real life to better understand the psychological effects of traumatic events and support individuals in adapting to and recovering from adversity. The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that by comprehending and implementing these theories, individuals and society as a whole can formulate strategies and allocate resources to enhance post-traumatic growth and cultivate resilience in the presence of adversities, such as natural disasters, conflicts, or public health crises like a pandemic. This knowledge can enhance support systems, facilitate healing, and promote resilience among individuals and communities. Thusly, chapter four is an invitation to traverse landscapes scarred by tribulation towards horizons that whisper promises of renewal and restoration.

This thesis embarks upon a profound exploration of contemporary literature's capacity to mirror, encapsulate, and animate the global expanse during times of pandemic. It seeks to peer beneath the surface portrayal of civilizations in duress, discerning the nuanced reflections of communal existence amid widespread upheaval. Such literary creations not only delineate the contours of pandemic-touched lives but also wield the power to sway the hearts and minds of readers. By embracing a comparative lens, this scholarly pursuit seeks to unfurl the complex

tapestry woven by literary luminaries José Saramago in *Blindness* and Josh Malerman in *Bird Box*, juxtaposing their narratives to reveal deeper insights into humanity's oscillation between trauma and resilience. This thesis stands as an impassioned testament to these works' potential to shape our understanding of catastrophes, dissecting their essence through the application of trauma and resilience theory in a bid to compare their potent portrayal of pandemics and the profound impact thereof.

Chapter One : Pandemic Through the Lenses of Literature

Introduction

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Introduction

The exploration of pandemics in the literature has been a subject of great significance, offering a unique perspective on human experience during times of crisis. Recently, the pandemic has become a significant force that has impacted the world in many ways, including the realm of literature. This first chapter, entitled *Pandemic Through the Lenses of Literature*, explores the various perspectives and representations of pandemics in literature. Its main concern is the literary depiction and prediction of pandemics through literary lenses, providing the historical context of early pandemic literature.

The chapter is divided into several sections that examine the whatness of literature, the functions of literature, trauma literature, pandemic literature, and the role and importance of pandemic literature. It explores the various facets through which the literature captures and interprets the impact of pandemics. From the intrinsic value of literature as a medium of expression and catharsis to its role in reflecting and dissecting societal traumas, this chapter critically examines the numerous dimensions through which pandemic literature operates.

Furthermore, it highlights controversial themes in contemporary pandemic literature, as well as pandemic depictions and predictions in contemporary literature. Overall, the first chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of pandemics on literature and the various ways in which literature has represented and reflected the pandemic experience. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the evolution and contemporary relevance of pandemic literature, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This exploration aims to deepen our understanding of how literature has grappled with and portrayed the complexities of pandemics, which is a decent tool to grasp the existence and evolution of pandemic literature in the world.

1.1 The Whatness of Literature

Several inquiries have been made concerning the notion of literature. From one milieu to another and from one epoch to the next, there were many views regarding the whatness of literature, each from a different perspective. Nevertheless, literature has always been a question that left us with quite enormous possible answers as to how one can define literature. The term "literature" is quite interesting when it comes to providing a selected meaning or unified definition. However, many scholars have opened discussion tables concerning literature, each trying to enlighten the world with its significance through his own analysis.

The common definition of literature that gives rise to the English word literature derives from the Latin term "litteratura," whose root word "littera" means "a letter," either explicitly or implicitly via the cognate French term *littérature*. In contrast to technical books, newspapers, magazines, etc., the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2022 defines literature as pieces of writing valued as works of art, especially novels, plays, and poems.

Paul Sartre, in his book *What Is Literature?* raises multiple questions attempting to determine the sole meaning of literature. Sartre's questions focus on what literature is and what it should and could be. In his response concerning the notion and nature of the writer, Sartre claims that the role of the writer is quite powerful when it comes to his reflection on society; on this matter, Sartre suggests that the writer is the speaker himself.

The writer is a speaker; he designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, persuades, and insinuates. If he does so without any effect, he does not therefore become a poet; he is a writer who is talking and saying nothing. We have seen enough of language's reverse; it is now time to look at its right side (34-35).

Moreover, he argues that one cannot be considered a writer if he has no unique and personal way of expressing his ideas, saying that “*one is not a writer for having chosen to say certain things, but for having chosen to say them in a certain way.*” (39). Furthermore, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, states:

Literature was about the world, readers were in the world; the question was not whether to be but how to be, and this was best answered by carefully analyzing language's symbolic enactments of the various existential possibilities available to human beings (qtd.in *What is Literature?* 7).

The key takeaway is that we should approach literature by considering its reflections on the world, with a particular emphasis on its impact on human existence. The writer is responsible for the meaning he transforms in his writings; the words must be chosen carefully due to their powerful reflection on society. On this matter, Sartre asserts:

Once you enter the universe of meaning, there is nothing you can do to get out of it. Let words organize themselves freely and they will make sentences, and each sentence contains language in its entirety and refers back to the whole universe (38).

Paul Sartre, in his book, analyzes every culture's language, starting with its earliest forms. He emphasizes French authors from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and the influence of their writing on French society and culture. In other words, the Sartre language is our antennae and shell; it keeps humanity safe from harm. It is our informative tool about others; it is an extension of our senses, a third eye that will see into our neighbor's heart. He likened language to the human body and identified our existence. When someone else uses language, it stimulates our senses in the same way that we sense other people's limbs, and we feel it spontaneously as we move beyond it toward other ends, similar to how we feel our hands and feet.

Furthermore, Sartre claims that authors chose to expose the world, particularly men, in order for other men to accept full responsibility. He asserts that once a writer becomes aware of what is happening in the world, he has an obligation to speak out. Silence, as a refusal to speak, violates the "code and law" of literature (37). It is therefore permissible to ask each writer the following question: "*What aspect of the world do you want to disclose? What change do you want to bring into the world by this disclosure?*" (37). Sartre reveals the following:

The 'committed' writer knows that the words are actions. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change. He has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of society and human condition (37).

Anders Pettersson's *From Text to Literature: New Analytic and Pragmatic Approaches* talks about "the everyday concept of literature," claiming that there is no unified meaning for the term literature. He sees literature as umbrellaing a variety of concepts from multiple logical types, as refers to the common definitions found in dictionaries and encyclopedias. For Pettersson, it is a useful but hazy everyday concept that, like others, marks an approximate but useful everyday distinction in the world of objects. The usefulness of this concept stems from its ambiguity; there is no need to make it more precise. He believes that there is no unified concept wherein each scholar draws his own criticism regarding literature; for that reason, the term requires theoretical clarification in order to understand the concept and notion of literature (Anders Pettersson et al. 108-110).

The term literature is both vague and fascinating. Tracking its historical existence, one can understand that its meaning does not lie in the definition of the term itself; rather, it is in the analysis of the concept from its early ages until today. Many critics hold the belief that literature

embodies history, while history serves as an approach that optimally interprets literature and its functions.

1.2 The Functions of Literature

The functions of literature vary depending on the context, from the efferent to the aesthetic phase; words fail to manifest the glory of literature's reflections and functions in human existence. People view literature as a reflection of social norms and values, a window into ideology and cultural ethos, class struggle, and sociocultural facts.

Literature helps us use our imaginations, increases empathy for others, and inspires us to develop our own creativity and life art. Literature is defined as the best-written expression of the best thoughts. Moreover, literature is a creative form of language that produces aesthetic ideas, images, and symbols, rather than concepts.

“Literature presents itself to us” (83) says Roland Barthes in his “Rhetorical Analysis” claiming that this representation can be seen first as an institution, in which it compiles the usages and all practices that regulate the circulation of the written work in a given society, as well as the financial security and philosophical perspective of the writer, methods of course, states of utilization, and authorizations of analysis. Second, it primarily consists of a specific type of verbal or written message. It is the work-as-object that I wish to address, implying that we should consider a still unexplored field (although the term is very old), rhetoric (83).

In this context, Barthes applied the sociological concept of institutions. He makes a clear distinction between the study of the work as an object, which is the domain of rhetoric, and the study of literary institutions, which is the domain of literary sociology. Literary history is only possible if it becomes sociological, focusing on activities and institutions rather than on individuals.

René Wellek and Austin Warren come out with another criticism regarding the functions of literature in their book *Theory of Literature*. They endeavored to emphasize the correlation between the function and nature of the literature. On this matter, they wondered, “*Have conceptions of the nature and function of literature changed in the course of history? The question is not easy to answer.*” (19). They held the belief that there existed a period when literature, philosophy, and religion intertwined. Plato refers to the dispute between poets and philosophers as an ancient quarrel and means something understandable to us.

However, Wellek and Warren claimed that we must not exaggerate the difference between the doctrines of *art for art's sake* at the end of the nineteenth century and more recent doctrines of "foesie 'pure? Poe distinguished the belief in poetry as an instrument of edification, or "didactic heresy," from the traditional Renaissance doctrine that the poem pleases and teaches, or teaches through pleasing (19).

Additionally, they coined the function of literature with the stability of emotions; for both the writer and reader, they considered it a tool that releases the human psyche from the pressure of emotions, no matter what kind of emotions are; in other words, literature for them is a relief, and it is associated with the aesthetic experience when it comes to reading and writing fiction, due to their claim:

The function of literature, some say, is to relieve writers or readers from the pressure of emotions. To express emotions is to get free of them, as Goethe is said to have freed himself from *weltschmerz* by composing *The Sorrows of Werther*. The spectator of a tragedy or the reader of a novel is also said to have experienced release and relief. His emotions have been provided with focus, leaving him, at the end of his aesthetic experience, with "calm of mind."(27).

However, Wéllek and Werren came to a conclusion regarding the function of literature, arguing that if we intend to find out how a literary piece functions, we need to track down its relation and how connected it is with the outer edge of a particular area. On this matter, they said: *“Writing to this end and for this prospective audience, they naturally stress the “use” rather than the “delight” of literature, and hence it would be semantically easy today to equate the “function” of literature with its extrinsic relations.”* (28).

In fact, there are many functions of literature, which function as a source of information to enhance the understanding of life itself; it is also a source for entertainment as it gives aesthetic pleasure and takes the reader as well as the writer to a higher reality, decorating and beautifying our existence. In terms of history, literature helps us realize a better present and future while looking at the past. There is little doubt that literature transforms societies and cultures because of its impact. Nevertheless, one of the most important functions of literature is to instill values and ethics in the reader’s mind. This has a significant effect on people’s attitudes in various ways. In fact, books provide hundreds of solutions to different issues, and through literature, humanity has insured its continuity and survival as a large community.

1.2.1 Literature Beyond its Functions

Humanity cannot survive without literature, but literature cannot create voids, and there is a correlation between humanity and literature. It is widely acknowledged that literature has a broad scope and influences almost every aspect of life. Literature goes beyond its well-known functions as it portrays, depicts, and predicts life, literature extends beyond its widely known functions. In fact, literature forms a strong bond with readers’ minds, enabling the mind to perform better through the realizations he made in his analysis as well as his ability to react within himself or against the external world.

Consequently, the greatest works of art have had the power to both hurl and heal society since the downfall of civilization. Literature is a revolutionary weapon. Writers crafted great literary pieces to stand against social injustice and political upheaval with their pens; they fought and are fighting still as warriors, each in its own battle in this great war we call life.

One may argue that literature is a vital source of human faith, especially in times of crisis, because it responds to mankind with resilience and optimism. Literature is a perfect means of illuminating the human mind with optimism, which is precisely what humanity needs from an optimistic source. On the other hand, literature serves as a form of therapy that allows us to communicate, express ourselves, and find solace for ourselves.

Thus, it has a therapeutic effect that helps readers understand the challenges and issues, and psychologists have used it as a therapeutic tool for psychological healing. Literature provides us with solace, companionship, and comfort since it is considered the memoir and psychology of a certain place and a specific period. Therefore, its portrayals and depictions provide multiple parallels in our daily lives and contribute to illuminating our insights to find meaning in life and think positively about our existence. It has an enchantment influence on its readers, in which it impacts each based on their needs.

1.2.1.1 Literature as a Way of Escapism

Escapism is defined in the Oxford Learner's Dictionary as an activity, a form of entertainment, etc. that helps avoid or forget unpleasant or boring things. It is the soul's desire for distraction and relief from unpleasant or unaccepted realities. When it comes to escaping, our surrounding literature can be a perfectly healthy tool. Regardless of how the reader approaches literature, it is evident that it turns into a way of escapism.

When we read, we mentally practice various emotions. First, literature transports the human mind from his surroundings to explore the rest of the world. In addition, traveling not

only in terms of places but also literature provides a free ticket to travel through time; it has a futuristic view as well as great records of the past. Lastly, it helps us enhance our mental and psychological state of mind during our daily lives. Engaging with a book separates us from our daily struggle and anxiety; it triggers our emotions to create a bond with the author's production, where we can sink into an imaginative world that serves as a source of solace and entertainment, escaping our reality.

Literature functions like water in a desert, satisfying our thirst for life. In his 1992 book *The Experience of Reading*, Philip Davis describes his experience of reading and interacting with literary texts in a very inspiring way. Driven by the famous modernist slogan "Art for Art's Sake," he associates the term "art" with his own purpose, meaning that each reader finds meaning based on his needs in the literary piece he encounters, and he interprets its purpose based on his concerns:

Art for Art's sake, said Lawrence in a letter but Art for my sake. "Reading as if for life," said Dickens of his poor boy David Copperfield. And as it is with these writers, so with the serious reader whom I have in mind. For that is what I am after: the idea of a reader who takes books personally- as if what the book describes had really happened to him or to her, as if the book meant as much to the reader as it had in the mind of the writer behind it (qtd.in Cristina Bruns 8).

Christina Vischer Bruns, in her 2011 book *Why Literature?* describes literature as a source of pleasure. She mentions a variety of critics regarding this matter, according to *The Pleasure of Reading in the Ideological Age* by Robert Alter, who invites the readers to experience literature's gratifications systematically and engage with it in a new way, where he describes literature as "high fun" (qtd. in Burns 14). Nevertheless, Marjorie Perloff, in an interview published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, argues that the pleasure derived from

literary reading ensures that the decline in this field of study does not continue unabated. However, she sees that the "sheer joy," as she described, of literary texts is sufficient justification for their reading and study.

I do not think art makes one a better person; literature teaches you the meaning of life. But the sheer pleasure of the text - the sheer joy in all the different values of literature, fictive or poetic - these are the greatest things (qtd.in Burns 14).

Bruns sees that both Alter's and Perloff's perspectives are not identical, which leads her to question the value of this textual pleasure. Burns seeks to find out how this literary entertainment is worthy through its reflections on human behavior. In doing so, she quoted Denis Donoghue's book *The Practice of Reading*:

The pleasure of reading literature arises from the exercise of one's imagination, going out of one's self toward other lives, other forms of life, and the past, present, and perhaps future. This denotes its relation to sympathy, fellowship, the spirituality, and the morality of being human (qtd. in Bruns 14).

Bruns sees that Donoghue's claim is quite vague, whether Donoghue would attribute the reader's enjoyment to the use of imagination, to the movement toward others made possible by the text, or to both. According to him, literature gives the reader pleasure because it includes the exercise of his imagination (15). Actually, Donoghue suggests that literature stimulates readers' imaginative processes and, as a result, helps them escape their reality. Christina Burns explains that Donoghue makes it clear that the value of literary reading, like other arts, is the exercise of imagination in relation to the spiritual and moral worlds, not the pleasure itself (15). On this matter, he claims, "*it should provoke me to imagine what it would mean to have a life different from my own*" (qtd. in Burns 15).

In contrast, Burns added another critic written by C. S. Lewis, who regards the pleasure of literature as distinct from the pleasure of imagining being different, rather than originating from it. According to C.S. Lewis, pleasure stems from the form of the text; he defined it with the Greek word “*poiema*,” which means workmanship; in other words, something produced; enjoying a text as a skillfully crafted work of art (15).

Both critics suggest that literature is our free ticket to travel beyond our boundaries to experience others’ perceptions. Lewis writes, “*Literary experience heals the wound without undermining the privilege of individuality*” (qtd. in Burns 15). Through literature, we can partake in other societies and cultures from our own perspectives. Thus, Donoghue adds that literary reading may be a source of pleasure since it is a way to alleviate loneliness and to have a sense of connection with individuals different from ourselves without jeopardizing our own originality. Similarly, J. Hillis Miller, in his fine book *On Literature*, emphasizes the idea of literature as a transcultural means to discover the world through words, assuming that “*reading literature is also one of the quickest ways to get inside a culture other than one’s own, assuming that is possible at all and assuming you happen to want to do it.*” (90).

1.2.1.2 Belletristic Literature

Literature is both a knowledge-sharing instrument and an entertaining tool; it affects feelings and shapes aesthetic tastes. We coined the term “belletristic” to describe texts of aesthetic value because literature aestheticizes the mental process. Paisley Livingston defines the notion of fine art in his essay “Aesthetic Experience and a Belletristic Definition of Literature.” Regarding the concept of belletristic literature, Livingston asserts that the author bears the responsibility of articulating the reader’s aesthetic experience through the creation of an aesthetically pleasing work, as he states in his essay “From Text to Literature.”

The literary utterances are those intended primarily by their authors to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character, in the very broad sense sketched above, which means that in writing a work of literature, the author or authors aim to create a work the contemplation of which can be intrinsically valued (46).

Similarly, *On Literature*'s Miller Hillis writes: "On Literature, I have used, and will go on using, the word "magic" to name the power that words on the page have to open up a virtual reality when they are read as literature." (21). Miller associated the term "literature" with magic, suggesting that literary texts have a magical power over their readers.

Miller also borrows the famous Arabian Nights magical sentence "Open Sesames" to demonstrate how powerful the literary works are, particularly their beginning. He said:

For me the opening sentences of literary works have special force. They are "Open Sesames" unlocking the door to that particular work's fictive realm. All it takes is a few words, and I become a believer, a seer. I become the fascinated witness of a new virtual reality. More accurately, I become a disembodied observer within that reality (24).

Furthermore, Miller claims that whenever he had a literary experience, it enchanted him with its magical reflection and took him into a magical world full of emotions:

Literature seizes me and carries me to a place where pleasure and pain join. When I say I am "enchanted" by the virtual realities to which literary works transport me, that is a milder way of saying I am enraptured by reading those works. Literary works are in one way or another wild. That is what gives them their power to enrapture (29).

Miller had been captivated by literature since his childhood, and when he first read *The Swiss Family Robinson*, he compared the text to rain, claiming that he felt as if the words were

falling from the sky. It was something magical for him how a simple piece of literature made him feel (14). He was immersed in other worlds through lines and words; for him, literature is an adventure in an imaginary and hyperreal world; he claims that it is “*not an imitation in words of some pre-existing reality, but rather the creation or discovery of a new, supplementary world, a metaworld, a hyper-reality*”(18).

The beauty of literature remains in its reflection on and affection for its readers and how it can estheticize and elucidate their insights. The magical power of words has the ability to transport them from a mundane to an enchanted world; thus, it is known as belletristic literature, which aims to work as a source of pleasure, light, and delight.

1.2.1.3 The Psychological Impacts of Literature

Literature has a variety of effects on human attitudes; it affects individuals by teaching, entertaining, and inspiring them to take action in life. Each person's literary experience matters for their behavior and psychological state of mind. In her analysis of literature's effects, Christina Bruns categorizes three stages of literary experience: shock, recognition, and enchantment. In the first stage, she explains that a reader may face shock along with the delight and pleasure of engaging with literary fiction.

Christina Bruns mentioned John Lentricchia's essay, "The Last Will and Testament of an Ex-Literary Critic," where he assumes that literature may create a feeling of being pushed outside of oneself by pushing us beyond the bounds of our self-perception. He describes certain literary works as "veil-piercing," implying that such encounters might also have a psychological effect (18).

On the same account, Bruns claims that reading is often characterized by a sense of interruption or even menace. In reference to Walter Slatoff's book and with respect to readers, Slatoff provides insight into this element of literary reading. He collects a variety of phrases

commonly used to describe why we read literature: it stretches, widens, heightens, deepens, broadens, extends, grows, expands, or enhances our consciousness (18).

Moreover, Slatoff says that terms such as these indicate that our normal experience and consciousness are restricted, constrained, and quiet, and that we read primarily because we want and need those limitations tested and our balance upset. Seeing in a new light necessitates having our regular patterns of vision challenged or shaken loosely, which a shock may do (18).

Bruns draws reference to the works of Flannery O'Connor, as they serve this purpose of literary shock for both readers and characters. Her fiction is noted for frightening moments of violence. In an often-quoted phrase, O'Connor makes this purpose explicit: "*I have found that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace. Their heads are so hard that almost nothing else will do the work*" (qtd. in Bruns 18). Receiving O'Connor's characters' "grace" necessitates stripping them of their comfortable but obstructive vision of themselves and their environment.

Bruns discusses the literary impact on the reader and how this efficacy contributes to his real-world realizations. Similarly, Miller Hillis supports Christina Bruns on this matter:

We then act in the real world on the basis of that seeing. Such action is a performative rather than a constative or referential effect of language. Literature is a use of worlds that makes things happen by way of its readers (20).

Likewise, Victor E. Frankl, in the foreword to the 1992 version of *Man's Search for Meaning*, expresses a very insightful idea. He shared his thoughts on the writer's responsibility to assist readers in understanding the writing objective. Through this, he sheds light on the powerful function of literature in humanity's progression. He made it obvious that by sharing his personal experience with readers, he may help them find a purpose in their lives.

I had wanted simply to convey to the reader by way of a concrete example that life holds a potential meaning under any conditions, even the most miserable ones. And I thought that if the point were demonstrated in a situation as extreme as that in a concentration camp, my book might gain a hearing. I therefore felt responsible for writing down what I had gone through, for I thought it might be helpful to people who are prone to despair (xiv).

There is little doubt about the efficacy of literature for its readers; it functions as an effective tool that alters readers' perceptions of themselves and the universe. Their attitudes require actions after the reading process, either consciously or unconsciously, which ultimately affect their psyche.

1.3 Trauma Literature

In literature, there are several approaches to trauma analysis, such as intergenerational, transhistorical, indescribable, unrepresentable, and placing theory. A trauma novel, a special form of narrative, best expresses these approaches. A trauma novel is a work of literature that expresses severe grief or acute anxiety at an individual or social level.

“Trends in Literary Trauma Theory” by Michelle Balaey explain that what distinguishes a trauma novel from another genre is the alteration of the self. An external, sometimes horrifying event is a distinguishing aspect of the trauma novel, illuminating the process of coming to terms with the memory dynamics that drive the new views of the self and environment. Through a variety of narrative innovations, such as landscape imagery, temporal fissures, silence, or narrative omission, the withholding of explicit, visceral painful detail—the trauma novel—expresses a range of severe emotional states. Literature communicates trauma through a protagonist who serves as a culturally representative character. The protagonist's role

symbolizes and expresses an event that has occurred in a group of individuals, either historically or hypothetically (Michelle).

Michelle adds that the traumatic experience becomes unrepresentable in literary texts due to the brain's incapacity to correctly store and process the event, understood as the bearer of coherent cognitive conceptual frameworks.

In her book *Trauma Fiction*, Anne Whitehead illustrates the literary texts by Pat Barker, Jackie Kay, Anne Michaels, Toni Morrison, Caryl Phillips, W. G. Sebald, and Benjamin Wilkomirski. In doing so, she attempts to explain how contemporary authors examine the issue of trauma and incorporate its forms into their literary productions.

She begins by discussing the impact of postmodernism, colonialism, and postwar legacy on traumatic narratives. Trauma fiction, according to her, connects significantly with postcolonial literature in its preoccupation with the recovery of memory and admission of the denied, repressed, and forgotten. Whitehead analyzed how trauma has influenced fictional form, investigating how authors have responded to the task of producing horrific narratives and identifying important stylistic traits associated with the genre.

Furthermore, in her book, she introduces the reader to prominent trauma theory opponents such as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman. The linkage between trauma theory and literary texts not only provides insight into works of modern fiction but also highlights the fundamental links between trauma theory and literary works that have frequently gone undetected. The book's contrast between literary topics and style raises important concerns about the nature of trauma itself. Trauma, like the novels studied, occupies an ambiguous yet fruitful space between content and form.

Anne Whitehead asserts in her *Trauma Fiction* that the term "trauma fiction" implies a paradox, which is a mixture of a painful experience or memories of a traumatic event that haunt an individual while resisting expression (3). In addition, she inquires about the way fictional works may inform about traumas, suggesting that it is feasible to do so in a variety of ways through the link between fiction and trauma (3). For Whitehead, trauma theory and a renewed interest in it have offered authors new options and methods to comprehend and express traumatic experiences (3).

Trauma fiction, however, has recently been concerned with more than simply making a narrative out of trauma and evoking unpleasant memories. These stories no longer center on recollections, but rather on modern narratives that emphasize the process and motivation behind memory. This could potentially elucidate a shift in trauma studies from medical and scientific discourse to literary studies, emphasizing the narrative style and the intention behind narrating painful experiences. Recently, the focus has been on how and why these narratives may be better conveyed through artistic foundations.

Nevertheless, traditional narrative strategies are insufficient for depicting traumatic experiences in trauma fiction. Instead, trauma fiction pushes these traditional approaches to their breaking point, emphasizing the nature and limitations of writing. In this way, narratives may attempt to illustrate the destructive and distorting influence of traumatic situations.

Traumatic narratives show how a traumatic incident breaks bonds between oneself and others by challenging fundamental beliefs about moral rules and social connections, both of which are linked to specific surroundings. The centrality of location in trauma representations grounds individual experience within a wider cultural framework and organizes trauma memory and meaning.

1.3.1 Characteristics of Trauma Literature

Trauma fiction is an assembly of various characteristics. Nonlinearity is one of the major characteristics of trauma fiction, where there is no chronological order for the events. LaCapra Dominick in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* calls it the nonconventional beginning-middle-end plot.

This form is commonly used because the more traditional storyline seeks closure, which is ultimately lacking in traumatic narratives. Other modes of narratives are utilized in these circumstances because, according to LaCapra, they “*raise in probing and problematic ways the question of the nature of the losses and absences, anxieties, and traumas that brought them into existence*” (54). It is crucial to note that most novels in modern literature employ this unconventional style, which is only used in trauma literature but may still be viewed as one of its characteristics.

The employment of flashbacks and flash-forwards, which generate a disturbed chronology, is one approach to resisting the linear framework. Many contemporary writers use this non-linearity in their works, especially in the science fiction genre. The American author Kurt Vonnegut is a fine example of one of those writers; there are numerous focal points and chapters alternate between his points of view. His novel *Slaughter House Five* expresses how Billy Pilgrim’s traumatic experience shapes the nonlinearity of events. “*There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at once.*” (77)

Vonnegut expresses to his readers that there is no linearity in his plot, the information is mixed, and there is no chronological order for the narration or for the events happening. Kurt Vonnegut wrote the novel, which is considered a trauma novel, after witnessing World War II

as a prisoner in Germany and surviving the bombing of Dresden. Nevertheless, Vonnegut claims that he was not traumatized after the war, but *Slaughter House Five* is proof of his psychological condition, as he was suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder, as mentioned in the book review, “Did Kurt Vonnegut have PTSD? And does ‘Slaughterhouse-Five’ prove it?”

In “*Slaughterhouse Five*, Billy Pilgrim’s consciousness flashes forward and backward with abandonment, making it difficult for him to hold onto the narrative strands of his life as the past interferes with the present and even the future. The idea of becoming “unstuck in time” is also often associated with PTSD (Elliot Ackerman).

Ceremony, Leslie Silko's 1977 novel, is another clear example of trauma narratives. The protagonist serves as a cultural figure to raise awareness of historical events. We can see that the trauma novel offers a picture of the person who suffers, but it does so in such a way that this protagonist is "every person.”

In the novel, the protagonist, Tayo, is a traumatized soldier from World War II whose dreams are tormented by images of his prior experiences as a soldier and childhood memories of how his mother abandoned him. Tayo resides in Laguna, Mexico, a place where people speak both Laguna and Mexican Spanish; his dreams reflect both his home and the nightmares of his time in the Philippines. Despite his efforts to suppress these memories, they emerge subconsciously. Tayo, like most Native American men returning from WWII, encounters resistance to his attempts to drown himself in alcohol to sooth his trauma, which ultimately leads him to commit suicide (“*Ceremony*: Study Guide | SparkNotes”).

However, in *Ceremony*, the reader experiences a nonlinear narrative structure, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between primary and secondary narratives, as well as between the past and the present. The entire work, whether narrated in the past tense before Tayo's birth or during the ceremony, gives the impression of occurring simultaneously. This recreates the Pueblo concept of time, where everything is cyclical and the relevance of things in the present determines their importance.

Trauma novels contain nonlinear plots or disruptive temporal sequences to highlight mental uncertainty, chaos, or thoughtfulness as a reaction to an event. The literary approach to silence may create a gap in time or emotion, which creates a state of wondering and guessing in the reader's mind, thereby expanding the meaning and ramifications of the event. These techniques assist in structuring the story to portray the psychological function of traumatic memory or dissociation.

Memory loss is another characteristic of trauma fiction. Although remembering and forgetting are two crucial aspects of trauma, confusion about some memories is vital in traumatic novels. Characters fail to mention facts, make up stories, or spout lies while ignoring their deception.

Kurt Vonnegut begins his novel, asserting, "*All this happened, more or less.*" (3). He was not certain about the events, as he was suffering from memory loss after the Second World War. His trauma affects his memory, and uncertainty can be shown in his narrative style. Repressed memories, according to Freud, form a defensive mechanism against remembering that can lead to language disturbances. Traumatic situations destabilize language and require vocabulary and grammar that correspond to what occurred in the past. Throughout Vonnegut's novel, the reader notices doubts and confusion through plot events. The reader feels himself lying unconscious in the narrator's voice, which makes him doubtful and untrustworthy.

Additionally, unconscious lying is an issue in nonfictional works since it causes historians to question the credibility of witnesses. It is important to remember that these witnesses are frequently so traumatized that they cannot recall everything exactly as it happened, leading them to utter lies due to their brains' inability to comprehend all that occurred during the shock.

Furthermore, Anne Whitehead links language, imagery, and story to repetition, another key stylistic element in trauma fiction. According to Anne Whitehead, repetition is not only fundamentally ambiguous but also resembles the process that a traumatized person goes through. Aside from these tale fragments and gaps, intertextuality is an essential way of representing traumatic narratives. Repetition may “*act as a form of binding, which allows the reader to connect one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution and so make sense of the narrative*” (125).

Trauma fiction generally includes more than one narrator. The reader might feel that there are two voices narrating the story; this is another aspect of traumatic narratives that is widely known as double narratives. Each narrator describes the same scene or event from his own perspective, which is why the reader feels confusion, as well as repetition of the event and scenes, but differently.

We can notice this feature in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*; the bar scene, for example, has two narratives; in the primary narrative, Tayo and Harley went to the bar. In the second narrative, Tayo recounts an earlier incident in which Harley, Emo, and Leroy all went to the same bar.

This finding suggests that people rarely portray traumatic memory as a precise recollection of events. Tayo perceives his terrible history differently depending on who he is speaking to. Because the meaning of trauma frequently shifts each time the protagonist recalls the painful

incident or the tale of trauma is conveyed to a new person, Consequently, stories never directly depict or recall trauma loss.

Concerning this, Michelle Balaey in “Trends in Literary Trauma Theory” argues that the reconstruction of the past contains new information with each recounting or is formed from other angles, demonstrating that memories of the traumatic incident are changed and actively reorganized according to the individual's requirements at a given time.

Similarly, Felman and Laub support Michelle's argument; they believe that the testimony of survivors of traumatic events is corporate. However, they claim that their testimony is sometimes worthless because they are unable to discover words, pictures, and narrative structures that effectively describe their experiences. The limitations of their words have muffled what they have witnessed. Trauma is an unlocatable and unpredictable experience (51).

LaCapra also discussed another aspect. The middle voice, when discussing the free indirect style, names it ‘*Erlebte Rede*’ (196). The middle voice is a voice hanging between active and passive modes. LaCapra suggests that this type is one of the most acceptable methods of conveying trauma in writing, “*for representing or writing trauma, especially in cases in which the narrator is empathically unsettled and able to judge or even predicate only in a hesitant, tentative fashion.*” (197).

La Capra Claims that this form of telling is rarely used in narratives that examine ethical or political issues and makes no claim to communicate the actual truth. By contrast, the middle voice is frequently associated with uncertainty, danger, and receptivity to the tale of the radical other (197).

On the contrary, Anne Whitehead opposes La Capra’s suggestion regarding the use of the middle voice, which is placed between the passive and active voices. Whitehead argued that

the present continuous tense is a form of representation that frequently aids in conveying the reader's uncertainty and receptivity. In her depiction, historiography using the middle voice causes ambiguity, which is one of the most antithetical characteristics of writing history. Indeed, language fails in the face of traumatic expressions, but not discussing or writing about such horrific occurrences is also not an option.

On this matter, Pierre Nora says that “*our current ‘Era of commemoration’ is characterized by forgetfulness: we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left*” (qtd. in Whitehead 282). Therefore, trauma narratives should gain interest from both writers and readers. However, authors should be conscious that they must draw a clear line between fiction and nonfiction; it is their great responsibility to depict reality, as it does not betray their readers. When a novelist depicts a tragic incident in an overly romanticized manner with a beautiful conclusion, he must be aware of the way it may have an impact on the victims and witnesses.

1.3.2 The Purpose of Trauma Literature

Any literary text's reflection on society reveals its purpose. Nevertheless, trauma narratives may have a variety of goals and functions. According to Vickory's *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fictions*, trauma literature has gained interest not only from authors but also from trauma theorists and historians. The rise in interest in trauma theory and testimony throughout the 1980s and 1990s gave trauma literature a prominent place in twentieth-century culture, with many critics viewing it as an alternative to historical perspectives (4-5).

Many historians would undoubtedly reject such an argument and refuse to recognize the link between fictional representation and historical facts. In contrast, others would acknowledge the prospect of opening history to new types of representations. In their work, *Is History*

Fiction? Ann Curthoy and John Docker point out that historians consider history and fiction as two separate, opposite paths. Historians find that writing history is a difficult task, and they have to be rigorous in ensuring the reliability of their records; they follow extreme relativism and absolute objectivity in writing history (5).

Similarly, Peter Novick distinguishes between the work of a historian and that of a writer and harshly critiques those who cross “*the most sacred boundary... between history and fiction ‘and questions the objectivity of history’*” and calls the objectivity of history into doubt (599-600).

At the same time, Novick acknowledges that the Holocaust, which is central to his research, is likely to be susceptible because of the variety of interpretations, historical representations, and metaphoric and metaphorical understandings (8).

LaCapra, on the other hand, suggests that “*affect and empathy*” cannot be recorded while recording history (xiv). LaCapra supports Laurie Vickroy’s claim regarding trauma narratives, where he asserts that traumatic narratives indeed offer “*alternatives to often depersonalized and institutionalized historiographies.*” Furthermore, Vickroy adds that trauma, in trauma narratives, can be present as more than a “*subject matter or character study*” (2-4).

Again, Caruth in *The Unclaimed Experience* questions the ethical issue of narrating history by asking, “*How not to betray the past*” (27). For Caruth A trauma writer's critical goal would thus be to avoid reducing traumatic experiences to clichés and removing the force and honesty of the horrific reality (vii).

Additionally, in “Representing the Past: Introduction, Trauma: Explorations in Memory.” Caruth promotes the creation of understandable stories that may be integrated into narrative

memory and argues that even unusual frameworks employed for that goal do not inevitably imply denial of historical reality (154).

Caruth sees that a literary interpretation can replace direct testimony and enhance it with chronology, characterization, and conversation, which are otherwise missing from survivors' experiences. However, the original intent of the testimony remains apparent in the trauma writing. Its purpose is to alleviate suffering and allow for communal and individual healing of trauma symptoms (vii).

To validate the importance of fictional trauma narratives, Vickory notes three essential considerations that writers should consider when writing traumatic novels. First, she claimed that writers must assist readers in discovering their own empathetic imaginings of humanity under threat. Secondly, to *“expand their audiences’ awareness of trauma” and confront them with difficult cultural issues, and lastly, to reveal “obstacles to communicating [traumatic] experience”* (2–3). Vickroy feels that the writer's responsibility is to help the reader by recounting a traumatic experience. *“In order that this experience be understood more widely”* (8). That is to say, the more readers experience traumatic narratives, the more they gain valuable insights that enable them to manage similar incidents in real life.

Lastly, Vockory adds, *“No reader can apprehend trauma completely through narrative; the audience needs assistance in translating unfamiliar experiences in order to empathize with them.”* (11). In other words, a traumatized person may require the assistance of a professional therapist to help him or her complete and ultimately pronounce the account of a traumatic occurrence. Consequently, a person who did not encounter trauma cannot grasp its entire impact and significance, but a guide in the form of a fictitious tale and characters with whom the reader can relate can bring about a much-needed empathetic and respectful reaction.

Meanwhile, Vickory argues that the story cannot be considered "*overly mediated*" (26). Otherwise, it would lose the authenticity of the traumatic reality, which the writer should retain by instilling in readers, and that is what La Capra refers to as "*empathic unsettlement*" (78). This implies being an attentive witness or reader, whose empathy is desired for comprehending painful occurrences, and disposing of narratives that reject the suffering they are presenting by "*prematurely (re)turning to the pleasure principle.*" (LaCapra 78).

Trauma narratives might serve as a guide for processing lives with different casualties. Despite fictional and nonfictional works, both contribute to raising awareness about traumatic experiences. History is known to repeat itself, and by examining these traumatic narratives, one can gain insight into the experiences of others who have faced similar traumas.

1.4 Pandemic Literature

Diseases and their treatments have piqued writers' interest. Literature is a reflection of society. When a disease spreads widely, such as during an epidemic or pandemic, its apocalyptic character does not escape literary imagination. We have quite a few works set against the pandemic backdrop, starting with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400) one of the most important works in medieval literature.

Chaucer's work deals with a group of travelers trying to avoid the choleric plague spread in their districts and portrays the moral as well as physical degradation of the community. Besides its poetic power and entertainment value, notably its depiction of the different social classes of the 14th century CE, it tells a story of people trying to survive. Chaucer turns their survival tripe and resilience into one of the most influential pieces of literature that depicted people's behavior during a pandemic.

Daniel Defoe (1659–1731) wrote *A Journal of the Plague Year*, a journalistic work that includes a detailed account of events, stories, and statistics about the great plague of London in 1665. *The Last Man* (1826) by Mary Shelley was one of the first future apocalyptic novels to portray the story of a small group of people who pretend to be immune to the epidemic and avoid contact with others.

Edgar Allan Poe, an American poet and novelist, wrote *The Masque of the Red Death* (1842), an allegorical short story about the metaphorical element of topos during a plague. Jack London, an American writer as well, explored many typical concerns of the literary topos of plague in *The Scarlet Plague* (1912) extending from a reflection on social morality to the contagion and disease manifestations of the disease.

Jack London's novel was one of the first examples of postapocalyptic fiction in modern literature. The story unfolds in a ravaged and wild America in 2073, 60 years after the Red Death, an uncontrollable epidemic that depopulated and nearly destroyed the world in 2013. Despite its publication over a century ago, *The Scarlet Plague* maintains its contemporary feel by allowing modern readers to contemplate the persistent global fear of pandemics. Pandemic literature provides lessons for humans; it shows their fear of infectious diseases. Humans learn that the only way to survive is to stay in quarantine by avoiding contact with infected people.

The presentation included discussions of pandemics and the impact these diseases had on people's lives at the time. In a sort of social division, the wealthy retreated to safety and spent their time telling stories to the crowd as helpless, while the unfortunate poor were dying. Disease, mankind's oldest mortal enemy, has been a theme in literature since its inception. One remarkable example is Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, which was written in Italy centuries ago. *The Decameron*, which Renaissance writer Giovanni Boccaccio wrote in the late 1340s and early 1350s, is the most revered piece of European literature of its kind.

The Decameron is a collection of stories bound together by a frame story. Ten young people (seven women and three men) escape plague-stricken Florence to a beautiful villa near Fiesole as the frame narrative begins. Each day's guidelines specify the conditions under which participants must tell their daily tale, resulting in a collection of 100 pieces. Each day concludes with a canzone, a song that encompasses some of Boccaccio's most rich poetry.

Literature evolved from a century to the following: from a writer to new themes, perspectives, ideas, beliefs, context, style, history, depiction, and prediction. Nevertheless, this has not changed; even during the lockdown, people are still able to read our books and buy new ones in electronic format. Reading continues to be a method to escape from reality, discover new ideas, understand how people interact in other real or fictional worlds, or just pass the time.

What the world has encountered in recent years—the deadly virus of COVID-19—is accurate evidence that literature is a great teacher for our life journey, teaching us how to survive through its pages from ancient times. What literature is teaching us about pandemics is quite important. The above-mentioned example by Giovanni is a book that was written during the Middle Ages; nonetheless, it is still a relevant work to the contemporary world.

Giovanni Boccaccio, an Italian writer, centers his novels on this situation. In Florence Basilica, ten people—seven girls and three boys—decided to flee the city in search of refuge in the countryside, where they would spend the next 14 days. They will each tell stories to pass the time on the remaining 10 days as they rest for four of those days. Each day, they elect a new king who chooses a topic for the day's stories.

The Decameron's "frame" encompasses the "image" of the 100 stories. Examining this book's events, the reader cannot deny the truth beyond its creation: the real refuge or salvation from the plague is telling stories, and the protagonists find their amusement, entertainment, and

motives to pass time and live with the idea of death hunting them down through literature. It is interesting to note how they play a major role in maintaining their existence.

The book serves as an antidote to the sense of impending death and disruption of civil life brought on by the plague, both in terms of the author's intentions and the book's content. Literature can act as an antidote by reconstructing values and showing that life is a force that always overcomes obstacles. *The Decameron* uses metaphor to reassure anyone who is worried that society is slipping away, pointing out that it is in human nature. Great messages are transformed in time through Boccaccio's book and are still relevant in today's world.

This demonstrates, as does any great work of literature, that individuals are the same across history and that their emotions and passions are universal. Any piece of literature, fiction, or nonfiction will always be relevant and able to teach us something new about the world and ourselves if it can accurately represent the human mind.

Boccaccio stated that "*all the advice of physicians and all the power of medicine were profitless and unavailing. Perhaps the nature of the illness was such that it allowed no remedy. . .*" (*Decameron*). Despite great advancements in modern medicine, many people die today. In Boccaccio's time, the sextons were responsible for taking care of the corpses and had the miserable job of disposing of the bodies by dumping them into open graves and trenches that frequently contained hundreds of bodies.

Currently, overflow from hospitals is addressed by refrigerated trucks outside hospitals. We have always disregarded the preferences of the deceased, funeral customs, and grieving rituals. Services are frequently held during the recent pandemic, with few mourners actually present, but they are televised and shared over live feed with those at a distance. One very human

impulse to connect with one another remains at the core of the roughly seven-hundred-year gap in time.

Nevertheless, as the world plunges into darkness and chaos, people find ways to bring joy and hope into their lives through literature. During the worst plague in European history, when misery, sadness, and death were all that humanity had known, Boccaccio wrote *The Decameron* to guide the reader through every emotion, sorrow, hardship, and unfairness that comes with life. Despite their gloomy surroundings, his characters escape by telling tales and engaging in social isolation. Boccaccio urges us to maintain our sense of humor, optimism, and creativity. Readers illustrate that social isolation should not follow physical separation. *The Decameron* is ultimately a celebration of everything that life has to offer.

The pandemic is a recurring motif in literary history, and Albert Camus' French novel *The Plague* (1949) is a well-known example from the twentieth century. This is a necessary starting point for any study of this literary motif in modern literature. Camus' narrator describes the progress of an epidemic in the Algerian city of Oran, as well as the community's resistance to it. This work offers an existential perspective on the world, namely, that humans, as mortals, are subject to an illogical, ludicrous, and entirely unexplained death sentence.

In *The Plague*, Camus examines human nature and condition by drawing on the pandemic's repercussions and consequences. Camus' examination is so relevant to today's post-pandemic situation that the focus is much more on human behavior in the face of death.

The story took place in the French Algerian city of Oran. On his way home from work, Dr. Bernard Rieux discovered a number of dead and dying rats. He eventually declares that Oran is pestilent. Oran authorities act after some initial hesitation, and, as a result, the city is quarantined and locked down. People try to escape as the city escalates into violence, leading

to the ultimate imposition of martial law. Funerals take place without ceremonies to expedite the burial of the dead bodies.

It is amazing how today's events are predicted and preserved in fictional works that were written in the past. *The Plague* preshadowed the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020. Great lessons can be taught through such fiction. It is said that history repeats itself; what is more accurate to say is that literature is the best narrator and teacher for this history. If you want to learn about the future, jump into the past and swim in the preserved pages of history deep down in the literary oceans.

Years later, many authors found their inspiration in *The Plague*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, a Spanish novel (1985), which the Columbian Nobel Prize-winning author considers one of the masterpieces of literary fiction when it comes to pandemic literature. It captures the society facing a disease and turns it into a piece of art.

That is the purpose of literature; as T. S. Eliot once declared, "*The purpose of literature is to turn blood into ink.*" This statement from the American modernist poet and playwright T.S. Eliot, who was one of the greatest writers and literary critics of his time, influenced by the horror of the First World War, brought the world quite influential literature. Eliot succeeded in turning the horror of the great war into works of art; its profound meaning goes beyond its words. Eliot talks about the purpose of literature and indirectly talks about its source. By his words, he means that the bleeding heart, the head gripped by outrage, the nerve-raking emotion, and the intense reaction of the human individual to life's victories and vagaries can constitute the human soul in essence. Like T. S. Eliot, Marquez uses catastrophe in order to create art. *Love in the Time of Cholera* is an artistic manifestation of life facing death.

In his article, *Literature, Pandemic, and Globalization*, Ravindra Kumar argues that history repeats itself in many enigmatic and incomprehensible ways. Pandemic as well repeats itself in different forms; it happened in the past in the form of the Black Death and the plague.

It hit Europe in the form of the Black Death, from 1347 to 1353. It was the most devastating pandemic recorded in human history resulting in the death of around two hundred million people. Then England faced the Great Plague of London sending around one million people to their last destination (2).

Recently, it came in the form of the COVID-19 killing disease. Kumar argued: “And now the horrible threat of the deadly Corona virus looms large on the bruised bosom of mankind across the world”(2). This deadly virus affected over two hundred nations; approximately twenty million people got infected, and many died. Since I am a student of literature, Kumar declared:

I very strongly feel that literary authors are gifted with esemplastic imagination and they, directly or indirectly, state something which becomes relevant in all the ages. Literature teaches us lessons in different ways. Artists have been the very thinkers and philosophers thinking ahead of their time and, interestingly, what they have stated seems to be true at the present time (3).

This declaration by Kumar supports one of the study's important claims about how the literature predicted and depicted pandemics throughout history.

The Spanish influenza of 1918 has been called a “forgotten pandemic,” lost in the archives amidst records of the Great War, the armistice, and the new era of modernity ushered in by these cataclysmic events. It was not that the Spanish flu did not keep pace with the war in terms of the destruction of life; estimates of the flu’s death toll hover around fifty million people

in a single year, while World War I was responsible for about eight and a half million casualties (18).

That war has had a powerful hold on cultural memory, as Paul Fussell observes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*:

“The war that was called Great invades the mind . . .” And that war detaches itself from its normal location in chronology and its accepted set of causes and effects to become great in another sense, all-encompassing, all-pervading, both internal and external at once, the essential condition of consciousness in the twentieth century (321).

The way Paul Fussell described the war and the horror it brought triggers the reader’s mind about how authors have the ability to send clear images in their artistic descriptions; we can treat their text as relevant evidence about history.

Many modern authors neglected the pandemic in their literary works until the end of the 1920s, after which, in the 1930s, the pandemic became more relevant in textbooks, history, and literary works; however, in the 1930s, a few authors began to look back on 1918 in a different light.

John O’Hara, only thirteen years old during the pandemic, published “The Doctor’s Son” in 1935, a short story fictionalizing his own experiences during the flu outbreak. “The Doctor’s Son” offers a distinctive perspective on the pandemic because its narrator acts as a sort of doctor’s assistant and thus is aware of influenza not as a personal or familial crisis but as a community affliction. O’Hara’s story thus differs markedly from the novels of Maxwell and Porter, who wrote about influenza from the point of view of sick people rather than well-off people.

William Maxwell was also a child in 1918, when his mother died of the flu. In 1937, he published *They Came Like Swallows*, a novel about a Midwestern family that falls ill when the flu reaches town. Finally, in 1939, Katherine Anne Porter's short novel, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, was published. The story closely follows an account of Porter's own illness and recovery during the pandemic, when she was working as a reporter in Denver.

The aforementioned are just a few of the many works published in various languages around the world that portray eloquently the effects of these diseases on society. Highlighting such works that represent and emphasize such issues can, however, achieve both aesthetic and efferent readings. Such literature helps the reader to entertain and learn, while also learning how to deal with similar situations.

1.4.1 Tracing the Roots of Pandemic in Literature

The artistic representations of pandemics transform the cultural life of the population; artists' expressions are rich and full of memory and imagination, and their texts, whether they are fictions or nonfictions, depict how pandemics affected populations throughout history. Moreover, their artistic interpretations give us insight into how humanity has thought and felt about infections. Pandemics of illnesses like cholera, plague, and influenza have played a significant part in altering human civilizations throughout history. Tracing the very first roots of pandemic will lead us to many stages in human existence. As the world has changed over centuries, witnessing many events with the greatest achievements achieved by humanity, pandemic was and is still a challenging reality that hunts for humanity's survival.

To explain the term itself, what is a pandemic? Rogers Kara, a senior editor of biomedical sciences at Encyclopedia Britannica, defines the pandemic as an outbreak of an infectious illness that spreads across a large geographic area and has a high prevalence, typically affecting

a large proportion of the world's population over several months. Epidemics, which are disease outbreaks localized to a specific portion of the world, such as a single country, give rise to pandemics. Pandemics, particularly influenza pandemics, can come in waves, with a post-pandemic phase characterized by reduced disease activity followed by another period of high disease prevalence.

As the world grappled with the COVID-19 outbreak, we had to remember that the human struggle with pandemics is as old as the hills. The role of literature in framing our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic is critical, since history is the best teacher for humanity. Literary references provide valuable insights into the historical context of the pandemic.

Pariona Amber mentioned in her article entitled "The 10 Worst Epidemics in History" the different epidemic crises that the world has suffered from throughout history. From the Antonine Plague (165–180 AD), the Justinian Plague struck humanity between 541 and 542 AD, killing an estimated 100 million people. During 1346–1350, the Great Bubonic Plague in Europe, also known as the Black Plague, wiped out 60% of Europe's population. The deadly Spanish Flu (1918–20) or the 1918 Flu pandemic infected 500 million people, or roughly one-third of the world's population at the time, and 17 million to 50 million, and as many as 100 million, died worldwide. HIV (1981) and the Asian Flu (1957–58).

Stories about pandemics have provided much catharsis, ways of processing strong emotion, and political commentary on how humans respond to public health crises throughout the history of Western literature, starting with Homer's *Iliad* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* to Stephen King's *The Stand* and Ling Ma's *Severance*.

Homer coined the term "epidemic" to describe the returning natives in *The Odyssey*. In a treatise, Hippocrates first used the term as a medical term, meaning "that which circulates or propagates in a country." Throughout history, writers have explored the impact of epidemics in prose and verse. Pandemic literature echoes our existence; it provides an opportunity for us to look into the similar crises that were before.

Ancient Greece was the site of one of the first plagues recorded in western literature. In Book One of Homer's *Iliad*, a plague decimates the Greek contingent at Troy. The god Apollo, in anger, dispatched this one among the Greek huts on the beach. The Greek military leader Agamemnon had taken the daughter of one of his priests as a war prize. (The Role of the Plague in the *Iliad*)

He came as night comes down and knelt then
 Apart and opposite the ships and let go an arrow.
 Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver.
 First he went after the mules and the circling hounds, then let go
 A tearing arrow against the men themselves and struck them.
 The corpse fires burned everywhere and did not stop burning (*The Iliad, Book one*).

In the second book of his monumental (and seminal) *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the Greek historian Thucydides (460–400 BCE) describes an actual plague. In the late fifth century BCE, the city states of Athens and Sparta engaged in a grim and protracted war, ultimately leading to Sparta's victory and devastating consequences for Athens, the ancient world's cultural center. The Athens plague resulted in the deaths of a quarter of all Athenian citizens. What we can learn from Thucydides' work is that pandemics are best confronted by rational thinking, logic, and scientific thoughts, not mythical thoughts and beliefs.

Another great reference about plague and pandemic released in 1353 by the Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio is *Decameron*; the plot is set during the Black Death, one of the deadliest viruses in history; it was a catastrophe that reaped the lives of half of the European population. The description of the plague was cruel in *Decameron*; the reader would feel the characters' struggle in facing death each day and everywhere. The story indeed is a post-apocalyptic plot, and the depiction visualizes a clear scene for the reader:

And the plague gathered strength as it was transmitted from the sick to the healthy through normal intercourse, just as fire catches on to any dry or greasy object placed too close to it. Nor did it stop there: not only did the healthy incur the disease and with it the prevailing mortality by talking to or keeping company with the sick - - they had only to touch the clothing or anything else that had come into contact with or been used by the sick and the plague evidently was passed to the one who handled those things (Giovanni Boccaccio).

Nonetheless, *Decameron* is a story that was written to inspire people to find meaning in life in times of crisis. Through the event, we notice how the main characters resist their horrifying surroundings through everyday small pleasures like telling stories for each other to ignore reality. Giovanni sent a strong message in his work, telling the world to never lose their hope and good spirit in life no matter what the circumstances you may face.

Samuel Pepys discusses the plague in his journal, "The Plague Year," as follows:

16 October 1665 But Lord, how void the roads are, and despairing, such a significant number of poor wiped out individuals in the boulevards, loaded with bruises, thus numerous tragic stories caught as I walk, everyone discussing this dead, and that man wiped out, thus numerous in this spot, thus numerous

in that. What's more, they reveal to me that in Westminster there will never be a physician, and however one pharmacist left, all being dead – yet that there are incredible any desires for an extraordinary diminishing this week. God send it.

In his journal, Pepys describes the plague in detail, concluding that humans cannot create the scenes he describes; rather, it is a matter of a superior power that man cannot conquer. Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) was written to remind the people of England of the horrors of the 1665 Great Plague of London. Defoe's work is a great lesson for the world in facing pandemic conditions, which necessitate a disciplined quarantine based on wisdom rather than compulsion. Defoe predicted the future, and we witnessed his depiction during the last COVID-19 pandemic.

Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (1827) is partly set during the 1630 plague of Milan, which violently upends the situation of the characters in the story. In this novel, we capture how crises disrupt the course of life and present an opportunity for forgiveness and the reorganization of passions.

The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of History's Deadliest Plague is one of many wonderful books that were written by John M. Barry. This work describes the conditions that humans and society observed and practiced as a result of the 1918 flu pandemic. This excessive pandemic began in 1918 and spread globally, resulting in an estimated 20 to 100 million deaths. Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1947) is also another piece of evidence that narrates the struggles of the population of Oran, Algeria, during a fictional outbreak of plague in the 1940s. Camus, through his work, tries to tell the readers to practice common decency. Ingmar Bergman's 1957 publication, *The Seventh Seal*, chronicles a group of characters attempting to evade death and

endure the Black Death in Sweden. It tells the reader about the importance of charitable deeds in times of despair and crisis.

Many people believe that history repeats itself, but the truth is that history does not repeat itself. We can have a *cliché* from the past, but it is definitely not the same; the same thing does not occur twice; it could be a similar incident indeed. When we read history, we can illustrate that we have experienced very few things; however, the human species has encountered everything beautiful and terrible that we can imagine at some point in its vast history. The recent COVID-19 pandemic is proof of this claim. In the preserved pages of history, one can trace the manifestations of pandemics from the early ages to today.

Literature has always been the best narrator that captures reality with an artistic voice. If we intend to discover our history, there is no better way than using literary lenses so we can really see the clearest image and the sharpest vision. That is the case in our attempt to learn about our ancestors' struggles with pandemics through the literary canons that depicted and predicted the diseases through history.

1.4.1.1 Apocalyptic and Post - Apocalyptic Literature

John J. Collin, in his book *The Oxford Hand Book of Apocalyptic Literature*, illustrated that the term apocalyptic literature is derived from the book of Revelation in the New Testament. According to him, the term "Apocalypse" signifies "revelation," yet it exclusively refers to revelations that address either eschatology (the conclusion of history and the destiny of the deceased) or the heavenly and infernal realms, or both.

Apocalyptic literature is a genre of prophetic writing that originated in post-exile Jewish culture and was popular among early Christians. The term "apocalypse" is a Greek term that is a synonym to the term "revelation," which means an unveiling or unfolding of things not

previously known. It is a literary genre that describes, predicts, and foretells a futuristic, tragic vision for the end of the world. That is why, with its futuristic insights, it is considered a subgenre in science fiction literature.

Because of its literary genre and mode of communication, which is frequently in the form of visions and prophecies, apocalyptic literature is among the most difficult genres to understand and interpret. Though the content of these visions is filled with strange symbols and images shrouded in secret and coded language, it is still considered inspirational and mysterious for the readers.

Different critics have described post-apocalyptic literature as an independent genre of literature. According to Oventile in his book review, "*Post-Apocalyptic Representations as Symptoms of Trauma*," he associated the origin of the term "apocalypse" with the Greek word "apocalypsis" (103). Furthermore, Oventile added that it signifies the revelation of truth and the clear distinction between "good" and "evil" (104). He has emphasized that post-apocalyptic literature, "After the End," is a genre that "*compulsively formats its political, novelistic, filmic, and pop-cultural narrations*" through apocalyptic settings and events; moreover, it is related to American postmodernism (104).

In her book, *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity Beyond Salvage*, Heather J. Hicks provides a large amount of criticism regarding this genre of literature with reference to the contemporary literary arena, in which she sheds light on the six most popular post-apocalyptic novels. Her critic examines the following novels; she begins with Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*.

In the first chapter, Hicks provides a detailed analysis of Atwood's novel's intertextuality with its precursors. Hicks considers Margaret Atwood, who published *Oryx and Crake* in 2003,

as the mother of all apocalypses. She also focused on other novels such as *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell (2004), *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy (2006), *The Stone Gods* by Jeanette Winterson (2007), *Zone One* by Colson Whitehead (2011), and *The Ship Breaker series* by Paolo Bacigalupi (2010) and (2012).

She defines post-apocalyptic literature as "*material that depicts what might be called "globalized ruin"*" (7). Moreover, she explained that the depicted disaster is usually "*of at least a national level and, by nature of our globalized political economy, assumes dramatic effects elsewhere as well*" (7). Hicks contends that all of these texts are profoundly intertextual with earlier texts, especially Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and posits that "*it is Crusoe's role as an avatar of modernity that is most crucial to understanding his haunting presence in the contemporary narrative of global disaster*" (1).

In this manner, Heather J. Hicks harps on how these books reexamine the perplexing elements of twenty-first-century advancement by using the strong basic component of the dystopian type. Her undeniable commonality and office with reasoning, scholarly speculations, and history imply that her review draws in with the basic discussion.

Houfková Katerina has defined post-apocalyptic literature in her article entitled "The Warning Function of Post-Apocalyptic Science Fiction" as "*a specific sub-genre which depicts earth's civilization as collapsing or collapsing.*" "*The fictional post-apocalyptic worlds reflect possible dangers and threats related to contemporary politics, environmental changes, culture, technologies, or society*" (59).

Houfkouvà declared that post-apocalyptic literature plays an important role in warning and educating society about environmental change, ecological dangers, technological risks, and

social issues. It assists people in understanding their situation and impact in the Anthropocene epoch.

Her survey-based study aims to demonstrate that post-apocalyptic fiction can potentially prevent a catastrophic future from occurring and serve as a warning to humanity. Moreover, Houvkouvà mentions the gothic short story *The Masque of the Red Death* by Edgar Allan Poe that was published in 1842, claiming that plague is one of the major themes of post-apocalyptic literature, as well as Jack London's novel *The Scarlet Plague* (1912).

The plague is clearly no longer the main threat for authors of post-apocalyptic fiction from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, the threat of a pandemic remains very real. The theme of the plague threat has not vanished; rather, it has evolved into a fear of the military or a laboratory-created virus, as depicted in Stephen King's 1978 novel *The Stand*.

According to Tessa Hill's article "Post-Apocalyptic Literature: Humanity's Survival Tool," it has been confirmed that post-apocalyptic literary plot occurs during or immediately following an apocalyptic event such as a nuclear holocaust, a species-ending plague, a zombie outbreak, or an environmental collapse (1).

Hill claims that post-apocalyptic literature emphasizes the importance of compassion and empathy while providing opportunities for emotional growth and a greater awareness of one's shared humanity with others. While it may appear ambitious, many scholars believe that literature plays an important role in human survival (7).

She asserted that post-apocalyptic literature "may contribute to humankind's survival by engaging readers in empathy with fictional characters" (7). Hills explains that such a genre can be considered a guide for people; those who witness the same conditions can find solutions to

their dilemmas from the behavior of fictional characters in dealing with crises or a doomed world.

Reading post-apocalyptic literature, where portrayals of misery and savagery energize close-to-home reactions, might act as a reflection on one's humankind and a common humanity with others. The sympathy and viewpoint-taking that go with story reproduction might prompt an expanded inclination and capacity to identify with the real world in reference to the fictional one, and in this manner, help to set up the readers for lived encounters that look like the experiences portrayed in such genres of fiction.

“Literature regards each individual with compassion and goes deeper than what statistics or historical records can tell us . Literature may not explain away or fight off things such as pandemics, even as modern science sometimes can't, but it does become a source of consolation a way of sharing our common humanist concerns, and , in its own way , provides the deepest and most insightful record of the events,” (Ghosh).

The equivalent might be the justification for the ascent in ubiquity of the apocalyptic or dystopian or pandemic literature and films during the social commotion brought about by Coronavirus. Stuck at home holing up many individuals are getting books, for example, Albert Camus' *The plague*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, and the various dystopian fictions from Margaret Atwood, Stephen Ruler, Jim Crace, and Cormac McCarthy among others.

The social disturbance brought about by COVID-19 inspires numerous well-known post-apocalyptic or dystopian books and films. Obviously, the pandemic emergency has sent many individuals rushing to read fiction about diseases and viruses. Books and films about pandemics have spiked in prominence throughout recent past; stuck at home holing up, many

individuals are getting books like Stephen King's *The Stand* or streaming motion pictures like Steven Soderbergh's influential movie *Contagion* that artistically predicted the Covid-19 pandemic.

In his article “Does Post-Apocalyptic Literature Have a (Non-Dystopian) Future?” the journalist and writer Jason Heller tries to gain insight into the world about the popularity of post-apocalyptic fictions; furthermore, he explains why the readers turn to such genres. He said:

Post – apocalyptic books are thriving for a simple reason : The world feels more precariously perched on the lip of the abyss than ever, and facing those fears through fiction helps us deal with it . These stories are cathartic as well as cautionary. But they also reaffirm why we struggle to keep our world together in the first place . By imagining what it’s like to lose everything , we can value what we have (2005).

Kateina Houfková's research aims to clarify the functions of post-apocalyptic literature, as well as its impact on human sociological awareness. She lists the following seven functions of post-apocalyptic literature in relation to a post-pandemic situation:

First of all, the aesthetic function in which she claimed that post-apocalyptic fictions give us aesthetic and artistic experience, regardless of the situation we are in, means that the reader can find pleasure in dealing with such genres. Second is the informative function, assuming that these fictions extend the knowledge of the current world and the reader's sense of cognition. Third, she listed the formative function, that is, post-apocalyptic literature forms the reader's value system and stimulates their imagination.

Moreover, she mentioned the entertainment function, in which the reader expects to enjoy this kind of fiction, and this function goes hand in hand with the aesthetic function. Furthermore, the realistic evocative function involves the use of realistic discourse and terminology to evoke

a sense of realism in the reader. Furthermore, through its educational function, post-apocalyptic fiction educates the reader in the fields of culture, politics, ecology, and so on, giving him an idea of possible futures for the Earth. And she ends the warning function by extrapolating controversial and problematic aspects of reality; authors of post-apocalyptic fiction draw attention to them and warn of the danger they can cause.

In her article, Houfkouvà aims to explain how post-apocalyptic literature is a functional genre of literature. She claims that post-apocalyptic literature makes a connection between a potential future and the present status of the Earth and humankind. It reminds the readers that their decisions and collaborations contribute to preserving their own existence and protecting their future. The reader is presented with a unique opportunity to contemplate their aspirations for their desired future, those that remain unrealized, and how their actions contribute to both.

Apocalyptic literature misshapes human experience and might be morally risky. However, it has become a popular and influential genre, especially in the last few years with the COVID-19 pandemic; nonetheless, it is indeed a functional genre that provides great lessons for humanity about what it means to be in a post-apocalyptic situation.

1.4.1.2 Dystopian and Utopian Literature

Sir Thomas More's first utopian fiction, *Utopia*, entered the literary arena in 1516 and served as the inspiration for dystopian fiction. The sub-genre of dystopian literature explores social and political structures within an apocalyptic world. The term is characterized by mistreatment, poverty, and oppression. Science fiction and speculative literature mostly utilize this theme.

Usually set in the future, dystopian fiction foretells tragic events or the end of humanity. This genre focuses most of the time on specific themes, such as natural disasters, global

warming, atomic and nuclear disasters, government control, technology control, endurance, alien control, and pandemics. Dystopian authors predict the future's most tragic events to emphasize what could happen if you misuse the present's resources.

Two of the most famous works of dystopian 20th-century fiction are Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. Both are dystopian texts because they portray a world where the characters seek to have a perfect or utopian society, but their plight results in a world that is worse than the one they changed. In contrast to utopian fictions, which depict a perfect and idealized society without any problems, which indicates heaven, dystopian literature dramatizes the ways things can go wrong. Dystopian fiction helps us imagine what reality might be like and how people might deal with adversity.

In order to understand the purpose of dystopian fiction, Snyder Katherine, in her essay "Time to Go': The Post-Apocalyptic and the Post-Traumatic in Margaret Atwood's 'Oryx and Crake,'" gives hope as she declares:

Our awareness that such apocalyptic visions of human futurity mirror our own inner fears and desires does not mean that all trauma , whether individual or collective , will be consigned to the past , but it does help us to confront our status as subjects of history by looking to the future (286).

The pandemic literature may pique the reader's interest in returning to dystopian fiction; it may have a significant impact on the minds of the readers, but it should not adversely affect their behavior and vice versa.

1.4.1.3 Survival Literature

Pandemics have consistently inspired literature, art, and music to understand the interconnection between nature and humans. Books can provide mindfulness, awareness, motivation, and knowledge by encouraging us to think about survival during disasters and crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has given us an opportunity to learn the lessons of survival from literature.

The survival literature is concerned with the human struggle for survival in the harsh circumstances imposed by nature. To depict human survival, innovative literature plays an important role in portraying how humankind faces and battles with natural disasters, catastrophes, and various pandemics. Aside from the author's creativity, what is so captivating about survival literature is the struggle of the principal characters and how they overcome countless odds just to live another day. To survive for another day or just the next hour is all that matters. Survival literature shows how life is priceless; it provides the essence of life itself.

There are many writers who contribute to the creation of such literature; almost any book by Jack London or Paulo Coelho falls into this category because their characters frequently fight nature. Indeed, even in mainstream society or film variations, such pandemic subjects are managed to offer comfort to the general public. For example, the Hollywood films *Contagion* and *Quarantine* manage the issues.

As apocalyptic literature features the meaning of sympathy and compassion while opportunistically encouraging close home development and an expanded consciousness of one's common humanity with others, while it sounds aggressive, numerous researchers argue that writing assumes a critical role in humanity's survival. From one literary movement to another, many authors have introduced the meaning of survival literature through their fictional works.

The battle between the protagonist and himself against humans, nature, God, society, or technology comes under one big umbrella: survival for the fittest.

According to Joseph Gold's argument in *The Function of Fiction: A Biological Model*, "the novel is a language model of human behavior, the function of which is to increase human self-awareness and consequently social awareness, with a view to improving the chances of community survival." (89). Fiction can be a great contributor to humankind's survival; the reader builds a strong relationship with the characters he encounters with, that is to say, engages with the fictional character with empathy towards not only their survival but also his own survival.

According to Manney in his article "Empathy in the Time of Technology: How Storytelling is the Key to Empathy," *storytelling... is not only the most successful remote means of creating social empathy, but has actually been the engine of social and cultural liberalization and change.*" (90).

The story reproduction of an apocalyptic existence where portrayals of misery and barbarism empower profound reactions might act as a contemplation on one's humanity and a common humankind with others. The reader prepares himself to live in an apocalyptic world. Dealing with such a genre of literature stimulates his mind to think about the suffering depicted in these fictional works; these stimulations will in some way or another result in the desire for survival. The reader might find the resolutions or the behavior of the characters are not really functional, or vice versa.

There are other apocalyptic novels of this concentration that, in a similar manner, investigate sympathy and empathy as human characteristics worth saving, characteristics that might add to mankind's survival.

In Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man*, Adrian, Earl of Windsor, recognizes that the plague and its suffering are unavoidable when they arrive in England. He believes that the only thing they can and must do is help those in need. He asserts, "*It is not by flying but by facing the enemy that we can conquer.*" Such a declaration does not reflect its literal meaning but its profound one; it's anything but an explanation of confidence in humanity's capacity to overcome the actual plague; rather, he accepts they can hold their humankind through sympathy, empathy, and love. Adrian exudes compassion, risking infection to care for the sick and dying on a daily basis, visiting not only those who are likely infected with this disease but also hospitals and pest houses, and even touching the sick.

"That is part of the beauty of all literature." You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong." F. Scott Fitzgerald, this declaration by Fitzgerald confirms he above mentioned; living with fictional characters that portray, depict and predict your life might reflect your attitude towards your survival and existence, that is why fictions can be categorized as survival literature.

1.5 The Role of Pandemic Literature

Pandemic literature travels from ancient times in the early canons of literature, from Homer's *Iliad* and Boccaccio's *The Decameron* to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* in "*The Pardoner Tale.*" Reaching the modern ages with Albert Camus' *The Plague*, fictions about pandemic pandemics have provided much catharsis, different ways of processing emotional experience, and social criticism on how humans respond to public health crises throughout the history of literature.

Pandemic literature brought the world a new meaning of the certain death: no matter what you are, no matter your position or status in society, death will reach you; in other words, teaching human beings about equality. The artistic genre of allegorical common painting motif

"Dance of Death" by the German artist Hans Holbein (1497–1543) displayed the universality of death in the late Middle Ages.

During the time when the upper, middle, and working classes were living their lives, the upper class, such as kings, popes, and monks, were living luxurious lives, but when the Black Plague broke out, everyone was equally at risk. In that allegory, the emperor, king, pope, monk, children, and beautiful girls are all skeletons. It teaches us about how fragile their lives were, as well as the splendors of earthly life. It also expressed the common wisdom of the time: that no matter one's status in life, the dance of death brought everyone together. The Dance of Death, also known as "danse macabre," is an allegory describing the universality of death.

Different critics draw their own artistic interpretation of The Dance of Death; each version consists of a series of separate images depicting a social stratum character, ranging from a king to a peddler. Each piece depicts the moment an individual is taken aback by death, as a skeleton dances with the subject or leads them away to their death.

From a literary point of view, one can see that The Dance of Death symbolizes the unexpected pandemic; literally, it represents the inevitability of death. People are divided; they belong to different classes, but there is only one truth that can bring them all under one umbrella: facing death.

In his play *Summers Last Will and Testament*, Thomas Nashe wrote a sonnet entitled *The Litany in the Time of Plague* he said that rich men have not the trust in wealth, and gold cannot buy the health he marked that physic means doctor must himself fade, claiming that everything is meant to end. It implied that the epidemic does not discriminate; everyone is a victim of it. Nashe claimed that the queen died young and fair and that dust had covered Helen's eyes. There is no distinction between what is beautiful and what is ugly. Only God can save us.

In Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, the single most illuminating work of literature ever written on contagion and human behavior, he spotted the light on the same idea and stated that "when I was making a list of all such... I only remember that there died sixteen clergymen, two aldermen, five physicians, and thirteen surgeons within the city." Hence, literature teaches us equality; it builds the human mind's resilience.

The initial reaction to a pandemic outbreak has always been denial. National and local governments have always been slow to respond, and they have distorted facts and manipulated figures to deny the outbreak's existence. Defoe reports in the early pages of his work that in 1664, local authorities in some London neighborhoods attempted to make the number of plague deaths appear lower than it was by registering other, invented diseases as the recorded cause of death.

Literature teaches us to be patient and optimistic because epidemics must come to an end. We can save our lives if we take care of ourselves and take some precautions during that time. Another important thing that was mentioned in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Years* is that people must stay away from rumors and not spread fear in society. Defoe marked this when he said:

It was in those shambles that two persons falling down dead, as they were buying meat, gave rise to a rumor that the meat was all infected; which, though it might affright the people and spoiled the market for two or three days, yet it appeared plainly afterward that there was nothing of truth in the suggestion. But nobody account of the possession of fear when it takes hold of the mind." (n.pag.).

Engaging with pandemic literature portrays and depicts the carelessness, incompetence, and selfishness of those in power as the main cause of the masses' rage. However, such writers

provide their readers with a glimpse of a reality other than politics, something essential to the human condition that lies beneath the wave of popular fury.

Pandemic literature is the depiction of those periods of time when people survived in a world without newspapers, radio, television, or the internet. The illiterate majority had only their imaginations to figure out where the danger was, how serious it was, and how much pain it could cause. This reliance on imagination gave each human's panic its own distinctive voice, acquainting it with a lyrical quality that was spiritually centrally located. But, unlike in previous pandemics, we now have access to a greater volume of reliable information about the pandemic we are experiencing. That is also what distinguishes the powerful and justifiable fear we are all experiencing today.

Our fear is fueled less by rumors and more by accurate information; reading about their suffering and the circumstances under which they lived gives us hope about what we might face because, no matter the dilemma that we are facing or will face, we have more advantages than them. Not only this, but we also learned from their experiences and those papers from the past, which were the best teachers. It is indeed a warning from the past. Learning from other people's experiences and taking precautions from their behavior, reading pandemic literature provides a glimpse at a safe future.

1.6 The Importance of Pandemic Literature

No one can deny the importance of literature in the continuity of human existence; nevertheless, pandemic literature proves to the world its significance through depicting and predicting the world in the face of death. Literature provides great lessons from the past; in other words, it helps us learn from other people's mistakes. Pandemics alarm us incompletely on the grounds that they transform other, less concrete fears about globalization, social change, and local area character into substantial dangers. Portrayals of infectious illnesses give both the

reader and the writer an amazing opportunity to investigate the non-clinical components of the feelings of trepidation associated with infectious viruses.

In *The Betrothed*, a novel that was written in (1827) by the Russian author Alessandro Manzoni, he mentioned a very important incident that happened during the (1630) plague in Milan; it was when the governor of Milan ignored the threat posed by the disease despite the evidence he had and he didn't cancel a local prince birthday celebration. As a result, the plague spread rapidly. From this, we can raise awareness about the importance of the restrictions, Manzoni declared:

The Governor was deeply grieved at the news [of the rapidly spreading and devastating plague], and shown himself keenly sensible of the situation ... Two or three days later, the Governor issued a proclamation, in which he decreed public festivities for the birth of Prince Carlos , the first – born son of King Philip IV , oblivious or uncaring of the danger of a great public gathering in this circumstances – just as if the times had been normal , and no one had mentioned the plague to him at all (568).

In Albert Camus' novel *The Plague*, when Dr. Rieux witnesses the sick rats emerge from sever and long, tottering lines to die, he informs the authorities, but the people of Oran refuse to believe for a time, treating this as a bad dream. The citizens didn't take his warning seriously, instead making vacation plans and nurturing opinions about their lifestyle.

Dr. Rieux said "*they thought themselves free*" (Camus). It didn't take so long when they found themselves in a closed city; it was forbidden for the outsiders and residents to leave. They were not able to use the mail or phone calls, leaving separated families to communicate only by telegram (Gee Andrew).

Reading about a pandemic evokes hope in the human mind, which is an important source for maintaining sustainable faith during an epidemic or a pandemic. When there is news of widespread destruction everywhere, the human being requires an optimistic source, which is literature, because everything in the world should come to an end.

As in Camus's closing in his novel, when the plague retreated from the city, he stated in the last part, "*so all men could win the conflict between plague and life was acknowledged and memories...*" (253). He also noted that "*what we learn in times of pestilence is that there are more things to admire in men than to despise.*" (268). These statements strongly describe human values and optimism in this kind of situation.

In times of crisis, pandemic literature is just as important as medicine for the patient. This genre teaches us what we can learn from this situation, as well as how to proceed. It helps us understand that we must be patient while adhering to the authorities' rules and regulations. Pandemic literature makes us aware of the universality of death, as well as the importance of precautions for recovery and safety. As a result, literature contributes to human mental resilience during epidemics.

Literature teaches us moral values and ethics, and while pandemic literature teaches us how to emerge from the pandemic with a better world, literature is there as a reminder that it is just a wake-up call for humanity to learn from our mistakes and appreciate what we have. In order to survive, literature is telling us that we must embrace and nourish the feelings of humility and solidarity.

1.7 The Representations of Pandemic in Literature

The representation of epidemics, diseases, and pandemics in literature has been a great contributor to the creation of great canons of literature from the early ages to the contemporary

ones. Literature in this manner is an assessment of the human condition and a metaphorical representation of a pandemic.

The Old Testament contains the earliest recorded descriptions of ten plagues in detail. Thucydides later explained in his book *History of the Peloponnesian War* (470 B.C.) that a pestilence with so many fatalities had never struck humankind before. Supplications in temples, divinations, and other rituals were all futile. The disaster's overwhelming nature ultimately put an end to it.

In this context, the reader can identify many similarities to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, people were not given legitimate entombment in light of the number of losses and how they tossed their friends and family into others' fires to dispose of costs and dead bodies. Practically the same circumstance is going on after such countless years: individuals are not guaranteeing or are not permitted to guarantee the dead collections of their friends and family on account of this pandemic.

Major Ralph, in his book *Classic Descriptions of Disease*, comments on Thucydides' description, claiming that "*the account of the plague of Athens written by Thucydides is one of the most vivid and terrible pieces of writing in all literature.*" Procopius mentioned another description in his book *History of Wars*; he recorded the Justinian Plague and provided a detailed description of its origin, symptoms, spread, and reaction, along with his observation that God sent it.

He wrote in Book II, XXII:

During these times there was a pestilence, by which the whole human race came near to being annihilated But for this calamity it is quite impossible either

to express in words or to conceive in thought any explanation, except indeed to refer it to God (1-7).

Hippocrates (460-370 B.C.) is regarded as the father of modern medicine and the first to regard disease as a natural rather than supernatural phenomenon. The "cough of Perinthos" epidemic, an influenza-like outbreak in the 5th century BC, as well as several other cases complicated by pneumonia, tuberculosis spondylitis, malaria, and tetanus, are documented in his various works, such as *Epidemics*, *Fever*, *Tetanus*, and others.

Many other books have been released and devoted to the Black Death than the Justinian plague, according to John Duffy: "*Historians have generally paid little attention to epidemics other than the Black Death and the Great Plague of London*" (review of Alfred W. Crosby, *Epidemic and Peace* 1918).

One of the masterpieces of literature depicting this as a central motif is *The Decameron* (1349–53) by Giovanni Boccaccio. He not only portrayed the ghastly nature of mortality, as he writes about the death toll of "over a hundred thousand human lives" in the city of Florence alone, but also its psychological and emotional effect on people.

Boccaccio was more empathic in describing the poor's condition and suffering; he writes:

The condition of the common people was yet more pitiable to behold, for that these, for the most part retained by hope or poverty in their houses and abiding in their own quarters, sickened by the thousand daily and being altogether untended and unsuccored died wellnigh all without recourse" and harsh for the wealthier ones who run away as "callous" and lacking in pity when he states that "to take pity on people in

distress is a human quality which every man and women should possess
(*The Decameron*).

Accordingly, he made every one of his fictional ten main characters his mouthpiece to censure the church and aristocratic class and show how sickness butchers the attitude of the rich that they are a preeminent influence. He likewise reported changes in entombment practices, taking note of the fact that individuals as of now do not grieve as they used to in light of the fact that they couldn't accumulate freely or embrace the body of a dearest relative or companion who had capitulated to sickness. Boccaccio's text is so relevant to the current context we are witnessing.

As Jerry Ellis argues in his book, *Walking to Canterbury: A Modern Journey Through Chaucer's Medieval England*, he says that Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* to reflect England in an era that was steeped in the inescapable threat of the plague.

As Mckoff and Schildgen bring up "The Pardoner's Tale," it at last takes us back to Chaucer's thought of epidemics as addressing an ethical demise. "What the rioters actually find under the tree is not the plague, of course, but their own moral death." "*Their greed and narcissism ultimately are their undoing, as they eventually kill each other over gold*" (*The Pardoner's Tale*). The greater part of the early writers related infection with moral or corrupt nature, as they were ignorant regarding genuine beginnings and vectors.

Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* also mentions plague. In this context, Martin stated in his criticism of "*Play and Plague*" in *Ben Jonson's "The Alchemist"* that "*The Alchemist* is Ben Jonson's meditation on the complexities of plague and theater." In the play, the owner abandoned his house and left it for the servant, who was running from the plague.

Even if the great works of literature have not been devoted only to plagues and pandemics, in a way or another the presence of the plague has been mentioned in great canons of literature. In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the plague was mentioned in Act 3 scene 1 by Mercutio before his end he altered in agony “A plague o' both your houses” (70); in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, also, the word plague appeared again, where Lear, who was grieved, says to Goneril with a broken heart:

I preithee, daughter do not make me made:

I will not trouble thee my child; farewell.

We will no more meet, no more see one another;

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;

Or rather disease that in my flesh,

Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,

A plague sore, an embossed carbuncle,

In my corrupted blood.” (*King Lear*, Act, 2 Scene 4, Line 227).

There is always a reference to the plague in literary works; they represent the pandemics with their differing customs and how they accompanied the literary canon from ancient times until today. These texts are still relevant if we intend to learn more about pandemics.

Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague of the Year* (1722) is one of the best-known accounts of the plague in England. He wrote this because there were rumors that the disease could reach England, and he wanted to give the people a kind of practical handbook to combat this epidemic. The poor, as always, faced the virulence of the disease without any protective gear. The mayor ordered the people to quarantine themselves in their houses and dye their clothes if there was any suspicion that they might have contracted this infection.

Edgar Allen Poe's short story "The Masque of Red Death" allegorically satirizes the notion that riches can avoid death and mortality by sacrificing and disregarding the plight of the poor. Prospero, who represented the wealthy and aristocratic classes, took extraordinary precautions against the outbreak of the pestilence, but his efforts were futile. Critics continue to debate whether he is referring to the plague or tuberculosis, which killed many of his friends and family members, including his wife.

The Scarlet Plague by Jack London is one of the first post-apocalyptic fiction novels to be published in modern literature. In their article "Pandemic Fear and Literature: Observations from Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague*," Reva et al. accurately describe the novel.

James Howard Smith, alias "Granser," one of the few survivors, tells his incredulous and nearly savage grandsons how the pandemic spread around the world and how people reacted to contagion and death. The story takes place in a ravaged and wild America in 2073, sixty years after the Red Death, an uncontrollable epidemic that depopulated and nearly destroyed the world in 2013. London emphasized that no medicine or doctor could save humanity from this deadly epidemic, despite writing the story during a time when germ theory was well established. (Reva et al.).

London writes, "*And it was because of all this that the bacteriologists had so little chance of fighting the germs... Then came the struggle in all the laboratories to find something that would kill the plague germs. "All drugs failed"* (3). According to the London description, the situation was quite similar to the COVID-19 pandemic; physicians were struggling to find a cure for the disease, but all their efforts did not succeed.

Stephen King's *The Stand* is one of the novels that centers on the pandemic as a prominent aspect of contemporary literature. The plot revolves around a pandemic brought about by a very

deadly kind of flu, an organic weapon made in a U.S. lab that killed 99.4% of the population. The infection is named "superflu."

Albert Camus' *The Plague* is also a great reference that deals with an outbreak of plague in the Algerian town of Oran and the town's response to it, including the medical community and volunteers. The novel emphasizes the importance of rewiring our lives. It conveys a beautiful message about how life is inherently unpredictable, with the possibility of repeated plagues and disasters; therefore, making time for love and happiness is essential.

A few years later, Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* tells the harrowing and heartbreaking story of Robert Neville, the world's lone human survivor. Other women, men, and children surrounded him, but they had all transformed into vampires, thirsting for his blood. In the novel's peculiar conclusion, the protagonist uncovers the existence of a separate society among the vampires, which he himself haunts. A very influential movie, *I Am Legend*, depicted the story of human survival against pandemics and contagion.

Pandemics like the coronavirus have likewise impacted our general public in an extraordinary way. History can likewise be composed as the historical backdrop of infections and viruses because of the profound effect of pandemics on us. Literature, which portrays human activity and thought, firmly connects the tales of pandemics with our lives, making them relevant to us. Pandemic literature is a very faithful companion for humankind to handle the ongoing circumstances.

1.8 Pandemic in Contemporary Literature

Most people turned to fiction to understand the scope of the threat and, perhaps paradoxically, to find comfort as the world grappled with the growing COVID-19 crisis; however, novels can also assist people in wrapping their heads around something that appears

to be too big and scary to process. Living in a post-apocalyptic situation would draw your attention to read about pandemic literature. What interests the readers with the COVID-19 pandemic is digging inside contemporary depictions and predictions of pandemic rather than old ones; thus, this section is devoted to the portrayal of pandemic in contemporary literature.

In her article, "What to Expect When You're Expecting an Epidemic: Ling Ma's *Severance* and Karen Thomson Walker's *The Dreamers*," Emily Waples sheds light on Ling Ma's *Severance* as one of the literary works that depict pandemics and infections. Published in 2018, preceding the coronavirus pandemic a year before, the novel, set in 2011, narrates the story of Candace Chen, a young woman who works at a publishing house that produces novelty Bibles embellished with semi-precious stones.

The company outsources the manufacturing to a factory in China, where workers are dying of lung disease because of the dangerous working conditions. Soon, the Shen Fever spreads through the world via mass-produced, cheap junk, turning the population into zombies. Candace and her band of millennials find refuge in a mall, turning to Google to figure out how to survive. According to Emily, "*Ma's novel imagines the possibility of radical severance from a past world with the swift dissolution of our "impossible systems"*" (128).

Ma's Severance is an intelligent critique of exploitative capitalism as well as an approachable younger generation probably going to come story. It's also a pandemic zombie dystopian novel, but with plenty of surprises to keep the reader guessing.

They Came Like Swallows, a finely crafted, understated novel about family dynamics set against the backdrop of illness and fear in a Midwestern town as influenza rages, is another great piece of contemporary pandemic literature. Maxwell pictures the situation and what life would be like in facing a pandemic such as the Spanish flu of 1918.

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) is a novel that has gained popularity in recent years. Mandel's novel follows a group of Shakespearean actors as they tour a post-apocalyptic landscape in North America decimated by infectious disease. Mandel's novel serves as a case study for comprehending the cultural reaction to COVID-19. *Station Eleven* is a quietly haunting novel about nostalgia and survival that weaves in flashbacks.

The Traveling Symphony, a group of musicians and actors, travels from small town to small town in horse-drawn wagons to entertain survivors. One of their stops shatters their hopes of reuniting with two members of their troupe and their newborn baby. The novel is uniquely relevant to the COVID-19 situation (Farooq, Muhammad, et al.).

The Year of the Flood (2009) by Margaret Atwood is a sequel to the more well-known *Oryx and Crake*. Whereas the novel focuses on the events leading up to the "Waterless Flood," a man-made disease that wiped out humanity, *The Year of the Flood* focuses on life after the devastation. The focus is much more on finding a way to escape the plague and to rehabilitate physically and emotionally.

In her article, "We're Using Up the Earth," It's Almost Gone: A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood's "The Year of the Flood," Jane Brooks Bouson claimed that Margaret Atwood reflects not only on feminist but also on humanist and posthumanist concerns in her novel *The Year of the Flood*, as she does in her 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake*, as she questions humanity's very survival in an era of environmental destruction, excessive consumption, unregulated biotechnological experiments, and pandemic viruses.

In "Against the Post-Apocalyptic: Narrative Closure in Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*," Sorensen Leif argues that Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* is one of the most relevant

contemporary literary works, capturing the uncertainty about the future that pervaded the cultural and political environment in which *Zone One* debuted in 2011.

Political, economic, and cultural commentators saw the collapse of global financial markets, the protracted violence of the global war on terrorism, the events of the Arab Spring, and the election of Barack Obama as portents of doom or a better tomorrow. The novel captures the tension between a widespread sense of crisis and the equally pervasive influence of futurism, which depicts crises as moments of possibility.

Sorensen asserted that most contemporary novels of crisis are based on futurist assumptions, which range from economic models based on cycles of creative destruction to popular post-apocalyptic narratives that have proliferated in print, television, film, and video games. As an alternative to futurist narratives of crisis, *Zone One* embraces radical narrative closure as an alternative to futurist crises.

Contemporary literature succeeds in capturing the pandemic in her texts. Many writers portray, depict, and predict life under a crisis; encountering a sudden virus that would threaten human existence becomes one of the most discussed topics in the contemporary literary arena. The artistic interpretation of the author from one work to another has captured the attention of the reader to such genres, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. The reader finds comfort in engaging with pandemic literature to capture the meaning of life and to learn lessons from these depictions and predictions.

1.8.1 Controversial Themes in Contemporary Pandemic Literature

Fear of disease and its horrifying consequences has been a recurring theme in literature. However, humanity has steadfastly survived all of these pandemics, and the majority of pandemic literature gives us hope that we can recover. The authors introduce many themes in

their texts on the subject of epidemics and pandemics that the human race has encountered. It described human conditions and interactions with such helplessness, terror, awfulness, and hopelessness.

Pandemic fiction brought the world many controversial themes; each work introduces and inspires the reader's mind with its theme. *The Plague*, by Albert Camus, discusses the unexpected plague affecting society and how the authorities have reacted to it. Katherine Ann Porter's *Pale Horse Pale Rider* (1939) is a collection of short fiction and is about a real survivor of the flu and World War I. Stephen King's 1978 novel, *The Stand*, tells the story of a lab-leaked super-virus that kills most of the population, akin to the plague.

All of these fictions incorporate major themes from contemporary pandemic literature, making them inseparable from those found in classical literature. Pandemic literature focuses on courage in the face of defeat. Authors fictionalize in their plots the human's capacities to overcome a crisis; in their attempts, they try to prove their insight about determination and courage and how humans should not lose hope even in the most difficult circumstances.

Isolation and quarantine are among the most discussed themes in pandemic literature, and with the recent context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has a clear idea about the importance of social distance and quarantine. Man cannot survive alone, but in the face of viruses, contagions, diseases, and pandemics, isolation is the only way to survive. Pandemic literature tells the world about the consequences of ignoring quarantine.

The theme of the inevitability of death is quite present in pandemic literature, but it does not induce depression and anxiety all the time. Sometimes the text illuminates ways to survive a pandemic only by taking precautions, but nonetheless, sometimes we cannot beat what we

cannot create; authors instruct the readers to accept their destiny as it is and do not try to challenge the creator.

Science and technology are a major theme in contemporary pandemic literature; they both reflect humankind's determination in the face of danger, the struggle against pandemics in order to find a cure and defeat viruses, and prove that every man has a reserve of unlimited potential.

Resilience appeared as a prominent theme in most contemporary pandemic literature; from one writer to another, it has evolved mainly into psychological assumptions. We find characters with the ability to cope or adapt when confronted with adversity in life, with the belief that individuals can learn techniques to build resilience. The authors emphasize psychological models and how they can overcome crises based on their beliefs.

Human dignity and solidarity are often contributing factors to survival in pandemic literature. They show the reader that the laws of the jungle do not fit the world when facing crises; survival is not for the fittest but rather for those who are in favor of others.

Pandemic literature has given us an opportunity to learn great lessons about survival and struggle; it plays a vital role in our lives. Such fictions are important to many people because they nourish their minds. We can gain knowledge of various things through pandemic literature.

1.8.2 Depictions and Predictions of Pandemic in Contemporary Literature

In response to pandemics, literature celebrates the enduring range of human responses—the range of emotions that rage against the invasion of disease and viruses. The authors will undoubtedly retell the difficult times of facing a certain death. Literature is a depiction of life

itself; it goes without saying that when it depicts life, it also predicts what we might possibly meet in the future.

Many fictional works have predicted different scenes in life. It happened for most of us that when we were in a situation and had this feeling of having been there before and kept asking ourselves where we had seen this before, it was what the French call "*le déjà-vu*," or being exactly in a similar situation. This is how literature works. Thus, literature, besides depicting life, predicts the future.

The plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; . . . it can lie dormant for years in furniture and linen – chests; . . . it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves ; and . . . perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and enlightening of men , it roused up its rats again and sent them forth to die in a happy city” (Camus 252).

Camus’ novel works as a prophecy about the plague or pandemic; he says that even if it comes to an end, it is still a threat and could comeback at any moment over the course of time. In fact, this day of the return of the pandemic has come to light again on 2020 rising from the tomb of the past and history in a form of COVID-19 pandemic.

However, this new form of the plague, which is the COVID-19 pandemic, is more obstinate than the plague of Oran’s 1940s that was fictionalized by Albert Camus in his novel. The COVID-19 pandemic comes to threaten the entire world with a multifaceted power. Firstly, COVID-19 entrenches and deepens racism; the whole world stands against China as the source of the virus.

In June,20,2020 The Guardian published an article about Donald Trump the former president of the United States of America when he announced the term "Kung Flu" to describe the virus in his campaign rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, it was a racist language he used publicly,

Trump associated the COVID-19 virus with many terms referring to China; he described it with the term "the Chinese virus" or "the Wuhan virus" as a consequence; his declarations brought the world another conflict; many civil liberties organizations have expressed outrage, warning that such language can incite racism and violence against Asian Americans.(David Smith)

The new form of the plague comes with more than Camus predicted, despite the fact that it endangers the health of the entire world; besides, it creates new forms of cruel economic motives: imperialism, capitalism, racial-based violence, and man-planned pauperization of the world; these are just some of its most visible facets. Camus' predictions are the core of the new pandemic; he warned us about the return of the plague, and he used the right words.

Camus wrote, "*Yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.*"(112). From history to the present, Camus, with his fictional view, provides a defensive account of dealing with repeated unpredictable events that frequently threaten our existence. As he predicted the coming back of the virus, he clearly informed us about the way it might come back with no warning, emphasizing "*by surprise*" (112).

If it is fiction or non-fiction, literature considers as a helpful mean which can raise our awareness for making future plans. John M. Barry, an American author and historian, wrote a non-fiction book in 2004 about one of the worst pandemics in history, the Spanish flu in 1918. Barry described the horror of the pandemic in his book, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*. During his summer vacation, the American President George Bush read the book, and his study would later set forth plans for the federal government to prepare for future pandemics.

In a speech to the National Institutes of Health in November 2005, the former president of the United States of America, George W. Bush, declared: "A pandemic is like a forest fire; if caught early, it might be extinguished with limited damage." He claims that if we allow it to smolder undetected, it will grow into an inferno that will spread faster than we can control.

His declaration came after reading the book. Realizing that an outbreak is a different form of disaster, he addressed the scientists, claiming, "*If a pandemic strikes, our country must have a surge capacity in place that will allow us to bring a new vaccine on line quickly and manufacture enough to immunize every American against the pandemic strain.*" Bush spent \$7 billion on this plan and launched a website, www.pandemicflu.gov, which is still operational.

Nevertheless, as time passed, it became difficult to continue funding, and the government transferred power every four years, reducing funding and this plan. He remarks that "if we wait for the pandemic to appear, it will be too late to prepare, and one day many lives could be needlessly lost because we failed to act today." His statement, made 15 years ago, is still relevant in the context of America's COVID-19 pandemic.

As a matter of fact, what is remarkably important about the above factors is what a book can do and how it can function in order to set plans and rules decided by higher authorities while, at the same time, predicting the future of the nation; in other words, literature indeed predicts the future as it reflects it.

Pandemic fiction does not offer a prophetic look into the future, paying little mind to what some might think. All things considered, such literature about infectious diseases, sickness, and viruses holds up a mirror to our most profound, most undeveloped feelings of trepidation about our current situation and investigates various potential reactions to those feelings of trepidation; that is why it is considered functional fiction.

1.8.3 Pandemic Literature during Covid-19

Literature played a vivid role during the crucial days of COVID-19. Through literature, people become much more aware of the conditions of post-pandemic life. Living in quarantine, lockdown, and social distance wasn't an easy mood of life that the human mind could easily deal with, but literature was there telling people that the world has witnessed such conditions before.

The idea of quarantine has been explained in many literary works from ancient times. It was mentioned by Daniel Defoe when he stated:

If a person visited ... to come or to be conveyed from a place infected to any other place... the parish whence the party has come and conveyed the notice ... if they escape , carried back again and offending to be punished ... and the house visited person to be shut off for twenty days (n.pag.).

In this pandemic, every suspected house is marked; this reference can also be found in literature, as Defoe mentions it; he declared:

That every house visited to be marked with red cross of a foot long of the middle of the door , evident to be seen and with the usual printed word “Lord , have mercy upon us ” to be set close over the same cross there to continue until the lawful opening of the same time .” (n.pag.).

Daniel Defoe pictures the situation, how the conditions were during the plague, the reader will have empathy towards his or her situation by reading such literature. Many writers mirror the reflections of the pandemic in their works. In his diary, Samuel Pepys wrote on June 7, 1665:

This day much against my will, I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked red cross upon the doors, and ‘Lord have mercy upon us’ writ there which was a sad sight to me, being a first of the like that, to my remembrance I ever saw” (qtd. in Keys 1).

In every line, the reader can get a clear picture of the circumstances that were in the past; moreover, they start comparing them with the actual scene he or she is in. Reading these lines from Pepy's diary clarifies that in the past, they truly suffered facing the pandemic. The reader will have some relief about his or her condition since facing the pandemic in the current decade is not a catastrophe if we take a glimpse into the past.

COVID-19, in a similar vein, discusses people's unending patience in order to survive. Subsequently, the way of thinking about pandemic is genuinely a way of thinking for 'all people groups. It reflects not just the ascent of present-day infections like the Corona virus, but additionally the exemplary ones like plague.

As a matter of fact, individuals all over the planet have become progressively shut off from each other as clearing travel boycotts sped up, walling districts apart as a viral pandemic unfolded. It is in this setting of political, financial, and strict agnosticism that harmony, security, and human respect have become fabrications.

Camus' novel is an ideal illustration of a customary, scholarly theme that has the capabilities to peruse, compose, and connect with the recent moral and basic issues of COVID-19. Albert Camus said, "The world had just heard the word 'plague' for the first time." So as the instance of the Corona virus, or COVID-19, is for the entire world". Demise is an existential reality that is clearly reflected in Camus' novel.

As a result, pandemics are the mass killers of both individuals and entire civilizations. Literature, therefore, may not give the answer to pandemics but rather give individuals comfort, an approach to sharing humanistic worries, and, in this way, the most profound and clever thoughts regarding pandemics. Literature can be a useful assistant for humanity; it can assist us with contemplating what we are encountering, something mankind experienced prior, and how we made due. It additionally advises us to be careful and not to be smug.

Camus' novel *The Plague* can be considered a functional book to be read during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak; it is a literary text that examines the human condition and metaphorically represents the pandemic. Inspired by Camus' novel, Sean Illing declared:

This is a time for solidarity: what Camus' 'The Plague' can teach us about life in Pandemic. COVID – 19 doesn't discriminate. Whoever you are , wherever you live , you're vulnerable , at least in principle. While some of us may fare better because of our age or health , the microbes themselves are impartial This country is built on a cult of individualism (12).

It is quite evident that Camus' novel has a futuristic view that is still relevant to our context; many lessons can be illustrated from it. For example, the novel emphasizes the emotional fallout during the plague, the feelings of isolation, despair, fear, and loss. Actually, in recent years, the whole population has experienced such feelings; the plot of the novel is quite similar to COVID-19 events.

Camus wrote: "*A feeling normally as individual as the ache of separation from those one loves suddenly became a feeling in which all shared alike*" (42). In his novel, Camus discusses a separation that resembles the quarantine process during the COVID-19 emergency. We can operate remotely to prevent the spread of the virus and our own infection.

Pandemic literature allows us to step back in time during a crisis and learn about the lives and experiences of others before us. We can gain a better understanding of culture and have a greater enthusiasm for our existence. We can learn about our past, present, and future.

Conclusion

Literature is the foundation of humanity's cultures, beliefs, and traditions. It is a reflection of reality, an artistic product, and a window into the time's ideology. A work of literature can document, record, and impart knowledge about everything that transpires in society. Literary works encourage students to use their imaginations, increase empathy for others, and develop their own creativity and life art. Literature, as the best written expression of the best thought, is a creative form of language that does not produce concepts but rather

aesthetic ideas, images, and symbols. Literature is a valuable resource for modern civilization. It broadens our imaginations while also cultivating our ethical and societal responsiveness. Individuals can also use literature to make necessary changes in their lives, resulting in responsive transformation. This chapter discusses the artistic values of literature, its functions, role, and purpose. Shedding light on pandemic literature and how it plays a major role in elucidating the human mind. Pandemic literature not only provides great lessons about humanity's struggle since ancient times, but it is also a tool that entertains people during their traumatic experiences.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

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Conclusion

Introduction

From one fiction to another, the genres varied, but the aim still the same; enlightening the human mind about his own existence. The intersection between literature and society is quite fascinating. Whether exploring the ways that literature reflects and shapes our culture, or investigating the relationships between authors and their readers, there is never a shortage of sociological insight to be gained from reading a piece of literature. Through history, humanity has found literature to be a useful resource that insures its survival. The social sciences have examined literature in countless ways, and continue to do so with great success. This chapter sinks into the depths of exploring some of the ways in which the study of literature can be informed by a social scientific perspective. In addition to studying the ways in which literary texts shape our perceptions of reality, scholars have also explored the roles that authors and literary critics play in the formation of social value and insights. Shedding light on some criticisms and literary theories, this chapter attempts to elaborate as well as enlighten the readers about the notion of literature and its functions.

2.1 Literary Theories and Criticisms

Literary criticism is applied to a variety of textual works. Literary theories are dedicated to exploring the principles underlying literary criticism. In other words, a theory is a systematic explanation and interpretation of a given text or practical situation within a broader context. Literary theories shed light on the motivations behind our practices; they reveal the connection between practice and ideology, power structures, our unconscious mind, political and religious beliefs, and economic structures. Most importantly, theories show that practice is not inherently natural but rather a specific historical practice.

Hence, we apply a certain literary theory to a certain literary work in search of a critical analysis. Such theories and criticism help us to investigate, analyze, understand, and interpret literary productions from different contexts and perspectives. Literary theories and criticisms

are lenses that provide us with the deepest vision of the text we intend to read. Various schools of literary criticism have emerged over time, each with their own pioneers and ideologies.

Literary theories have a long and rich history in the academy, and many of the most important literary works in the field have been influenced by these theories. From one ideology to another and from one perspective to another, theorists represent their theories as diving equipment if we intend to sink into the deep literary oceans.

2.2 Comparative Literature

Comparative literature is the study of literature from different countries and periods. It can be used to explore different ways of looking at literature, and to understand how different cultures influence the way we experience books. It can also be used to study different literary movements, such as realism, romanticism, modernism, and postmodernism. There are many different types of comparative literature.

When conducting comparative studies, it's important to identify what aspect of the text you are comparing. For example, if you are comparing two poems by the same poet, you should look at the theme, imagery, and structure of the poems. Whereas, if you are comparing two books by two different authors, you should look for similar themes and writing styles. You can also use other stylistic elements to compare texts from different periods or countries. For instance, you can compare the language of a text written in Victorian England to that written in contemporary America.

Comparative literature is a tough phrase to describe by definition. The challenge stems from the discipline's large and unknown domain, as well as the already contentious character of the two terms that comprise its name. The aspects of a comparison can be found solely in the literary works, whereas, some of these aspects can also be found in another area of study.

Furthermore, each scholar comes with his own interpretation of both literary and comparative terms to determine the meaning of the concept. Thus, the literary area has never

had a really distinct or a standard description. The most widely recognized definitions evolved from one to another in response to the norms and practices of the time, often following the outline proposed by one of the field's most significant leaders. The following few definitions are proposed by the most notable scholars and researchers in the field, starting with Oscar James Campbell. As he titled his work *What is Comparative Literature?* (1926) attempting to find an answer for the question, he asserts:

Comparative literature ... endeavors, in the first place, to discover general laws which transcend any one literature, such as the development of types and forms under the progressive relationships of different literatures. In the second place, it seeks to reveal relations of affinity within two or more literatures. Finally, through the discovery of similarities and differences by means of comparison, it endeavors to explain the inception and growth of individual works. That is, like all scientific studies of literature, our methods are primarily investigations of the processes by which a work has come into being and appraisals of the forces which produced this result. In other words, the methods of comparative literature do not seek to produce or enhance aesthetic delight, but rather to create new models of understanding (23-40).

Campbell suggests that comparative literature approaches are basically explorations of the processes by which a work came to be and assessments of the forces that generated this result. They do not strive to generate or improve aesthetic pleasure, but rather to develop new models of knowledge. It seeks to identify general rules that transcend any one literary, such as the evolution of types and forms under the relationships of multiple literatures.

On the other hand, René Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* (1942) suggest that the phrase comparative literature, has and continues to embrace a wide range of disciplines of research and issue groups. It might also be the study of the relationship between

more than one literature, moreover, it might be coined to the term "world literature," which is a translation of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, refers to the interactions of two or more literatures. On this matter they declare:

Comparison is a method used by all criticism and sciences, and does not, in any way, adequately describe the specific procedures of literary study. The formal comparison between literatures – or even movements, figures and works – is rarely a central theme in literary history [...] in practice, the term “comparative” literature has covered and still covers rather distinct fields of study and groups of problems. It may mean, first, the study of oral literature, especially of folk-tale themes and their migration
 [...] Another sense of “comparative” literature confines it to the study of relationships between two or more literatures. [...] A third conception obviates, however, all these criticisms, by identifying "comparative literature" with the study of literature in its totality, with "world-literature," with "general" or "universal" literature. There are certain difficulties with these suggested equations. The term "world literature," a translation of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* (38-41).

2.2.1 Comparative Literature as a Discipline

Comparative literature is an interdisciplinary discipline that emerged around the turn of the nineteenth century. According to Susan Bussnet, most academics do not agree on a final united definition when defining comparative literature, resulting in various conflicting opinions. Different critics attempted to create well-established notions while disagreeing on a defined comparison technique (Enani).

In *Comparative Literature Theory, Method, Application* Steven Totosy de Zepetnek defines comparative literature from different angles, claiming that:

In principle, the discipline of Comparative Literature is in toto a method in the study of literature in at least two ways. First, Comparative Literatures means the knowledge of more than one national language and literature, and/or it means the knowledge and application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature and second, Comparative Literature has an ideology of inclusion of the Other, be that a marginal literature in its several meanings of marginality, a genre, various text types, etc.

[...] Comparative Literature has intrinsically a content and form, which facilitate the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of literature and it has a history that substantiated this content and form. Predicated on the borrowing of methods from other disciplines and on the application of the appropriated method to areas of study single-language literary study more often than tends to neglect, the discipline is difficult to define because thus it is fragmented and pluralistic (13).

Comparative literature is the study of literature without limits. Most comparative literature specialists try to study literature across boundaries, with a concentration on different languages, in order to preserve works' originality and achieve real comparative analysis.

As the preceding paragraphs show, the notion has undergone a few ideological modifications from its inception to the present. Furthermore, it is clear that no definition has been able to adequately address all of the elements and theoretical elements of this complicated topic known as "comparative literature".

As Robert J. Clements states in his *Comparative Literature as an Academic Discipline* 1978:

It is a fact of life that the often maligned term "comparative literature" is here to stay and we must live with it. Indeed, it has achieved a rank of distinction in

many quarters – in the titles of many important literary journals and books, a plethora of articles on every continent, and most college catalogs (11).

To compare, is the act of placing two or more items together and displaying their similarities and contrasts. That is to say, comparative literature is a discipline in which the study crosses time, languages, genres, cultural barriers and geographical boundaries. Moreover, as a discipline it investigates the relationship between literature and psychology, science, history, culture and philosophy.

2.2.2 Psychology of Literature

The study of literature has always fascinated humanity and played a key role in shaping the history of societies across the globe. Literature has also been used as a source of inspiration and reflection for people all over the world. People of different cultures and races have used stories from their own societies to inspire them and teach them about important values and principles of life. Many writers and artists have used literature to make their work more interesting and enjoyable. They have also been able to convey their feelings and thoughts through their works of art.

Over the years, many books have been written to explore the psychological aspects of literature. Psychologists have been studying the effect of different literary works on the emotions and attitudes of readers and have come up with many interesting findings. According to their findings, certain works of literature can be very effective in influencing the minds of the people who read them. These works can also be used to promote certain values and teach people new things about life and the world. However, the effect of literature on the psyche of the readers is not as simple as it may seem. The impact of a literary work on the reader depends on the theme of the story and the way the author conveys it. The study of how people think, behave, influence, and relate to one another is known as social psychology. It is an attempt to

engage in discourse with the social sciences to comprehend the social experiences of individuals involved in different social movements.

Krech and Crutchfield argue that there is only one individual in psychology, each with a distinct set of perceptions, motivations, emotions, and adaptive actions. This tripartition is a didactic device for the study of man (*Elements of Psychology*). Overall, the writer is an individual who senses, feels, sees, thinks, and imagines in ways that no one else can. This impression comes before the writer's language creativity, forcing him to think with his senses. A writer's individual perception is his concept, his invention, or an observation about what is perceived.

Importantly, the publication of Eduard Spranger's *Types of men: The psychology and ethics of personality* in 1928 points out what is known as the schema understanding. Spranger explains that it is a sort of understanding that considers a writer's personality, qualities, abilities, beliefs, attitudes, values, intentions, ways of adjustment, and temperament, as well as how others perceive them. The features are within the individual, but the kinds are external, such as philistines, bohemians, apollineans, dyonisiacs, rationalists, and empiricists. Spranger accepts theoretical, artistic, social, political, and religious kinds, which allows us to comprehend people by studying their values via different denominations.

Authors typically use real-life experiences as a springboard to express their emotions in their writing. Since literature depicts life, psychology is closely related to it. Psychology, on the other hand, can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter, characterization, and other elements conveyed within literature. Psychology can provide insight into why people behave the way they do. It elucidates the root causes of human behavior and motivation.

However, it should be noted that, as abstractions developed to accommodate different understanding frameworks, none of these typologies describe the individual as a whole. Several archetypes have been used to characterize the individual as a whole over time. There are ideal,

empirical, cultural, and fundamental knowledge forms. Some authors advocate the ideal forms, that are based on logical approaches such as Spranger's understanding scheme. Others, use the empirical types encompass a wide spectrum of personality; in which the psychological state of people's personalities and its reflections on their behavior and actions matter, such as introverted versus extroverted individuals. In addition, authors who advocate the cultural types; that are determined by social integration, and basic types offer fundamental understanding about a topic. Nonetheless, while being a type that is part of a social group, a personality is determined by qualities. Among others, there are authors who use propedeutic types; those who introduce fundamental information about a topic, such as constitutional, perceptual, cognitive, maturity, and immaturity types (Meiliana 108).

2.3 The Interdisciplinary Relationship of Psychology and Literature

Two fields that have been intertwined for centuries are psychology and literature. They share a common origin in the scholarly pursuit of understanding human behavior. In this article, we will explore the ways in which these two disciplines can complement each other. We will also examine some of the ways in which the influences of each discipline on the other have changed over time. The study of psychology has made many important contributions to our understanding of human cognition and behavior. This includes the study of perception, memory, learning, motivation, emotion, personality, developmental psychology, and many more. Psychology is a science that explores how the mind works and what makes us tick.

Interdisciplinarity is the closeness of areas of knowledge in order to transcend one field's discursive principles at the junction with the theoretical viewpoints and operating modes of another. It enables the separation of specialized character of disciplines, which can be validated at various levels and degrees (qtd.in Meiliana 105).

Sylvie Meiliana assumes in *The Study of Comparative Literary Model*; that interdisciplinary studies have advanced humanity, but now is the time to reverse the

predicament of modern man, and especially specialists, since free access media make information available to all. Psychology, which deals with specifics such as understanding and interpreting people and the world, is being contrasted to Literature, which investigates the possibilities of imagination breaking away from constraints (105).

Psychology prioritizes logic, which contrasts sharply with Literature, even though the latter may be founded on probability. Literature is another field that has been heavily shaped by the influence of psychology. Authors often use psychological theories and methods to influence readers' emotions and reactions. Literature can also help us understand the emotional and psychological factors that can affect how we react to certain situations.

According to Russell; “*Psychologists prefer observations that can be replicated, whereas a serious writer deals with analogy, metaphor, and perhaps intentional ambiguity*” (*Psychology and Literature* 551) However, most psychological theories are based on observations that are rooted in the experiences of western society. This means that they are not as applicable to other populations. In order to make scientific progress in this area, we must continue to expand our knowledge base by researching different cultures and incorporating different points of view into our current theories.

Nonetheless, both literature and psychology share the same comprehensible target, taking into consideration both categories of the treated subject, either fictional characters for literature or real one for psychology, they aim to providing the difficulties and issues they confront. Russell sees that this attribute results in the fact that knowledge of one discipline may add to knowledge of another in at least four categories: the psychology of the writer, the psychology of the creative process, the study of behavior, and reactions to literature.

The psychology of the writer is based on biographies and autobiographies of previous writers' interpretations, whereas the creative process psychology focuses on the writer's personality and characteristics. Psychological studies of the process of creating literary works

often include the stages that all creative processes go through while acknowledging the unique distinctions in each author's style. The mentioned conduct is being studied in order to characterize the type and register of attitudes that human participants make explicit or leave inferred when executing it. Similarly, readers respond to what they read, which gives rise to the 'effects' that predetermined storylines have on the readers.

Psychology is an interdisciplinary field that studies the interaction between art and its surroundings in order to bring human enlightenment. It is used to analyze literature through the lens of allied disciplines such as history, linguistics, communication, social sciences, philosophy, education, and the arts.

René Welleck and Austin Warren tackled the issue of psychology and literature in their book *Theory of Literature*, focusing on the relationship between criticism and the psychology of the writer, arguing that there is a connection between the writer's presentation and the psychology of the creative process, demonstrating how interdisciplinary studies have taken humanity into new realms of knowledge (75).

Wellek and Warren explain that there are several definitions of literary psychology based on the subject of research. The psychology of literature studies the influence of literary works on the reader. It means that it sees the influence of literary work on the reader, whether it affects the way of thinking and the way of life of the reader or not (81).

Wellek and Warren defined the expression *Psychology of Literature* as:

- (a) the psychological study of the writer as a type and an individual, (b) the study of the creative process, (c) the study of the types and laws that are present in literary works, and (d) the study of the effects of literature on the readers (95).

Wellek and Warren claim that a writer is a human being who is inextricably linked to the essence of desire and emotion. He can write literary masterpieces based on his desire and emotional foundation. However, the psychology of literature investigates how a work's process

may be transformed into a complete literary masterpiece. Additionally, investigating how psychological topics and scenarios are employed in the character of literary works. Above all, Wellek and Warren, indicate that the psychology of literature examines the impact of literary work on the reader, whether or not it influences the reader's way of thinking and way of living.

Among others, Carl Gustave Jung claims in his work titled *Psychology and Literature* that psychology is the study of psychic processes. It can be brought to bear upon the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all sciences and arts. Jung discusses the relationship between psychology and art by dwelling on their relative principles, saying that "*psychology and the study of art will always have to turn to one another for help, and the one will not invalidate the other... Both principles are valid in spite of their relativity.*"(2017).

The psychological study of a writer as an individual and type, as well as the analysis of his creative process, is an essential component of the psychology of art. It explains the human's psychological experience when engaging with artistic actions, such as enjoying, developing, and executing them, or interacting with society and listening to their critiques.

2.4 Reader Response Theory

Reception or reader response theory is a school of literary criticism that examines how readers interpret literary texts. It is a relatively new school of criticism and there are still many questions about how it works and what its goals should be. The reader response criticism it is generally divided into three sections: reception history, reader reactions, and hermeneutics.

Reception history focuses on the way a story is received when it is first published and later when it is reprinted or adapted into other media. When a new story is published, it is usually met with some initial resistance. For example, many authors deliberately include elements that seem controversial or are out of the ordinary to try to attract the attention of readers and create controversy. However, if the story is not well received initially, it is seldom

repeated in the future. Readers may also respond to stories in different ways over time, depending on their mood and life experiences at the time they are reading the story. They may respond more strongly to certain aspects of the story when they are younger and less experienced, but years later they may react more positively to certain elements that they did not notice or understand earlier in their lives.

The second section of reader-response theory is called reader reactions. This focuses primarily on the ways in which readers interact with and interpret the stories that they read. This includes their attitudes toward the characters in the story and their feelings about the story as a whole. It also includes the manner in which they respond to specific parts of the text and the emotions that they feel while reading it.

The third section of reader-response theory is hermeneutics. This involves an analysis of the underlying meaning of the text. This includes the identification of recurring themes in the text and their meanings. It also includes an analysis of themes and how they are developed throughout the story. It may also include an analysis of the structure and organization of the story and the relationship between the characters in the story. A theory of literary criticism should not attempt to interpret the meaning of a story by relating it to real-life events or human experiences.

M.A.R. Habib, in his book *A History of Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present*, argues that the role of the reader or audience in shaping the meaning of a literary work or performance has been recognized since classical times. Many classical and medieval writers view literature as a branch of rhetoric, the art of persuasive speaking or writing. Literature had to be highly aware of the composition and expectations of its audience (708).

Before the advent of reader-response theory, scholars mostly focused on analysing the text or the author's intentions when creating it. They analyzed the meaning behind the words and the way that words were used to convey ideas. Some critics also look at the larger historical

context of the story and try to understand how the message fits into broader cultural trends or social issues of the time. Others attempt to dissect the text itself to figure out how the author constructs the plot and how certain elements work together to create a specific effect or mood for the reader.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, several theories of literature examined the ways in which readers engage cognitively and historically with literary texts. Subsequently, several Romantic theories stressed the powerful emotional impact of poetry on the reader. Several other kinds of theories, such as Feminism and Marxism, have long acknowledged that literature is always oriented towards certain kinds of audiences (M. A.R. Habib, 708). In all of these approaches, the focus is on what the author is creating and how the text works as a whole. The reader is pretty much an afterthought in this type of analysis. Thus, the reader-response theory focuses on how readers respond to a text rather than what the author intends to create.

However, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a set of formalists argued that literature is an object to be studied in terms of its specifically literary qualities, as opposed to any moral, religious, or other significance it might hold for later generations of thinkers and writers. Habib claims that the reader-response theory was a reaction against such formalism and objectivism; it was also a renewal of a long and diversified tradition that had acknowledged the important role of the reader or audience. There are elements of a reader-response outlook in the theoretical writings of some writers, such as Virginia Woolf, Louise Rosenblatt, and Wayne Booth. All of these thinkers acknowledged that the author of a literary text employs certain techniques to evoke specific effects in their readers or to shape their response. A variety of poststructuralist groups, such as deconstruction, have questioned the formalist and New Critical assertions of textual objectivity (709).

Nevertheless, in the 1970s, a number of critics at the University of Constance in Germany began to formulate a systematic reader-response, or "reception" theory. The leading

members of this school were Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss. Their theories had their roots in the hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions of Alexander Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, and Friedrich von Schiller (Habib 709).

On this account, Louise Rosenblatt explains in her *book Literature as Exploration* that the reader “draws on past experience of life and language to elicit meaning from the printed words” (26); she explains that the reader’s past experience with life and language serves as an interpretive tool that builds his understanding of the text. For Rosenblatt, literary work is a social product that works and serves the continuity of social life.

Moreover, Rosenblatt sheds light on the literary experience where she attempts to find out what would happen when we read a literary text. She emphasises how the reader is hunted down by all his life experiences when it comes to drawing meaning for the text. Rosenblatt sees that the reader is responsible for the resulted meaning based on his conscious and unconscious mind, she said:

The medium of words, the text brings into the reader’s consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, and scenes. The special meaning and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, recent needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text (30-31).

Lois Tyson’s *Critical Theory Today* explains that a number of different approaches can be used while approaching the reader response criticism; one can use psychoanalytic lenses, feminist lenses, Marxist lenses, or others; regardless of the approaches or lenses the reader uses,

reader response critics maintain, according to Tyson, “*that what a text is cannot be separated from what it does.*” (170). Tyson explains that reader-response theorists share two beliefs: first, the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature, and second, readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; they rather actively make the meaning they find in literature. Therefore, the reader's response criticism discusses the death of the author or its displacement as an authoritarian figure in the text.

According to Tyson, different meanings and critics can be drawn upon in one text from different readers; however, the same reader can provide different meanings and interpretations for the same text he reads; “*reader-response theorists believe that even the same reader reading the same text on two different occasions will probably produce different meanings because so many variables contribute to our experience of the text.*” (170).

Tyson claims that the multiple interpretations of the same text can result from information obtained between our first and second readings of it, from personal events that happened in the interim, from a change in mood between those encounters, or from a change in the reason for which we're reading it (170).

2.4.1 From the Aesthetic to the Efferent Phase

Literature significantly affects the advancement of society. Overall, it has molded developments, changed political frameworks and revealed inequity. Furthermore, it assumes a crucial part in change of society and contributes significantly in country building. Moreover, it is one of the major contributory elements in social change. In addition, it provides us with an itemized insight of human encounters, permitting us to interface on essential degrees of desire and feeling.

Literature has an impact on society or the nation, either directly or indirectly. Literature influences people by teaching, entertaining, and inspiring them to take action in their lives by

establishing a new literary aesthetic. Literature plays a vital role didactically and aesthetically when it comes to dealing with life's adversities and diversities. It has become the social instrument for countries to assemble and reshape their lives, especially after or during a crisis. It becomes a tool for crisis management.

Crisis management is a method of dealing with an unexpected outbreak of events that threaten and harm humanity and its entire community. For example, before the COVID-19 outbreak, it appeared that books were dead in the deceptive world of social media and online entertainment; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they were more alive than at any time in recent memory. Literature has become a lifeline and an inhaler for mankind, a wellspring of new expectations in such a difficult time.

According to Lozano Rafael, in his article "Female Words: Literature as a Healing Process," he claimed that literature serves as a means of healing for humanity. When we are defeated, we can find solace in literary works. They motivate us to work hard while remaining hopeful and courageous. They remove our ignorance while increasing our knowledge. Literary pieces broaden our horizons and sharpen our intellect. Because they provide context, relevance, engagement, understanding, and meaning, novels, plays, poetry, and stories have the power to change a person's beliefs and attitudes.

Lozano assumes that literature can likewise give voice to undetectable parts of the human emergency experience. Reading a complex personal account of a crisis experience depicted in literary artistic works permits us to see that recuperation from a traumatic experience is often characterised by the arduous work of breaking through protective and defensive positions over time, with the help of key in summoning individual strength, resilience, and spirituality. We can learn a lot from the reactions of literary characters to life's problems and crises.

According to Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* (1938), she talks about the reading stances we take when we approach reading a literary piece. She argues that when we read a text, we approach it from one of two stances: the aesthetic and the efferent stance. Rosenblatt emphasises that by approaching a text from the aesthetic stance, we are reading it simply for the pleasure of it. To put it simply, there are many inspirational poems to restore our mental grit and courage. There are numerous poets whose ability to inspire others has earned them fame. Such poems provide people with the internal strength they require to overcome a problem, achieve a goal, or let go of resentment or guilt. Poems can even inspire people to work for a cause or to become better people in difficult social situations. Many famous poets were gifted with the ability to use written words to reach people's hearts and souls, inspiring them to take action.

Additionally, Rosenblatt asserts that when we approach a literary text from the efferent stance, we are approaching it with the idea of taking something away; in other words, it is much more a didactical approach. Similarly, Lozano Rafael claims that literature brings concepts to life by providing nuanced illustrations of complex phenomena encountered in crisis situations, such as victim blaming and survivor guilt. It is simple for learners to assert defensively that they would never blame a victim or dismiss survivor guilt as something that should simply be let go of until they witness the reactions of individuals and communities in actual crisis situations and hear the voices of their struggles, as well as judgement from themselves and others in their communities.

Literature plays both roles, pleasing the human mind during a crisis while teaching and enriching our knowledge about situations that we are facing or might face through other people's experiences. Nevertheless, Rosenblatt combined the two stances together, which means that we can approach both stances while reading a text; we can read a book for professional purposes while approaching the efferent stance, but still, we can also get pleasure from it; the reader can

take the meaning away but also get pleasure out of it, and that is what Rosenblatt called the “elegant solution.” What Rosenblatt expresses in her theory illustrates the case of pandemic literature; the reader cannot deny that while reading pandemic literature, he or she is approaching both stances: the aesthetic and the efferent one. Dealing with literature as a distraction tool to overcome a critical situation, such as post-pandemic, doesn’t eliminate its didactic function as learning from other people’s experiences in similar situations.

2.4.2 The Elegant Solution

Louise Rosenblatt diverges her reception criticism from both old and new criticism, in which she does not neglect either the reader nor the text; she claims that the reader and the text are both critical, which is what resulted in the reader response theory, which is considered a transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt believes that the writer creates the text and the reader co-creates the meaning of the text; each of us, as readers, brings to a text slightly different backgrounds.

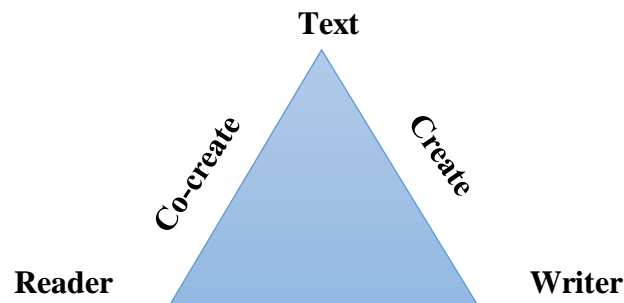


Figure 1 The Transactional Theory of Reading

In addition, Rosenblatt also talks about the reading process; she argues that the reading process is a transaction between the self and the text, or the reader and the text. Besides, she talks about the reading stances we approach when we read, claiming that when we approach a text, we approach it from one of two stances: the efferent stance and the aesthetic stance. That is to say, when we approach a text from the efferent stance, we are approaching it with the idea

of taking something away; the focus is much more on gaining knowledge. On the contrary, when we approach a text aesthetically, we are seeking pleasure.

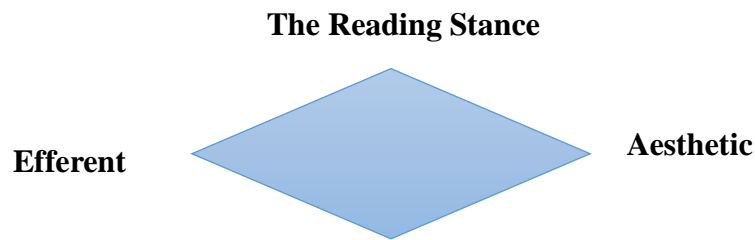


Figure 2 The Elegant Solution

However, Rosenblatt combines the two stances and comes up with what she calls the elegant solution; in other words, the elegant solution is a combination of the efferent and the aesthetic stances. We approach the elegant solution only when we are reading for both reasons: seeking knowledge and seeking pleasure. For example, when we read a professional book, we are approaching it from an efferent stance; we are taking meaning and knowledge away, but we are also getting pleasure out of it, and that is what Rosenblatt calls the elegant solution, when the reading process becomes a transaction between the self and the text.

Reader-response theory is founded on an attempt to shed light on the reader-text connection. According to Yang, “literary texts frequently contain social dilemmas and conflicts. Such reading demands personal responses from readers” (50). In order to make sense of these literary texts, the reader response theory tends to focus on a variety of various roles that readers should play when reading. The theory is based on the concept that, throughout a reading experience, readers, just like the text, have a role in making an interpretation.

Reader response theory opposes modern criticism that holds that meaning is formed purely by the text and can only be uncovered via greater analytic abilities. Reader response theory views readers as active agents involved in the formation of meaning by prioritising them as experience builders in their attempts to manufacture meaning. Readers attempt to come at an

interpretation of texts as part of their engagement with them by relying on their prior knowledge and experiences.

Iser declares in his article “The reading process: A phenomenological approach” that *“the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or the realisation of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two”* (269). Readers have an active role in meaning-building throughout this process. Reader response theory, which focuses on the reciprocal interaction between the text and the reader, holds that meaning can only be negotiated after the reader and the text have come together. In other words, a literary text is generated by a transactional process that creates a reciprocal link between the text and the reader.

Meanwhile, Tyson defines reader response theory as follows: first, he claimed that the role of the reader cannot be ignored in our understanding of literature; second, he added that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather, they actively create the meaning they find in literature (170).

According to reader response theory, reading exists on a continuum from aesthetic to efferent. Whereas the aesthetic perspective relates to the readers' feelings and ideas, the efferent posture focuses on the information the readers draw on at the conclusion of the reading.

2.4.3 A Psychological Lenses for the Reception of Literature

There is a thematic link between psychology and literature. Above all, we can understand this link from the perspectives of René Wellek and Austin Warren's literary studies: *Theory of Literature*, interpreted in their work, *Psychology of Literature*, which examines psychology as a viewpoint for teaching literature, the creative process, and reader relationships. In support of this, Dante Moreira Leite's psychological studies, *The Psychology of Literature*, examine psychology as a perspective for teaching literature, the creative process, and reader connections.

Dante Moreira Leite, in his work *The Psychology of Literature*, believes that the creator of a work of art goes beyond the surface and obvious parts of ordinary life to study the human psychological state. Arguing that contemporary psychology, such as the description of an individual's behaviour and inner experience as a spontaneous activity, the continuity between problem solving and creative capacity, and the attempt to interpret the unconscious life through dynamic forces, all the above, are relevant resources in explaining the creation and permanence of a literary work. (*Trends in Psychology* 978).

The use of psychological ideas in the study of a work of art should be directed by the explanations that such notions have for this endeavor. Leite examines the organism-environment relationship, affective life and intellectual life, and the relationship between unconscious processes in order to clarify to what extent these concepts are useful for the description of productive thinking and/or the analysis of texts and readers in his reflection on the fundamental concepts of Freud, Jung, and the gestaltists (789).

Leite sheds light on Sigmund Freud's Libido concepts, in which he defines it as the mental existence marked by the pursuit of pleasure, love, and detachment from sorrow and death and identifies Id as the most profound and primordial part of the personality and Ego as the portion of personality in contact with reality. Leite borrows this concept as a framework for the focalization of literary analyses between organism and environment. He contends that the persistence of childhood sensations or experiences in adults' mental and behavioural lives, as well as the emergence of emotional and affective conflicts in historical continuity, are important features to consider when approaching individual and cultural histories.

In reference to Freudian theory, literature is a means of expression in a society where neurosis is frequently an alternate way of expressing creative tensions. Based on this perspective, there are many authors who purely use their literary productions as a means to manifest their neurosis. Edgar Allan Poe, for example, was among many other authors who

suffered from psychological instability due to the adversities they grew up in. Poe was adopted by wealthy Baltimore businessmen, but his interest in constructive thought at the price of commercial success caused him to be abandoned by his adoptive father, which had a direct influence on his obsession with the themes of painful death, sorrow, and suffering.

Kaufhold, in his article “The Neuroses of Edgar Allan Poe: A Fever Called Living,” investigates Poe’s sanity; he identifies psychological, biological, and sociocultural human disorders such as anxiety, somatization, and dissociation, among others, which, being detected in all cultures and at all times, albeit under different names, allow readers to observe that they are increasingly able to repress instincts, a fact known to anthropologists and sociologists in their studies of the human condition. Emphasizing the fact that Freudian theory is based on the interconnectedness of affective or emotional life and rational life, a feature that contradicts current beliefs that assume continuity between the two, and on the rationalization of the problems presented by man in his environment in order to show the emotional and conflicting origin of the processes of human thinking, unmasks and destroys human illusions, whether religious, sentimental, or artistic, is a fact.

Within the context of this theory, the concept of the unconscious, dynamically and continuously linked to conscience in a cause-and-effect relationship, and Freud's attempt to translate it into understandable terms have been regarded as one of psychology's most significant contributions to literature, particularly for those concerned with "the nocturnal and sick aspects of the human personality," such as the German romanticists. Nevertheless, scientists accepted experimental validation of this concept, but authors and art critics rejected it since it identified the same conflicts in all works of art (Santos et al. 790).

Meanwhile, the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung wrote the essay “Psychology and Literature” in 1941. Jung, a Sigmund Freud student, left Freud in 1913 to establish his own school of analytical psychology. He explains the psychology of the subconscious in this work.

In his essay, he masterfully demonstrates the connection between psychology and literature. His idea differs significantly from Freud's psychology.

Jung explains that since psychology is the study of psychic processes, it is apparent that psychology may be made to accept the study of literature; he believes that the human psyche is the mother of all his sciences and arts. On the one hand, we may anticipate psychological science to explain the production of a piece of art and, on the other, to show the qualities that make a person artistically creative. As a result, the psychologist is presented with two unique tasks that must be approached in quite different ways. Jung declares that “*psychology and the study of art will always have to turn to one another for help, and the one will not invalidate the other.*” (*Psychology and Literature*).

The derivability of mental experiences is an essential psychological idea. It is a concept in the study of art that a mental result is something in and of itself, whether the work of art or the artist himself is in dispute. Despite their relativity, both principles are true. On this matter, Jung claims that “a great work of art is like a dream, because for all its obviousness, it does not explain itself and is never unequivocal (clear)” (*Psychology and Literature*).

In addition, Jung proposed that the Freudian concept of “libido” may take two innate directions corresponding to the subjective-objective and internal-external dichotomies that would result in introversion and extroversion of being. He also proposed new concepts for the description of the individual, such as “external world,” “personal conscience,” “collective unconscious,” “archetypes,” “persona,” “animus,” “anima,” “ego,” and “shadow.”

Because of its focus on mysticism and religion, as well as its awareness of unconscious forces that project into the external world, Jung theory proves a rich ground for the creation of art. It offers a more profound and illuminating worldview than Freudism. Jung concluded his study by claiming that the key to artistic creations and their efficiency may be discovered in a return to the condition of participation magic—that level of experience in which man, not the

individual, exists. As a result, any great piece of art is objective and impersonal. Consequently, we may see Jung's profound psychology addressing the relationship of psychology to literature in his essay. Nonetheless, his ideas are well received by critics in both fields, psychology and literature, making his essay highly relevant.

Captains of the Sands, a 1944 novel by Jorge Amado, depicts the story of a group of abandoned boys left to their own devices in Salvador. Each member of the group has a highly symbolic identity that is exactly proportionate to the Jungian concept of archetype, such as innocence/perversity, heroism of the "childhero"/divinity and the "child-god," protection/abandonment, fragility/invincibility, past/future, and intuition. These functions can be classified based on how they manifest in introverted and extroverted individuals. (Santos et al. 790).

Overall, the gestaltists conduct perceptual experiments to investigate behavior as a result of an organism-environment interaction. They employ force acting in diverse directions to arrange and reorganise themselves, switching between resting and searching stages to accomplish an objective. This style of analysis is distinguished by the analyst's capacity to analyze the organism exactly at a particular instant, being concerned with the organism's past only if it is detected as an active factor at the time. The difference between the gestaltists, Freud, and Jung is the opposition of the mechanical model based on energy to the electricity model. The gestaltists study cases in which behaviour is directed by the environment without isolating behaviour and experience, making the study inviable (Santos et al. 791).

To put it simply, gestaltists believe that behaviour is controlled by intelligent contact with one's surroundings, whereas Freud and Jung believe that man is directed by unconscious impulses. Psychoanalysts look for illogical parts of rational action, whereas gestaltists look for rationality or appropriate awareness in emotional behavior. Moreover, the distinction between psychoanalysts and gestaltists is that gestaltists stress characteristics of perception rather than

literary art. This is because they did not account for the unconscious in their explanation of productive thought.

2.5 The Concept of Trauma

Shoshana Felman, in her book *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, called the 21st century a century of traumas (Elizabeth Rottenberg). The word trauma is derived from the Greek word meaning 'wound'. It was initially used in English in medicine in the mid-seventeenth century to refer to a body injury caused by an external factor. In subsequent usage, notably in medical and psychiatric literature and Freud's writings, the term "trauma" refers to a wound caused by the mind, not the body.

Everyone has experienced trauma. It could be a painful divorce, a lost job, or the death of someone close to you. Trauma fundamentally alters the function of the brain and impacts our thought processes and behaviors in significant ways. This makes it all too easy for us to think that we are alone in experiencing certain aspects of trauma—maybe because our traumatic experiences occurred in private—but this is not true. We are always surrounded by people who have been through some kind of trauma as well. In fact, studies show that trauma is the norm and not the exception.

Caruth Cathy, in his work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, argues that Sigmund Freud was among the first to search into the domains of psychology and psychoanalysis. Freud proposed that trauma is not available to consciousness until it manifests itself multiple times in the survivors' nightmares and repetitious actions (6).

Freud's research on trauma emerged at the end of the 19th century. Wherein, his developmental psychology theory arose from his approach to psychoanalytic analysis of adult emotional illnesses and his prior readings in medical sexology. Freud recognised that adult neurotic disorders, particularly hysteria, were induced by psychic shock, which he defined as a three-part process consisting of a devastating incident, the victim experiencing this trauma, and

this person's psychological defence, either by forgetting or repression (“Three Essays in Theory of Sexuality” 17).

Trauma is defined by repression as any overwhelming occurrence that your consciousness accepts. It is forgettable, yet it reappears in the form of repetitive behavior. Traumatic events, according to Freud, persist in the unconscious as "foreign entities" in the psyche, ready to be unleashed at any time. Furthermore, he observed that the patient is fixed on some very specific portion of their history, is unable to detach themselves from it, and has thus become entirely alienated from both the present and the future (Sigmund Freud).

In their attempt to answer the question, "What is trauma?" The Centre for Nonviolence and Social Justice declared in 2014 that the term "trauma" is used basically for the description of experiences and events that are emotionally painful and distressing; moreover, trauma is the process of people being unable to cope with their surroundings easily and leaving them powerless and disactivated. That is to say, trauma is all about causing a psychologically severe shock that damages mental wellbeing.

The traumatic incident, according to Judith Herman's famous book *Trauma and Recovery*, overwhelms the typical human adaptation to life. Traumatic occurrences, as opposed to ordinary catastrophes, usually include risks to life and physical integrity or a close personal experience with violence and death. Trauma is often characterized in terms of situations that are outside the scope of normal human experience. However, trauma can occur regularly for particular groups of individuals and become part of the universal human experience. Thus, traumatic occurrences are unique not because they happen rarely but because they exceed the typical human adaptability to life (33).

A traumatic experience, also known as a traumatic stressor, causes an excess of external stimuli as well as an excess of excitement in the brain. When the brain is assaulted, it is unable

to properly internalize or digest the experience. It responds through a variety of techniques, including psychological numbing and the suppression of typical emotional reactions.

2.5.1 A Brief History of Trauma

“Trauma paradigm”, “trauma culture”, “post-traumatic age” – these academic buzzwords capture the impact that the notion of the psychological wound has made within and beyond literary studies in recent years. Trauma has become a key interpretative category of our time. Ever since the American Psychiatric Association (APA) introduced the diagnosis “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) in the 1980 edition of their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (*Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* 11).

The notion of psychological trauma has flourished, establishing its own school and informing a variety of others. The approach has effectively entered common usage as freshly constructed treatment centers treat people who witness traumatic experiences all around the world. In her survey, *History of Trauma Theory*, Nicole A. Sütterlin recounts four main steps in the development of trauma through history.

First, Sütterlin sheds light on the roots of such theories regarding trauma concepts and how they were developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by European and American physicians, neurologists, and psychiatrists.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the earliest systematic medical examinations of what would eventually be labelled "trauma" occurred when British medical practitioners explored a mystery ailment called "railway pine." This illness was named after train accident victims who presented with physical symptoms but no visible biological injury. “Railway travel has always been perilous and frequently deadly. According to Railway Regulation Act records, between 1871 and 1901, there were no less than 200 people killed as a result of railway travel per year.” (Luckhurst 21). Victims and witnesses of railway accidents reported traumatic

symptoms such as flashbacks, paranoia, and loss of emotion that appeared right away after the incident.

In "The Railway Accident: Trains, Trauma, and Technological Crises in Nineteenth-Century Britain," Harington describes the railway accident as inextricably tied to the history of trauma as a symbol of nineteenth-century technical growth and cultural progress, as well as the tremendous changes brought about by modern life. The shocking arbitrariness and suddenness of railway accidents symbolised the dark side of the new golden age to a Victorian public shaken by frequent news of railroad collisions: an increased sense of vulnerability in the face of fast-moving technologies that exceeded human control and comprehension (2001).

Secondly, Sütterlin adds that recent discourse-oriented histories of trauma have effectively argued that these early diagnoses were determined by and constitutive of uniquely modern developments, such as the industrial revolution and the establishment of modern nation-state governments and welfare states. He claims: "But if trauma is a product of modernity, this raises the question of whether genealogies of trauma should look beyond the established timeframe, locating the origin of this concept in discourses that emerged prior to 1850." (11).

Furthermore, Sütterlin points out that the development of the post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis in 1980 represents a turning event in the complicated and turbulent history or, rather, politics of trauma, heralding what has been dubbed a "change in moral economy" and the birth of contemporary trauma culture (11).

At the end, he identifies the pioneers of trauma theory in the humanities who contributed to this movement, but their contentious ethical attitude raises the question of literary criticism's current and future role in interpreting the traumatic wound. By briefly addressing some significant successes and flaws of existing genealogies, Early nineteenth-century physicians rarely thought of a wound lodged only in the psyche as having the potential to profoundly affect the victim's mental wellbeing; they relied on the language of "nervous shock" to indicate that a

physical injury, such as a carriage accident or a near-drowning incident, delivered a shock to the nervous system, triggering aberrations of thought such as repetitive nightmares, memory losses, incoherent babblings, or hallucinations. It wasn't until Freud analyzed the injuries of "shell-shocked" WWI troops that the physical causation of shock was acknowledged. To Freud and others, it was obvious that some troops had psychological wounds that had no physical cause.

2.5.2 The Psychological State of Mind during Trauma

When we are experiencing trauma, our brain sends a signal to our body to prepare for danger or repel an attack. This causes the perspiration glands and even blood pressure to increase as our muscles brace for shock. The stress reaction also becomes more active over time, making us more sensitive to potential threats and less inclined to trust people when they reappear in our lives. The brain does everything it can to keep us safe, but it eventually directs our bodies to go into a condition of paralysis widely known as "tonic immobility." This is known as the "freeze, flight, and fight" reaction, and many people are unaware that it is a typical component of the human experience.

One of the main ways that trauma registers in our brain is through our fight-or-flight response, which involves hyper-arousal and the release of stress hormones like adrenaline. These hormones raise our blood pressure and heart rate, our muscles tense up, and we lose our ability to think straight. On top of these physical changes, though, there are also some serious chemical changes that take place in our brains when we are under stress.

In order to understand how the brain processes trauma, Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, in their work *The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma*, use the work of the French neurologist and psychologist Pierre Janet to investigate how the brain operates under trauma. According to this perspective, when humans encounter

new occurrences, they encode them and immediately incorporate them into the current schema (159).

According to Pierre Janet references, this process is known as narrative memory, which is what we use to make sense of our surroundings. When a person is unable to integrate inputs into existing schemas, the experiences are stored differently and "*not available for retrieval under ordinary conditions; they become dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control.*" (160). Nevertheless, the human mind keeps functioning in its attempts to interpret these experiences and make sense of them.

Through the lenses of Janet's theory of narrative memory, the incorporation of experience into memory follows the same rules as a story. If a significant component of one's story is absent or if an individual lacks an emotional connection to an aspect, the story remains incomplete, and that person cannot claim ownership of the incomplete narrative (162).

The complexity of current neuroscience distinguishes contemporary critics from Freud and Janet. While nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century thinkers may hypothesise about how the brain functions in trauma, current neurobiologists can anchor such explanations in scientific concepts. Modern critics support David Eagleman's principal in his book *The Secret Lives of the Brain*, which he calls "Secondary Track," which claims that during traumatic situations, the memories saved in the brain have a "flashbulb" character to them, appearing independently of the typical recall procedures that hippocampus memories follow. As a result, trauma survivors have multiple memories of the same incident competing for brain significance (126). On this matter, Eagleman describes this process as:

. . . two journalists with different personalities were jotting down notes about a single unfolding story. . . . In the end, it is likely that there are even more than two factions involved, all writing down information and later competing to tell the story (126).

Eagleman's description deepens Pierre Janet's theory about narrative memory. Narrative memory is disrupted because no one account of events can be reconciled into a completed story. Trauma theory is now considered a relatively new concept that arose in the health care system during the 1970s, primarily in conjunction with research on Vietnam veterans and other survivors groups. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association's official manual of mental disorders established a new category called "posttraumatic stress disorder" (Centre for Nonviolence).

2.5.2.1 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly referred to by the abbreviation PTSD, is a concept that has become commonplace and is wildly interpreted through films and television adaptations. As a result, the ordinary individual can recognise the symptoms of PTSD.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a condition caused by traumatic events such as domestic abuse, car accidents, sudden and severe illness, military combat, and natural disasters and crises. Such incidents lead the contemporary reader and viewer to anticipate certain characteristics of a trauma narrative: intense flashbacks, vivid dreams, and vivid memories. Moreover, such events may cause re-traumatization whenever a person is faced with similar situations again.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism, Freud's trauma theory captures Jewish history with the structure of trauma. His work called into question the country's historical and political standing. In addition, the manner in which we write confronts historical events, which we can use to rethink the possibility of history as well as our ethical and political relationship to it, which Freud refers to as "double telling" (it is referred to as "history" and "historical witness"). The alternating crisis of death (shattering) and crisis of life (survival function).

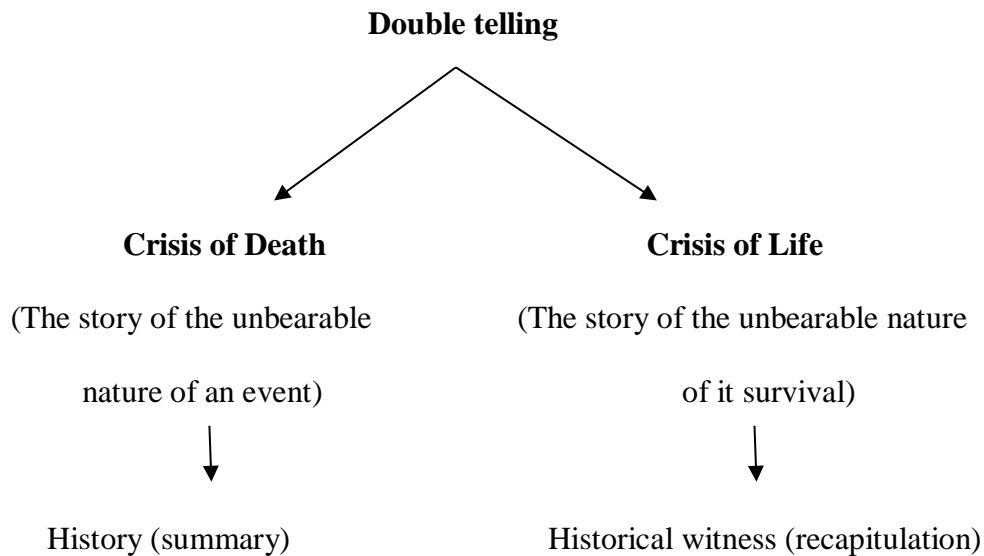


Figure 3 Fraud's Double Telling

Caruth gives her own definition of the term PTSD at the start of her *Introduction to Trauma*:

While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (4).

The traumatised carry an impossible past inside them, or he becomes himself the symptom of a history that he cannot process. The fact that the occurrence was overpowering for the victim indicates that the victim's brain was not prepared for such a traumatic experience.

2.5.2.2 The Psychological Responses to Trauma

Traumatic experiences can be pervasive; they have a cumulative impact that can be fundamentally life-aware. Nevertheless, individuals' psychological responses to trauma vary from one to another, and they remain unclear and have always been under the scope of investigations from one psychologist to another. On this matter, Laurence Kirmayer

writes *Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and Dissociation*. In which he claims that the different types of traumas are responsible for the different psychological responses, such as dissociative amnesia or intrusive recall, which are a result of the social valuation of the traumatic experience created in a particular culture (184).

The human mind is not ready for the unexpected events that it might face; for that reason, it is quite difficult to process the shock immediately. That is why a traumatised person is neither able to identify his position nor aware at the time of the occurrence of trauma, thus creating a gap between the occurrence of the trauma and the return to full consciousness.

Sigmund Freud already defined this process in his study of *Jewish history, Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where he asserts:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave physical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a 'traumatic neurosis'. This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the 'incubation period', a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease... It is the feature one might term *latency* (84).

Traumatic experiences may have a permanent influence on the human psyche, altering the nature of an individual's memory, self-recognition, and interpersonal relationships. The effects of trauma can have long-lasting consequences on a person's ability to function normally in society and on their ability to form healthy relationships. Some people may experience lingering effects of trauma for many years after the event occurred, while others may recover completely over time.

Despite the human potential for survival and adaptation, traumatic experiences can disrupt people's psychological, biological, and social balance to the point that the recollection of one specific incident taints all subsequent experiences, reducing appreciation for the present.

2.5.2.3 Collective Trauma

Collective trauma is a shared emotional and mental reaction to a horrible event. It is a shared experience of helplessness, confusion, and loss among a group of people. Some may experience the direct impact of catastrophic events such as natural disasters such as global warming, earthquakes, floods, and fires, as well as the widespread spread of diseases and viruses that turn to epidemics and pandemics, wars, and colonial oppression. The term collective trauma was first introduced by the American sociologist Kai Erikson in his book *Everything in its Path*, where he documented the catastrophic incidents of 1972's flood.

There are many negative consequences of collective trauma on mental health, such as fear, chronic stress, difficulty sleeping, brain fog, short-term anxiety, long-term depression, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and other mental health issues such as paranoia, physical pain, and obsessive thoughts that create patterns of confusion over what is happening. Unlike the psychological effects of individual trauma, one of the most important psychological effects of collective trauma is survivor guilt. Survivor guilt is a feeling of shame, guilt, and self-pity that someone feels because they survived an ordeal when someone else did not. Survivors often feel as if they are responsible for the deaths of their friends or loved ones. Thus, survivors of collective trauma are unable to move beyond indelible images of death; besides the guilt they carry, they suffer from psychic numbing, they lack trust in the world, and they struggle for meaning.

Nevertheless, collective trauma has positive consequences as well. Sometimes shared pain leads to solidarity. This is seen in the solidarity of people in the face of crisis. For example, during the global pandemic of COVID-19, natural disasters such as floods, fires, and

earthquakes. However, the negative consequences of collective trauma have more or less long-lasting effects on the mass, and they need to be treated as soon as possible. Overall, the effects of collective trauma can last a lifetime and can have a serious impact on people's mental health and well-being. There is a growing recognition of the need to address trauma in society. One way that society can try to address collective trauma is through collective healing.

Collective healing refers to the process of repairing and restoring relationships between people that have been damaged by trauma. It can involve sharing experiences, knowledge, and feelings to help healing take place. There is evidence that collective healing can be beneficial for both the individuals involved and the community as a whole. It can help to build stronger relationships and connections, promote social cohesion, and create a sense of community. It can also help to heal the wounds of trauma and reduce the risk of future incidents.

2.6 Trauma Theory in Literature

Trauma theory has been used in literature for a long time to explore the effects of traumatic experiences on individuals and society. The concept of trauma has been used in different ways by different authors, but the basic idea is that traumatic experiences can lead to psychological problems or long-lasting effects on a person's behavior.

Trauma theory is an approach to literature in which a critic or reader, while analysing attacks, looks up traumatic events and situations in the text. Trauma theory is often used as a literary device in novels and short stories to evoke strong emotional responses in readers. Psychologists have devised several different theories about how trauma can affect people. The theory of "vicarious trauma" argues that people who witness traumatic events can also experience psychological effects as a result of the events. People who experience a traumatic event may experience a range of physical, emotional, and psychological reactions that vary depending on the type of event they experienced and their personality type.

For Rodi-Risberg, trauma is “a phenomenon that is too shocking to be fully registered upon occurrence. It is only experienced belatedly. It offers specific challenges to traditional notions of referentiality.” (33). Risberg’s claim encapsulates the heart of literary studies in the sense of documenting an event after it has occurred—that which has been and/or happened, can be, or can happen and may be.

Additionally, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth argues that “trauma includes symptoms that had previously been called shellshock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis and referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes” (3). Caruth continues by explaining that these symptoms were formerly classified as post-traumatic stress disorder. There is a reaction, often delayed, to an overpowering incident or occurrence that manifests as recurring, intrusive hallucinations, dream ideas, or behaviours arising from the event, as well as a loss of feeling that may have occurred during or after recalling the event (4).

Marder, on the other hand, in his article *Trauma and Literary Studies: “Some Enabling Questions,”* characterises a traumatic event as a weird type of occurrence that cannot be identified within the bounds of location and time. That is why literature is one of the ways we transmit events about human experiences that are not contained by other usual means of communication. Marder points out the importance of literature in identifying and explaining unexplained traumatic experiences in reality.

Furthermore, Hartman acknowledges in her article “On traumatic knowledge and literary studies” that trauma theory dwells on the relationship between words and trauma. Hartman stresses the importance of literature in understanding traumatic incidences; trauma theory facilitates and helps to read the wound with the aid of literature.

In the context of literary interpretation, many trauma theorists have extracted a number of qualities associated with what has been variously referred to as trauma fiction. In Contemporary

Crisis Fictions, Emily Horton asserts: “*the aesthetic techniques of the crisis novel, including the first-person confessional, unreliable narrative voice, discursive irony, genre subversion, and temporal digression and fragmentation, which characterise a mode of crisis-bound writing*” (5).

With rare exceptions, trauma scholars who work with nineteenth-century writings interpret trauma in terms of current theories. While Cathy Caruth, Shoshanna Felman, Ann Whitehead, E. Anne Kaplan, Dominick La Capra, and Judith Herman's works have sparked major conversations regarding trauma in literature, their development of the notion of trauma seldom goes back further than Freud. With the release of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma in 1996*, trauma studies in literary criticism received major attention.

Scholars such as Caruth developed a psychoanalytic post-structural approach that proposes trauma is an intractable issue of the unconscious that reveals the fundamental paradoxes of experience and language. Caruth systematises Jack Lacan's method, where he defines trauma as a recurrent sensation of absence that shatters awareness of the intense experience, prohibiting linguistic value other than a referential expression. The various psychological definitions of trauma, as well as the semiotic, rhetorical, and social issues that are part of the study of trauma in literature and culture, may assist in comprehending the evolution of trauma theory in literary criticism.

The concept of trauma leads to the fundamental structure of contemporary literary trauma theory. This concept is best described by Cathy Caruth when she says that:

Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature--the way it was precisely not known in the first instance--returns to haunt the survivor later on (4).

The source of a traumatic response will always be unclear and unresolved; nonetheless, the ambiguous, literal experience is often present and obtrusive. According to trauma theory, the happening trauma can only be understood through recurring flashbacks that are literally highly relevant to the incident since the mind cannot represent it otherwise.

In order to identify the link between the theory and the practice, while studying trauma theory, the focus is on the study of literature on and about trauma. Literature has always been the source for psychologists, critics, and theorists in their attempts to interpret traumatic experiences. Sigmund Freud uses literature as an interpretive tool to describe the traumatic experience; he gives reference to Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Libertata* in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Similarly, Cathy Caruth notes in her *Unclaimed Experience* that literature, like psychoanalysis, is concerned with the intricate relationship. She adds that many writings investigate and tackle the traumatic experience in different contexts. Such texts address a major issue that arises from the actual experience of a certain catastrophe (6-8). "*Literature and art are a precocious mode of witnessing—of accessing reality—when other modes of knowledge are precludes*"(57). Claim Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. The witness of art is as essential as the witness of history; art has the ability to serve as a testimonial.

Regarding art and history and how both are essential in their testimonial capacities, Michelle Balaey asserts that the ethics of expressing trauma in testimonial literature, autobiographies (including false trauma memoirs), and fictional works are discussed in many literary forms. Personal trauma such as rape, incest, interpersonal violence, and mental illness are common topics, as are historical or communal trauma such as the Holocaust, American slavery, Native American genocide, and the Vietnam War (*Trends in Literary Trauma Theory*).

A trauma is an uncontrollable, disruptive process that affects the victim's thoughts and conduct as a result of an unanticipated and overwhelming encounter. It is classified as a disorder by the medical community, and among its most obvious symptoms are recurring phenomena such as flashbacks, nightmares, hallucinations, syncopal attacks, and so on, as well as anxiety, despair, sadness, suspicion, and other psychical disorders. Many trauma theorists and researchers investigate the latency of trauma, or the delayed manifestation of its effects. Such delay in diagnosing the traumatised person integrates the traumatic experience, which keeps the individual practically ignorant of it from the start, preventing it from being accessed and recalled consciously. That is only conceivable if the event has been effectively digested in one's psyche.

The portrayal of trauma, particularly in literary works, has triggered a debate among historians over its historical accuracy. Some theorists agree that a narrative capable of eliciting empathy and critical thinking while preserving the authenticity of the studied event can have a significant impact on readers' understanding of trauma. Trauma authors attempt to influence their readers in ways that replicate the pathological aspects of trauma. They aim to show the process of crafting a story as well as the recovery of the literary work's narrator and characters.

2.6.1 Trauma Theory Progression in Contemporary Literature

The trope of physical and emotional trauma can be found in almost any tradition. Therefore, trauma theory emerged as a distinct field of literary and cultural study. When it comes to contemporary literature, terms like violence and disaster are considered the key terms that dominate contemporary cultures. In many contemporary literary works, one can find that pain, suffering, violence, wars, natural disasters, and trauma are the dominant and major themes in such works, which are widely known as apocalyptic and dystopian literature. For that reason, trauma theory is nowadays considered a key term in discussion in the field of research for such a genre.

Many of the writings that came out in the 20th century and the early 21st century discuss violence, pain, and trauma, which have become key terms in contemporary literature. The causes of trauma vary; they can be caused by environmental crises, migration, refugee issues, wars, and diseases. The depiction of trauma in contemporary narratives is a way where one can find the individual or the subjective trauma at the centre of the fictional world as linked to the general angst of the hour and the theories; in other words, the theories of trauma effects on the individual subjects are often used to examine the personal and the individual experience of collective traumatic events in a literary work.

Through literature, we experience events that might have remained hidden from us. Through literature, these events become meaningful to us, and by mirroring the world, fiction is thus one avenue through which trauma can be expressed. Trauma is the story of the wound that needs to be told, and this mode of expression is found in literary texts, both fictional and non-fictional. It reveals the reality or truth that we can only experience through close reading of the text. Trauma is therefore the act of bearing witness, and this act places the witness in a unique position of risk, a risk associated with selectivity, self-censorship, and the betrayal arising out of the unreliability of memory.

Literature allows its readers to discover the undiscovered and experience the unexperienced. These experiences become relevant to us thanks to literature, and fiction, by mirroring reality, is therefore one way through which trauma may be articulated. Trauma is the tale of the wound that has to be told, and this method of expression may be found in both fictional and nonfictional literary writings. It reveals the reality or truth that can only be experienced by closely reading the text. Trauma is therefore the act of bearing witness, and this act placed the witness in a unique position of danger, one connected with selectivity, self-censorship, and betrayal as a result of memory's unreliability.

As a theory, trauma can be applied in research writing as a methodological tool through investigating what kind of trauma has been narrated or whether the writer has been able to narrate it properly, as well as looking at the way the writer narrativizes it. The investigation sees where and when the failure takes place, and what does the writer do in finding the surrogate.

2.6.1.1 Sigmund Freud

Tracing the historical and epistemological evolution of trauma theory, we generally began with Sigmund Freud as one of the pioneers. Trauma theory is inspired by Sigmund Freud's already existing psychological theories. Freud establishes the foundation for what is now one of the most evaluating developed schools of thought in a few brief words. Much has changed in the century since Freud's books were published, but researchers have continued to examine and interpret his theories within the context of their different times, and the applications today are arguably just as appropriate.

Trauma studies are inseparably connected to Freud and psychoanalysis. Freud is the first to represent the concepts of alienation, pain, the inexpressibility of the unconscious, and its expression through certain substitutions and manifestations. Freud's theoretical formulations on traumatic experience are highly instrumental in defining the psychological notions that influence this field.

Psychoanalytic theory addresses the effects of trauma or studies regarding shock and hysteria. In his early theoretical formulations in *Studies of Hysteria*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud notably his explanation of what he calls "traumatic neurosis," which is central to any study of trauma, and his investigation of the physiology of traumatic neurosis, which is known in contemporary writings with the modern term "trauma,"

Such neuroses, according to Freud, were distinguished from other "hysterias" investigated at the time in that a person suffering from trauma had "signs of subjective illness." Freud associates such "subjective ailment" with fright, which he defines as a state encountered when unprepared, as opposed to fear, which has a fixed object, and anxiety. For those suffering from traumatic neurosis, such terror is most typically experienced through the recurrence of nightmares that transport the person back to the time of trauma.

Freud claims that there is a division between the conscious and unconscious mind. On this matter, he writes: "*I am not aware, however, that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with not thinking of it.*" (12-13).

Hence, persons suffering from "traumatic neurosis" have little to no control over their memories' experiences. Such memories can only occur in an unconscious "dream." Therefore, unlike anxieties or fears, trauma cannot be addressed directly by the individual. Freud suggests that trauma is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again repeatedly in nightmare and in repetitive action of the survivor.

Freud discusses the notion of a broken sense of time for trauma sufferers. Where he suggests that the individual develops a broken personal history by bringing the "repressed" past into the present. For Freud, traumatic experience continues to dwell on the unconscious "foreign bodies" in the psyche that threatens to be unleashed at any time. He claims:

The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it . . . He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past (18).

Fraud studies dominate the pioneering efforts in trauma's conceptualization as an object of study. In the study of hysteria, Freud argues that the actual event or shock is not traumatic in itself, but the memory of the same brings in the actual trauma. He discovers that adult neurotic disorders, especially hysteria, are caused by psychic shock, which he sees as a three-part process: the first is the traumatising event, the second is the victim experiencing trauma, and the third is the person's psychological defense by forgetting or repressing. Moreover, his studies talk about the causes of hysteria, like remembering sexual abuse, experiencing fear, anxieties, intrusive thoughts, or disturbing images that reflect an implicit memory of the trauma. His argument is fundamental to the theoretical formulations regarding trauma studies in academics.

The role of narrations and representations is crucial to the notion of trauma. The varied process of recalling the events brings about pain, as it gives shape to the formerly repressed expression of an experience in the unconscious.

2.6.1.2 Jacques Lacan

Jacques Lacan is considered a field of theoretical inspiration for trauma theory and its literary implications. Extending Freud's theory, in his *The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud*, Jacques Lacan's query is actually whether the unconscious is deeply inside, whether it is kept on the outside in symbolic order, or whether it is in the language. Lacan claimed that the "unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual; what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier." (129).

Lacan's conceptualizations of subject and symbolic order are very crucial in any understanding of traumatic subjectivity or trauma. The inseparable connection between alienation and trauma gets complicated in Lacan's theoretical formulation of language and subjects. In his Lacanian approach to the emergence of subjectivity, he claims that human beings enter the world prematurely without any ability to manage their bodies.

Without language, we cannot categorise and manipulate the world in discursive practices. After the sense of fragment itself, Lacan says that the slowly constructed language and out of this human subjectivity spring. Lacan comes up with the concept of the mirror stage, where the child becomes conscious and has volitional control over its own body. This is the mirror stage where the seminal emergence of language takes place.

This alienation from the self with the self in language actually brings about or causes the first trauma in subjectivity, and the normal subject who is already traumatised gets complicated in the social ambience of violence and suffering. When the subject encounters violence or horror, Lacan, in fact, fuses this linguistics and psychoanalysis and also suggests that the subject is subordinate to the operation of linguistic manifestations. Lacan sees that desire drives the subject towards fresh desires and perpetually newer, and it leads to newer signifiers and newer ones where the signifier remains unreachable transcendental.

2.6.1.3 Cathy Caruth

Later on, after Freud and Lacan, Cathy Caruth, who is widely recognised by literary critics as the leading contemporary pioneer of trauma theory, Caruth is a product of the Yale School of Deconstruction and received her PhD from Yale University in 1988. Caruth endures the scene where she interprets Lacan's reading of Freud, thus, with Caruth's and Yale's critics, theorising trauma theory as an institution. Caruth's critic is the kind of climax or climatic ending of violence that is personal, individual, gender-bound. All these external elements of pain are theorised by her critics. Cathy Caruth argues in her book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) that:

trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on (4).

The individual experience of pain as it is formulated by Freud and the cultural and societal experience of pain as said by Lacan get beautifully summed up and extended by Cathy Caruth. She tries to shift the emphasis of her inquiry to the event that caused the trauma, where she gives importance to the actual structure of this experience or its reception as definitive.

The study of trauma and literature began with Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*. *Trauma narratives and history*: this work established the institution of trauma studies. In her introduction to *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth sheds light on Freud's examples of Clorinda and Tancred. According to Caruth, Tancred becomes a wound crying out as she writes "*a truth that cannot be fully known*" (3). In this narrative, Caruth emphasises a critical feature of trauma: trauma offers moments of knowing and not knowing, demanding our testimony while also denying it.

She sees that the core of Sigmund Freud's critics on trauma as well as the wound's voice both inform us about what the narratives truly tell:

Trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available (4).

Caruth comes out with a definition for trauma in which she asserts that "*in its general definition, trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.*" (91). Moreover, Caruth categorizes trauma in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 1995 as "*solely in the structure of the experience or reception... where the event is not fully assimilated at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it*" (4-5).

She stresses the paradoxical aspects of representation, which presuppose trauma and representability, and its role in integrating the traumatic as a part of the past and the event as essential incomprehensibility.

For Caruth, apart from being remembered that something occurred in the past, trauma becomes a part of the very agency and subjectivity of the survivor, and it is compulsively performed in the present as though it is a real occurrence in the present time. Trauma blurs the spatiotemporal understanding; Caruth's theorization of trauma in intrinsic and spatial temporal structure raises these issues of representation of memory, she claims:

the wound of the mind –the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world–is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that...is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor ...so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature –the way it was precisely not known in the first instance –returns to haunt the survivor later on (3-4).

The very core of trauma studies and the problem of representations are highly important. Again, Caruth questions if trauma, by escaping the conscious expression upon the impulse, manifests itself as an epistemological crisis that upsets our perception of time and space and reputedly returns as spectrums, and how it can be testified and represented, or rather read. This question becomes one of the major concerns of the thinking process.

2.7 Teachable Trauma

Trauma, also known as traumatization, is a painful occurrence that involves feelings and emotions and can have major long-term negative implications. Sexual abuse, workplace

discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic violence, and, in particular, childhood events all contribute to it. Although people react differently to comparable situations, not everyone who witnesses the same traumatic incident will become psychoanalyzed.

"Education and Crisis" by Shoshana Felman is the work that brought the term trauma to the American academic domain. As Cathy Caruth already assumed in her *Unclaimed Experience*, trauma is a humbling experience that may be found in and via a literary book. Felman and Caruth both contribute to enriching the academic arena with their research on trauma theory in relation to literary productions. Since literature is an art form, it may hold and express aspects of experience that were not completely experienced or processed in the real world; literature therefore holds in its pages depictions and predictions for life. It is a route and medium for trauma transmission that does not need to be understood to be present in a text or seen. Moreover, literary texts also present a particular reality about history that would not otherwise be available.

On this matter, Shoshana Felman attempts to find answers for some aroused inquiries in her work "Education and Crisis: The Vicissitude of Teaching," where her main concern is to find the relationship between trauma and pedagogy; in other words, Felman sheds light on what we can learn from trauma, or a crisis, according to her, or whether trauma turns out to be a teachable experience. Felman called the 21st century a century of traumas; she believes that we are living: "*In a post-traumatic century, a century that has survived unthinkable historical catastrophes, is there anything that we have learned about education that we did not know before?*" (13).

Shoshana Felman's "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching" explores the relationship between crisis and education. It is based on Paul de Man's "Criticism and Crisis" and Mallarmé's "Rhetoric of Crisis." Felman's implicit engagement with de Man suggests that rhetorical readings still avoid and resist the reading they advocate. Felman's text uses the notion

of crisis to address and confront de Man's declaration that "*we can speak of crisis when a "separation" takes place, by self-reflection, between what, in literature, is in conformity with the original intent and what has irrevocably fallen away from this source*" (8).

Felman examines in her text whether it is able to reflect on its own origins and perform theoretical writing on trauma that does not stop short of fundamentally inscribing its own traumatic origins. She identifies our post-traumatic era as one marked by a crisis of truth and the primacy of testimony, arguing:

What the testimony does not offer is, however, a completed statement, a totalizable account of those events. In the testimony, language is in process and in trial, it does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the constation of a verdict or the self-transparency of knowledge. Testimony is, in other words, a discursive practice, as opposed to a pure theory (16-17).

Felman elaborates on Cathy Caruth's observations on the performative nature of traumatic writing and the impurity of theory, but her pedagogical project diverges from the critical incisiveness of both performance and theory. She examines literature as testimonial discourse and the issues of narrative (Camus), confession (Dostoevsky), psychoanalysis (Freud), and poetry (Mallarmé and Celan). Her observations on Mallarmé's free verse reveal the formerly unseen relationship between culture and language, poetry and politics (Education and Crisis 8-19).

Felman's Education and Crisis conceals its own traumatic origins, obscuring reading behind the didactic achievement of a pragmatic reinscription of literature. Under the guise of ethico-political urgency, the traumatic agency of both literature and theory is ignored, so that her work integrates both, but ultimately at the cost of the latter.

Trauma has a tight association with various fields such as psychology, sociology, history, war, politics, and, most importantly, literature. Trauma, being a new phenomenon,

demands an interdisciplinary approach. It begins a movement to depict a changing incident; the route of anguish and pain continues to reach a degree of wisdom and comprehension.

Trauma can be an influential lesson in both the real world and literary canons. Through literature, authors succeed in depicting the traumatic experiences of people seeking change and progress. For example, the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood chooses female characters and their psyches to go on a journey using two key approaches: feminism and psychoanalysis. It is important to note that when these two techniques make their way to literature, literary criticism, like any other approach, can join them. To gain fresh knowledge, female figures would be placed in both traditional and modern societies. Yet, it comes at a cost in terms of pain and suffering. Almost everyone agrees that literature is vast. It draws on the influences of different areas to represent certain parts of life.

Atwood's three books, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), and *The Robber Bride* (1993), depict female characters' traumatised pasts. Patriarchy dominates the female characters, and the opposing attitudes of victim and conqueror are required to portray a scale of self-consciousness and self-actualization. Humans are social creatures able to construct a utopian or dystopian environment. After all, trauma is teachable; it teaches humanity how to resist their traumatic experiences and how to survive them.

According to Marder illustration in *Trauma and Literary Studies*: "Some Enabling Questions," trauma has an intrinsic political, historical, and ethnic dimension since traumatic events occur as a result of social forces in the social environment. The whole impact of trauma cannot be found in a traumatic experience. Trauma fractures the experience of the individual suffering it, and the event cannot be completely experienced at the moment. However, trauma does not only have negative consequences; it also has the potential for new beginnings. These new routes allow the traumatised person to survive, emphasising the significance of resilience.

2.8 Resilience Theory

Humans respond to their traumas in a variety of ways. There are people who emotionally combust, while others may become enraged or physically aggressive. Others may disintegrate, become numb, and feel helpless and overwhelmed by what has happened. Some may present themselves as victims, blaming others for what has occurred. They sink downward and harbour negative emotions. Then there are others who succeed in this circumstance. They come back stronger and better than before. It's all about how they respond to and resist their traumas; their survival depends on their resilience.

Resilience theory is a new and growing field of psychology that helps people cope with stress, adversity, and trauma. According to resilience theory, people who are resilient have a positive outlook and can bounce back from tough experiences. Resilience is a psychological term that refers to the ability to overcome difficult experiences in life and maintain a positive outlook despite these difficulties. Ledesma, in "Conceptual Frameworks and Research Models on Resilience in Leadership," defines resilience as the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune.

Norman Garmezy, a professor at the University of Minnesota, developed resilience theory, and his work was so significant that he was dubbed the "grandfather of resilience theory" by the New York Times magazine. Ann Masten, Garmezy's most well-known student, is also well-known in the subject of resilience theory, and she claims that Garmezy's pioneering work has led to research all over the world looking at encouraging healthy development in children impacted by war, starvation, poverty, and other calamities (Moore).

Resilience theory suggests that one can develop greater resilience and learn new skills through practice and training. In "*The need for and meaning of positive organisational behaviour*," resilience is described as "*the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased*

responsibility” (Luthans 02). However, some people may be born with certain qualities that make them more able to deal with stress and adversity. For example, some studies suggest that people who are naturally optimistic are more able to cope with and recover from hardship than other people. But regardless of a person's natural level of resilience, he or she can develop coping skills that will help him or her bounce back after a trying experience. Examples of coping skills include developing mindfulness, building social support networks, and developing positive thinking patterns. People can also increase their resilience by learning to cope with life's challenges rather than trying to avoid or escape them. This can help you avoid situations that cause you anxiety and help you develop healthy coping strategies that can help you deal with difficult situations in the future.

Throughout the past few decades, social workers, psychologists, sociologists, educators, and a wide range of other professionals have all focused on the multidimensional topic of study known as resilience theory. Resilience theory focuses on the qualities that people and systems exhibit that allow them to overcome adversity. O'Leary, in his article “Strength in the Face of Adversity: Individual and Social Thriving,” Notes:

Psychologists have recently called for a move away from vulnerability/deficit models to focus instead on triumphs in the face of adversity ... This call for a focus on strengths parallels that of a number of other investigators in child development..., medical sociology..., and education... The potential theoretical, empirical and policy significance of the proposed paradigm shift from illness to health, from vulnerability to thriving, from deficit to protection and beyond ought not be underestimated. The precedent for this paradigm shift is growing in the scientific literature (426).

For Garmezy, resilience means the skills, abilities, knowledge, and insight that accumulate over time as people struggle to surmount adversity and meet challenges. It is an

ongoing and developing fund of energy and skills that can be used in current struggles (qtd. in Weick et al., 298).

Mlambo, in “Trauma, resilience, and survival strategies in crisis times: An Afrocentric Literary Approach,” claims that “resilience, therefore, emphasises the strengths that the people have rather than their vulnerability, through exploring the coping strategies that they exhibit” (39). Resilience theory, however, is not about the adversities or hardships that one might encounter; what is essential about it is how humans react to them. It helps humanity to survive, recuperate, and even flourish in the face of any kind of adversity.

2.8.1 Historical and Cultural Progression of Resilience Concept

Much attention has been paid over many decades to the nature of resilience and how to effectively quantify it. Significant literature focuses on the resilience concept’s historical and cultural history, which took on many shades of meaning over time. In their research, “Psychological resilience: A review and critique of definitions, concepts, and theory,” Fletcher and Sarkar focus on understanding why only certain people can respond positively to adversity by changing it into chances for growth and new adaptation.

After the horror of the Second World War, many studies have been conducted to investigate how people cope with traumatic events that might cause psychological suffering. Issues such as the ability to transform a destabilizing event into a personal search engine, the ability to integrate lights and shadows, resources and vulnerability, or suffering and courage began to emerge as primary research topics aimed at providing a better understanding of resilience processes. Fletcher and Sarkar mention case studies of soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as other pathologies diagnosed as a result of traumatic events in war. They provide descriptions of individual characteristics of war veterans while also highlighting that a significant number of subjects were able to effectively process the traumatic events experienced.

In addition, Grinker and Spiegel's research on "Under Stress" on risk and protective variables for mental health focuses on the setting of developmental psychology, with the goal of examining the various life trajectories of those who have experienced trauma. Rinker and Spiegel's study has given rise to the notion that resilience is much more than the ability to keep growing one's ability in the face of hardship or to withstand trauma by shielding oneself from the effects of external events. It demonstrates the ability to respond positively in the face of adversity, converting it into an opportunity for progress. As a result, psychological resilience refers to a dynamic process that takes the form of a shift, allowing one to find a new equilibrium and positively progress. In the process of change, the human mind develops new skills. The individual is required to adapt to environmental changes and create new abilities and self-improvement. This cyclical mechanism aids in the implementation and growth of the resilience process.

Richardson et al., in their resilience model, suggest that we all have an innate propensity for resilience, which can help us face difficulties and rebuild our own balance. Their resilience model integrates two perspectives by considering them both as genetically determined traits and as processes. The paradigm of destabilisation of an individual's life paradigm provides the opportunity for in-depth self-reflection and redefinition of the self, leading to the identification and reinforcement of resiliency features. This will enable strategies aimed at facing the adverse condition and rebuilding their own balance ("The Resiliency Model" 33-39). Insofar as resilience is part of the adaptation process and its consequences, this model claims the circularity of the effects of the self and the environment.

Overall, Werner's pioneering work shifted resilience research away from risk and discomfort factors and towards the study of protective variables. These studies tried to uncover what characteristics distinguish resilient people and what elements enable the activation of positive processes in the face of crucial or emotionally stressful life circumstances. The findings

revealed that these patients were classified as 'resilient' because they demonstrated adequate or good evolutionary outcomes despite an adverse circumstance (Masten A.S., "Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes in Development.").

Antonovsky A., in his research "The salutogenic perspective: Towards a New View of Health and Illness," c claims that these findings increase awareness of the idea of resilience in the development of the salutogenic perspective to the point that it is now employed as a broad heuristic construct for understanding normal health processes. Antonovsky, in particular, claimed that stress is an inescapable phenomenon. Despite adversity, a considerable number of people may discover their own equilibrium and grow and sustain a sense of well-being. As a result, the author emphasised the need to direct research towards the ingredients that enable this growth and are at the core of health (47-55).

The argument over whether resilience is a fixed personality attribute or a dynamic process is still continuing. The scholars that define resilience in terms of process regard it as a resource on which the success of the transaction between the individual and their context is dependent. They think that protective and risk variables interact concurrently and dynamically, and that the impact is the outcome of their interplay. Being resilient entails rebuilding one's life path by reestablishing a new equilibrium and bringing about a change in oneself.

2.8.2 Resilience Theory in Literary Studies

It is essential in literary studies to employ theories that effectively stress the exact meaning of a certain literary work. Traditional theories, however, have failed in many ways to capture the core of contemporary literary works that play nowadays, an important function in society. It is crucial for theories that address 'the real world,' the genuine difficulties and concerns of society, as well as its pleasures, concerns, and difficulties and challenges.

Resilience theory is among the contemporary theories that researchers can apply to literary fictions to provide the best analysis as well as the most effective interpretation of fiction.

Resilience theory in literary studies refers to the study of how literature can foster resilience in individuals and communities by exploring themes of adversity and recovery, by offering readers coping strategies through characters' experiences, and by creating a sense of connection and empathy between readers and characters.

Resilience theory has gained increasing attention in literary studies as a means to understand how literature can help individuals and communities navigate difficult times and emerge stronger. Some scholars have also used resilience theory to analyse how literature can be a tool for resistance and social change, highlighting how narratives of resilience can inspire readers to challenge oppressive systems and work towards a more just society.

Through the lens of resilience theory, literary studies can provide valuable insights into how literature can be a powerful force for positive change and transformation in individuals and communities. Furthermore, by examining the resilience of characters in different contexts and from diverse backgrounds, resilience theory in literary studies can help us better understand the complex ways in which social and cultural factors influence our ability to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of adversity. Overall, resilience theory offers a valuable framework for exploring the role of literature in promoting mental health and well-being.

In their article “A Literary Exploration of Trauma and Resilience in Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*,” Cloete et al. argue that resilience theory can provide a unique lens through which to analyse and interpret the characters and themes presented in literary fictions, revealing how individuals and communities cope with adversity and adapt to change. By examining the resilience of characters and communities in literary fiction, we can gain a deeper understanding of how people respond to challenges and overcome obstacles in their lives. This can, in turn, provide insights into how individuals and communities can build resilience in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, the application of resilience theory to literary fictions can also shed light on how cultural and societal factors impact resilience-building and coping mechanisms in different contexts. Overall, the integration of resilience theory with literary analysis can provide a rich and multifaceted perspective on the human experience and the ways in which individuals and communities navigate life's challenges.

As such, this approach has the potential to not only enrich our understanding of literature but also inform and inspire real-life resilience-building efforts. Moreover, this interdisciplinary approach can open up new avenues for research and collaboration between fields, ultimately contributing to a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of resilience in both literature and real-world contexts. In conclusion, the application of resilience theory to literary fiction offers a valuable and innovative approach to literary analysis.

Conclusion

Literature and literary theories play important roles in human existence and continuity, helping us understand the world around us. Literature offers us a window into the hearts and minds of others, and literary theories can help us better understand how literary works are created and what functions they serve in societies. Literary theories provide a framework for studying literature. These theories help us understand the texts that are studied and help us gain a better understanding of the ways in which authors develop their texts. They provide a basis for comparing different texts and for analyzing how different works respond to historical and cultural contexts. Literary theories examine the ways in which a text creates a specific meaning or effect, as well as the reasons for that effect. Many of the key literary theorists approach their work from different perspectives. Some focus on language and how it is used in a specific text, while others examine the cultural and historical context of a text and its impact on readers' reactions. Still others view literature as a type of "message" and examine the way an author's message might be influenced by his or her culture and background. This variety of perspectives

provides the basis for an extensive body of literature discussing many different aspects of literature and literary theory.

Chapter Three: The Pandemic Genre through *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

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Conclusion

Introduction

The pandemic genre in contemporary fiction has captured the imagination of readers and researchers alike, delving into the fear and uncertainty that arise from a global health crisis. This chapter provides an analysis of two contemporary pandemic narratives: *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. Approaching a comparative study that aims to explore the portrayal of pandemics in both acclaimed works, *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, by examining the themes, character developments, and narrative styles in these two novels, the analysis aims to gain a deeper understanding of how the pandemic genre is utilised in contemporary literature. The novels are discussed in relation to their depictions and predictions of pandemics, as well as how they represent various aspects of pandemic life. The chapter also considers how these novels function as survival guides, escapists, and entertainment fictions for readers in the past COVID-19 pandemic climate. Overall, the analysis aims to illustrate what these pandemic narratives say about human nature and society in times of crisis while also reflecting on their metaphorical resonances with the ongoing real-world pandemic.

3.1 *Blindness* and *Bird Box*: Pandemic Narratives

Pandemic literature plays a major role in documenting the historical and sociological aspects of pandemics. Archiving personal narratives, scientific advancements, government responses, and societal changes brought about by pandemics has become highly important. José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* are significant examples of renowned pandemic narratives that have effectively addressed these aspects. The literary world is in need of both fiction and non-fiction works that capture the nuances, complexities, and human experiences associated with pandemics. This genre of literature focuses on various aspects of pandemics, including their impact on society, individual experiences, and lessons learned from previous outbreaks. It is essential to understand the significance of pandemic literature and its potential to contribute to the collective understanding of such global crises.

By examining how *Blindness* and *Bird Box* portray pandemics and how they differ in terms of their themes, characters, and plot. In addition, examining these elements will reveal how Saramago and Malerman have chosen to represent pandemics in their works and how they have chosen to portray the effects of pandemics on society. In both novels, the pandemic genre is depicted as a terrifying and chaotic time when society is confronted with a hitherto unknown and unimaginable pathogenic menace. These works of fiction blur the lines between sober scientific analysis and fictional dramatization as they explore horrifying scenarios of deadly pandemics and the breakdown of functioning economic, political, and societal structures.

Saramago, in particular, portrays the devastating effects of a pandemic of sudden blindness that spreads rapidly within a community. *Blindness* depicts how the loss of sight not only leads to physical suffering but also brings out the worst in people as they struggle to survive in a world where chaos and uncertainty reign. Malerman, on the other hand, presents a pandemic in the form of creatures that induce madness and suicidal impulses in anyone who sees them. The pandemic in *Bird Box* leaves society living in constant fear and isolation, as the characters must blindfold themselves to protect their sanity and survive.

Both novels exhibit the characteristics of pandemic literature. The analysis will provide valuable insight into how pandemics have been portrayed by contemporary authors and the potential implications for how future pandemics are represented in fiction. Gradually, readers will better understand how pandemics are represented in literature and the potential impact this can have on our perception and understanding of them.

3.1.1 Milieu and Setting of *Blindness*

Blindness (1995) is a novel written by José Saramago, a renowned Portuguese author. The story revolves around a mysterious pandemic of white blindness that affected everyone throughout an unnamed city. The novel follows the journey of a group of characters who have

been affected by this sudden onset of blindness. The pandemic first appeared with a man who suddenly lost his sight while waiting at a traffic light. The story focused on one particular character referred to as “the doctor's wife”, the central character and the only one who remained able to see. She accompanied her husband, “the doctor,” who is an ophthalmologist, into quarantine after losing his sight, pretending that she too had lost her vision, so they could stay together. However, she discovered that there are no real leaders or authorities inside the hospital—just groups struggling for power among squalor and disease. Soon, others in the vicinity also become blind and are taken to quarantine.

The government responded by isolating all those affected by the abandoned mental asylum, which quickly became overcrowded and unsanitary. As more people lose sight outside the quarantine zone, chaos ensues, with looting, violence, and desperation taking over society. The novel refers to the characters not by their names, but by their characteristics. Inside the asylum, the blind individuals must navigate through their new reality, facing various challenges and struggles. They must overcome the lack of basic resources, deal with the inhuman conditions of their confinement, and try to maintain their dignity and humanity. As conditions worsen within the quarantined area, food supplies dwindle rapidly, causing starvation among its inhabitants and leading them towards cannibalism until finally order is restored when most have regained their eyesight, except for 'the girl with dark glasses, whose blindness was caused by psychological rather than physical reasons. The story explores the consequences of this pandemic, including social breakdown, moral degradation, and the struggle for survival.

3.1.2 About José Saramago

José Saramago was a Portuguese writer born in 1922 in Azinhaga's village. He grew up in a humble family and had to leave school at the age of twelve to work as a locksmith. Saramago began his literary career writing poetry but soon turned to prose. His first novel, "*Land of*

Sin," was published in 1947, but it only achieved international recognition decades later with works such as "*Memoria do Convento*" (1982) and "*Essay on Blindness*" (1995).

In 1998, Saramago received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his ability to combine narrative imagination with critical analysis of contemporary society. His works are known for their unique style—long phrases without punctuation or dialogue marked by the frequent use of the comma—and for the insightful way in which they approach complex political and social issues. He explored themes of social and political injustice, as well as the human condition. In addition to his critically acclaimed novels, Saramago has also written political essays and plays throughout his life. He was also an outspoken advocate of democracy, social justice, and human rights. Saramago's works have been translated into dozens of languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. People remember him as one of the greatest authors of all time. At the age of 87, Saramago passed away in 2010, leaving behind a literary legacy that will endure for generations. His works remain widely read and discussed to this day, and his influence on modern literature is undeniable. His distinctive writing style and commitment to social justice will continue to inspire new generations of writers.

3.1.3 Milieu and Setting of *Bird Box*

Bird Box is a 2014 novel by Josh Malerman. The book is about a strange pandemic that turned people insane, criminal, and suicidal. The story follows a woman's struggle to protect two children in a world where people are driven to violence by unseen creatures, touching on themes such as paranoia, raising children to deal with an uncertain future, and the dangers of exceptionalism. *Bird Box* follows two timelines in Michigan, focusing on Mallorie, a pregnant woman, as she attempts to survive a catastrophic global event.

To avoid accidents, people take shelter in their homes by covering windows and wearing blindfolds. Reports of murder and suicide were everywhere. After losing her sister, Malorie becomes friends with Tom, Cheryl, Jules, Felix, Olympia, and Don. Olympia, a pregnant woman, passes months, and the housemates survived with occasional encounters with creatures. Malorie and Olympia gave birth in the attic, but all of their housemates were killed by the creatures. When Gary informed Malorie about the creatures, she sheltered newborns. Malorie receives an invitation to a refuge downriver after Olympia's death. Malorie abandoned her shelter, guiding the children on a rowboat in the second timeline, where they encounter a man, a wolf, and a beast. She joined Rick and Constance in a colony of blind people, revealing Tom and Olympia's identities. In addition to winning the Michigan Notable Book Award, *Bird Box* received nominations for both the James Herbert Award and the Bram Stoker Award for Best First Novel. In 2019, a month before the COVID-19 pandemic, the novel became a movie with the same title. Although the entities themselves don't explicitly represent a pandemic, their impact on society and the need for people to take precautions to protect themselves can serve as a metaphor. During COVID-19, the movie garnered a lot of attention.

3.1.4 About Josh Malerman

Josh Malerman is an American novelist and short story writer who wrote fourteen books before releasing his debut novel, *Bird Box*, with ECCO/Harper Collins. He was a member of the Detroit rock band The High Strung, which toured the country for six years. Malerman wrote rough drafts for these novels while traveling between cities on a tour. He never viewed the books with financial expectations, but he found joy in the act of writing. As the pile of rough drafts grew, so did the number of queries about what he intended to do with them.

Malerman frequently lived in a "glorious delusion" in which he participated in phantom interviews, claimed to have an agent, debated with fictional editors, and stocked his shelves

with unseen hardcover volumes. A high school classmate, Dave Simmer, helped Malerman realize his wildest dreams. Simmer, who has previously worked with Hollywood writers and franchises, invited Malerman to send his book, *Goblin*, to book industry contacts. Malerman agreed, and a team was formed, with Malerman contacting agents and editors. Dave's ghostly benefactor and his huge collection of literature affected Simmer's position in Malerman's career.

3.1.5 *Blindness* and *Bird Box*: Dystopian and Utopian Genre

Blindness by José Saramago is considered a dystopian novel because it portrays a society that has been decimated by a pandemic of blindness. Despite the darkness of the novel, *Blindness* also paints a picture of a utopian society in which people come together to help one another in the face of adversity. Individuals learn to rely on each other for survival and are able to find hope in the midst of despair.

The novel also highlights the importance of empathy and compassion in times of crisis. When faced with a lack of sight, the characters are forced to rely on their other senses, such as touch and sound, to interact with each other. This helps to foster a sense of community and solidarity among the characters, allowing them to come together to help one another even in their darkest hour. In addition, the characters learn to empathise with each other and understand that they are all in the same situation, which helps build a sense of hope and camaraderie.

Meanwhile, *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman is considered a dystopian novel, as the characters are constantly being hunted by mysterious creatures that can only be seen when one looks outside the safety of the cabin. The characters are forced to stay inside and live in fear of what lurks outside, unable to venture out into the world. The novel also highlights the dangers of relying on technology, as the characters are unable to use technology to protect themselves from the creatures. Thus, *Bird Box* portrays a dystopian life in which the characters are constantly living in fear and are unable to explore the world. This fear is a direct result of the

lack of knowledge and understanding of the creatures and their abilities. As the characters are unable to go outside and observe, they are unable to gain any knowledge or insight into the creatures and therefore rely on technology as a crutch to protect them from the unknown dangers.

Despite the dystopian setting of *Bird Box*, it also contains elements of a utopian novel because it portrays a society in which humans have found a way to live in harmony with nature. The main characters seek refuge in an isolated cabin in the woods and cultivate a self-sufficient life, free from the chaos and fear of the outside world. The plot paints a picture of a society that has successfully overcome a mysterious force that brings destruction to all who see it.

Malerman artistically creates in his book a combination of both utopian and dystopian genres, as he portrays a society that has found a way to live in harmony with nature while at the same time being threatened by mysterious creatures that lurk in the outside world. The characters are unable to gain any understanding of the creatures and their capabilities, leaving them in a state of fear and uncertainty. This combination of genres illustrates the difficulty of achieving a balance between embracing the world around us and protecting ourselves from the unknown. The inability of the characters to understand the creatures serves to highlight the fragility of this equilibrium.

3.1.6 *Blindness* and *Bird Box*: Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Genre

Blindness and *Bird Box* explore an apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic world where a mysterious force has caused a cataclysmic event that has left the world in chaos. In *Blindness*, a pandemic of white blindness has caused society to break down and chaos to ensue, while in *Bird Box*, an unseen force causes people to go insane and commit suicide when they look upon it. Saramago and Malerman created postapocalyptic texts that explore the themes of survival, resilience, and human nature despite an apocalyptic event.

In both books, the protagonists must overcome extreme odds and navigate a dangerous world to survive. They must find inner strength and courage to fight against the forces that threaten their lives while also contending with the psychological effects of their situation. Ultimately, these books invite their readers to consider how humans can retain their humanity and survive even in the darkest of times. In the end, the protagonists' stories challenge the readers to consider the nature of courage and resilience and how we can use them to face our own struggles. They also show the power of hope and the importance of never giving up.

The protagonists in both stories are faced with extreme adversity and must find ways to stay strong and brave regardless of danger. They demonstrate the power of hope and courage and how they can help us overcome our own struggles. They also show us that, despite the odds, it is possible to persevere and find a way to build a new life. For example, in *Bird Box*, the first story, the main character overcomes her fear of the unknown and embarks on a dangerous journey to find a better life, even though she does not know what awaits her. This courage leads her to take a leap of faith and eventually find a place that feels like home. Malerman describes the end of Malorie's journey in a very enthusiastic manner:

It's as if this whole place knows to give Malorie and her children a moment to themselves. As if everyone and everything understands that, at last, they are safe. *Safer*. Now, here, hugging the children, it feels to Malorie like the house and the river are just two mythical locations, lost somewhere in all that infinity. But here, she knows, they are not quite as lost. Or alone (378).

Eventually, both novels can be considered a post-apocalyptic literary genre as they explore a world that has been drastically altered due to a mysterious force, and the characters must find ways to survive in the new world. However, *Bird Box* emphasizes the apocalyptic nature of the world, as the pandemic persists and does not end. Malorie's journey of survival continues in

the second book written by the same author in 2020, entitled *Malorie*, where the protagonist Malorie continues her journey with her kids after the pandemic reaches the school of blinds, who take it as refuge.

3.2 Representations of Pandemic in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Throughout history, numerous literary productions regarding pandemics have always helped people make sense of contagion, explore the consequences, and form individual and social perspectives. The literature that arose in response to previous pandemics continues to resonate into the present and speaks to contemporary circumstances in profound and perceptive ways, supporting people in making sense of pandemic challenges. Because contemporary pandemic narratives are part of a long and well-established literary tradition, a brief examination of previous literary responses to pandemics can help us understand how different societies perceive and respond to pandemics, as well as the changes and continuities of the genre across time and culture.

Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box* depict the post-pandemic events, but they take different approaches. Starting with *Blindness*, Saramago explores the psychological and moral effects of the pandemic on the characters, while in *Bird Box*, Malerman focuses on the physical effects and the characters' struggle to survive. Saramago fictionalises characters who are forced to confront their darkest fears and face the reality of an uncertain future. In Malerman's *Bird Box*, the characters are driven by fear and their desperate search for safety in a world gone mad. Nevertheless, both stories capture the horror of a pandemic and explore the depths of human resilience.

Contemporary pandemic literature themes include psychological problems, horror, trauma, resilience, acceptance, and hope. They also explore the importance of connection, empathy, and kindness in helping people cope with the trauma of living through a pandemic. These two novels are examples of contemporary pandemic literature, which explores the psychological and

emotional effects of living through a global pandemic. They show how people can cope with loss, grief, and despair and how communities can come together to support one another. These stories also emphasise the need for solidarity and cooperation when facing a global health crisis. They celebrate the power of community and show how people can come together to find strength and hope in difficult times. Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* are representative of the pandemic in that they explore the psychological and moral effects of the pandemic on the characters, as well as the physical effects and the characters' struggle to survive. Additionally, both novels illustrate the strength of the human spirit as the characters struggle to find solace and hope amid the chaos and despair. Despite the difference in setting and plot, both stories show how quickly life can change in the face of disasters and the strength of the human spirit in facing adversity. Both stories also explore the importance of society and community in helping people through difficult times, as well as the need for solidarity and cooperation in facing a global health crisis.

Blindness and *Bird Box* can be taken as an allegory of the human condition. The two novels are quite disturbing pandemic fictions, especially when read during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reader knows how difficult the idea of quarantine and being cut off from his loved ones is; how the idea of not socialising with friends is frightening; and how the world has changed in a matter of a few months. Moreover, pandemic literature represents themes such as struggle and thirst for survival, trauma and resilience, chaos, barbarism, death, grief, paranoia, and psychological problems. Saramago and Malerman shed light on the pandemic's frightful conditions; they identify different themes with the different kinds of pandemics they create in their plots. They succeed in capturing many of the reflected images of the real, infected world.

3.2.1 The Shape of the Pandemic

One principal theme, although in a different form, blindness—white blindness, white evil, or white sickness—is the shape of the pandemic selected by Saramago in his novel *Blindness*.

The virus blinds people and causes them to lose sight. What would a person do or feel if he could not see what was going on around him? *“It's as if I were caught in a mist or had fallen into a milky sea. But blindness isn't like that, said the other fellow; they say that blindness is black. Well, I see everything white.”* (Saramago 5).

Saramago represents a new type of pandemic that attacks an important organ in the human body. The strange thing about it is how blindness can be a contagious virus. On this matter, the characters claim:

... had learned enough to know that blindness does not spread through contagion like an epidemic, blindness isn't something that can be caught just by a blind man looking at someone who is not, blindness is a private matter between a person and the eyes with which he or she was born (30).

On the other hand, Malerman, in his novel *Bird Box*, has chosen another shape for the pandemic: the virus is everything you see; death is the fate of every person with a clear sight; in order to survive, people need to blindfold themselves. Reports all over television and the internet alert the infected eras:

‘Malorie!’ Shannon calls again. ‘There’s another report on television! Something happened in Alaska.’ Malorie hears her sister, but what’s going on in the outside world doesn’t matter much to her right now. In recent days, the Internet has blown up with a story people are calling ‘the Russia Report’. In it, a man who was riding in the passenger seat of a truck driving along a snowy highway outside St Petersburg asked his friend, who was driving, to pull over and then attacked him, removing his lips with his fingernails. Then he took his own life in the snow, using a table saw from the truck bed (Malerman 19).

The virus turns people insane, causing them to attack and kill themselves or each other. Because the virus spreads at a single glance, people do not know what is happening around them. The situation is getting worse and spreading rapidly without control.

‘There might have been something in Canada, too. This is serious, stuff, Malorie. What are you *doing* in there?’ . . . Suddenly the bathroom door opens. Malorie reaches for a towel. ‘Jeez, Shannon.’ ‘Did you hear me, Malorie? The story is everywhere. People are starting to say it’s related to seeing something. Isn’t that strange? I just heard CNN say it’s the one constant in all the incidents. That the victims *saw* something before attacking people and taking their own lives. Can you believe this? Can you?’ (Malerman 20-21).

3.2.2 Quarantine

Living in a time of pandemic requires living in isolation and experiencing quarantine. Quarantine has been a major theme in pandemic literature because it is a powerful symbol of how disease can disrupt lives and create a sense of isolation. Both novels portray a sense of isolation and confinement. In Saramago’s *Blindness*, the blind individuals are quarantined in an asylum, cut off from the outside world. Similarly, in Malerman’s *Bird Box*, the survivors are forced to stay indoors with covered windows, venturing outside blindfolded only when necessary.

In *Blindness*, the quarantine is used to represent the psychological effects of the pandemic and how it leads to fear and paranoia. In *Bird Box*, quarantine is used to emphasise the dangers of the mysterious force that has taken over the world and the importance of staying safe and informed. In both books, quarantine serves to highlight the importance of self-reliance and perseverance despite adversity. It also emphasises the need for unity and trust in order to survive such a crisis. The quarantine serves as a symbol of the power of the human spirit in the face of

fear and uncertainty. It also highlights the importance of looking out for each other and uniting together in times of crisis.

However, Saramago and Malerman show through the events of the books how the idea of being cut off is quite difficult and disturbing. People find it unbearable to be unsocial and not be able to engage with their surroundings. They experience how harsh it is to live without each other. In both novels, the reader might notice the brutality of quarantine in human psychology.

In *Blindness*, we encounter the theme of quarantine as the first response to the pandemic. The government begins to quarantine all the infected people and the suspected ones.

Who was that, his wife asked, The Ministry, an ambulance is coming to fetch me within the next half hour, Is that what you expected to happen, Yes, more or less, Where are they taking you, I don't know, presumably to a hospital, (Saramago 34).

On the other hand, in *Bird Box*, people begin to isolate themselves in their houses, hoping that the virus will not spread further:

Days passed in which Malorie experienced a sort of double life. Neither sister left the house anymore. Both made sure the windows were covered. They watched CNN, MSNBC, and Fox until they physically couldn't watch the same stories repeating themselves. And while Shannon grew more serious, and even grave, Malorie held on to a pinch of hope that this would all simply go away. . .
"But it didn't. And it got worse." (Malerman 36).

3.2.3 Blindness

It is said that blindness is just another way of seeing, which is probably why the theme of blindness is presented in both Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*; both writers have artistically chosen blindness to make people see the truth of humanity. Blindness is a

common theme in both novels; the concept of blindness is used metaphorically in both narratives. It explores the idea of not being able to see the world around you and the fear and uncertainty that come with it. It is also a commentary on the human condition and how we often navigate through life without truly seeing what is going on around us. They both portray blindness in similar and contrasting ways.

In *Blindness*, the theme of blindness is depicted through a mysterious infectious disease that causes individuals to lose sight. This loss of vision not only affects the physical senses of the characters and has profound psychological and societal implications. In *Bird Box*, the theme of blindness is portrayed through a different lens. Instead of a physical loss of sight, the characters in *Bird Box* are forced to wear blindfolds and navigate the world without being able to see: “*In a world where you can’t open your eyes, isn’t a blindfold all you could ever hope for?*” (Malerman 130). This forms the basis of a suspenseful and terrifying narrative, as the characters must rely on their other senses and instincts to survive:

Once, the chicken wire that supports the cloth was used to fence in a small garden by the well in the home’s backyard. But for the past four years, it has served as armor, protecting the children not from what could see them, but from what *they* could see (Malerman 6).

Both novels explore the concept of blindness as a metaphor for more than just the inability to see. The blindness in both novels also represents a loss of control, vulnerability, and the struggle to adapt to a world that has become uncertain and dangerous. Saramago’s illustrates:

there will be no more life, Meanwhile, we're still alive, Listen, you know much more than I do, compared with you I'm simply an ignorant girl, but in my opinion we're already dead, we're blind because we're dead, or if you would prefer me to

put it another way, we're dead because we're blind, it comes to the same thing, (238).

Saramago uses blindness as a metaphor for the loss of humanity and morality while facing a crisis. The characters in the novel are not only physically blind but also morally blind as they descend into chaos and brutality.

The similarities between how blindness is depicted in the novels lie in the idea that both concepts involve a shift in perception and understanding. In both books, blindness is a literal condition that the characters must adapt to in order to survive. They must rely on their other senses and intuition to navigate their surroundings and make decisions. This can be seen as a metaphorical representation of how we navigate through life, often relying on more than just our physical senses to make sense of the world. It is through these narratives that they are able to make sense of their reality and learn from each other's experiences. Overall, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* explore the themes of perception, fear, and survival. The concept of blindness is used as a metaphor for the human condition and our ability to adapt and find meaning in a world that is often unpredictable and chaotic.

3.2.4 Struggle and Individualism

Wherever and whenever there is death or danger, there is a struggle for life; people starve to live; they kill to survive; both writers capture the barbarian lifestyle through both novels; they show the reader how humans forget every sight of civilization seeking survival. The theme of struggle is quite present in both novels on different dimensions: not only human against human and human against nature, but more important is the struggle of the human against himself, against his principals and beliefs, which is one of the most debateable themes in literature. With the pandemic spreading, each writer reveals the loss of social spirit among the people. *Blindness* and *Bird Box* reveal how society can turn from utilitarianism to

individualism, with most people, if not all, becoming selfish and caring only about their own survival.

Saramago and Malerman use the pandemic as satire to reveal humanity's true face and essence. They claim that human beings are actually selfish, and they need to turn blind to discover who they truly are. People start taking advantage of others. The characters in both stories demonstrate this by exploiting situations and individuals to gain a competitive advantage.

For example, in *Blindness*, the characters resort to violence and manipulation to ensure their own safety. This reveals how people can turn to desperate measures when faced with dire situations. The principal character, "The Doctor," reveals the truth about this pandemic and how it turns people into monsters. When he disagrees with his wife about telling others that she could see, he says, "Some will hate you for seeing; don't think that blindness has made us better people; it hasn't made us any worse. We're on our way though; just look at what happens when it's time to share out the food." (Saramago 127).

Meanwhile, in *Bird Box*, we see characters exploiting the chaos to loot stores and take what they want without consequence.

‘There could be maniacs out there. Criminals. The streets aren’t what they used to be, Tom. We’re not in suburbia anymore. We’re in chaos.’ ‘Well, something has to change,’ Tom says. ‘We need to make progress. Otherwise we’re waiting for news in a world where there is no longer any news.’ (Malerman 137).

3.2.5 Barbarism and Inhumanity

Blindness and *Bird Box* are kind of series of events that turn from bad to worse; they show human beings like us how, very soon, in a matter of a few weeks, things have changed and how all the signs of civilization, appearances, etiquettes, sophistications, and discipline can easily be crashed and gone, completely gone, and replaced by barbarism and unhumanism. In

Blindness, readers notice how the doctor's wife describes the horrifying scene and how the situation around her is against human nature :

Let's go, said the wife, there's nothing to be done, they're not to blame, they're terrified and are only obeying orders, I can't believe that this is happening, it's against all the rules of humanity, You'd better believe it, because the truth couldn't be clearer, (Saramago 61).

Saramago spots light on how the protectors and the rulers show no sense of community and prefer their own safety; he reflects this in the cruelty of the sergeants towards the blinds or the suspected with the contagion; he says: "*The sergeant's only comment was, It would have been better to let them die of hunger; when the beast dies, the poison dies with it.*" (80).

As the situation gets dire, all the signs of civilization disappear. There was no sense of life; they lost every sign of civilization, and people turned to animals. "*These blind internees, unless we come to their assistance, will soon turn into animals, or worse still, into blind animals.*" (126).

Similar to Saramago, Malerman highlights the same theme in his *Bird Box*, showing how society turns into a jungle where barbarism is the dominant regime: "*I'd like to tell you I have more respect for animals than that, Don. But right now, all I care about is surviving.*" (141). Most of the characters want to ensure their survival, no matter what the consequences or means of that. One of the housemates, Don, demonstrates this by sharing his cruel idea about Malorie and Olympia's expected babies, asking them to blind them once they were born.

Once, after the housemates had finished dinner, Malorie sat alone with Olympia at the dining room table. They were talking about Olympia's husband. What he was like. His desire to have a child. Don entered the room alone. He didn't care what Olympia was saying. 'You oughta blind those babies,' he said. 'The second

they come out.’ . . . It was as if he’d been thinking about it for a long time, then decided to tell them his decision (Malerman 161-162).

The novels depict how the pandemic dehumanized the population in a matter of a short period of time. Both authors target the fragility of the human essence when their lives are menaced. The pandemic resulted in a barbaristic society, depriving each individual of their humanity and creating savage behaviour.

3.2.6 Brutality of Authorities and Citizens

Another essential theme in such a genre is the absence of reason and wisdom on both sides: the authorities and the citizens. *Blindness* and *Bird Box* capture the violence, harassment, and brutality of the government and citizens during the virus’s spread. The chaos we witness in both books demonstrates how barbarism becomes an infected society's regime. In addition, they both show how humans can turn into animals and how a civilized society can turn into a jungle where survival is for the fittest.

This is different, Do what you think best, but don't forget what we are here, blind, simply blind, blind people with no fine speeches or commiserations, the charitable, picturesque world of the little blind orphans is finished, we are now in the harsh, cruel, implacable kingdom of the blind, (Saramago 127).

The description of chaos and how life has become is incredible. Thinking about the future while we should care and only think about how to survive for the next hour or the next day, the chaos reaches the higher authorities, the government turned blind as its citizens, blind ruling the blind, is it a reference to the decline or corruption, perhaps the unsuccessful political system? Saramago pictures how the pandemic accrued only to reveal the truth in people’s eyes—what they could not really see. They turned blind to see better, to have a better view of their lives. In order to see the truth, they needed to be blind, to have a clear view.

Cruel rules serve as a metaphor about how the truth is quite clear but no one can see it. José Saramago wants to say that they are blind to see the truth; perhaps only the wife's doctor can see it. The doctor's wife cannot bear what she sees every day, and she wishes to turn blind just like the rest of the people: "*If only you could see what I am obliged to see, you would want to be blind*" (Saramago 127). The situation is getting very harsh, and the doctor's wife becomes traumatized about the surroundings she lives in.

On the other hand, in Malerman's novel, the pandemic itself represents violence, where people kill each other the moment they get the virus. Malerman directly spots the results of any pandemic through the kind of pandemic he presents in his book

The Problem' always resulted in suicide. Fox News had reported the word so often that they were now using synonyms. 'Self-destruction'. 'Self-immolation'. 'Hari-kari'. One anchorman described it as 'personal erasing', a phrase that did not catch on Nobody has answers. Nobody knows what is going on. People are seeing something that drives them to hurt others. To hurt themselves (37).

3.2.7 Death, Grief, and Apathy

As well as exploring the idea of how people cope with loss and tragedy. Saramago's *Blindness* examines the lingering effects of a pandemic. It examines how people deal with the sudden loss of loved ones and the apathy that develops as a result. In Malerman's *Bird Box*, death and grief are constants. When a mysterious force holds, people flee their homes and face uncertainty.

Along the way, the characters experience the loss of family, friends, and loved ones, as well as their homes and possessions. Ultimately, they must come to terms with the grief and pain of their losses to survive. Most of the characters in both books experience family loss. Both novels spread grief and sorrow.

Along the way, each character witnesses loved ones' deaths. The deaths of loved ones serve as a source of conflict in both books. It forces the characters to confront their mortality and grapple with the difficult process of mourning and understanding their own grief. This creates a feeling of shared experience among the characters as they navigate grief and sorrow together. It also allows them to explore their own mortality and develop a deeper appreciation of life and relationship fragility.

Saramago's description of the feelings in his novel reflects the above-mentioned: "*Joy and sorrow can go together, not like oil and water; she no longer remembered what she had said two days before, that she would give a year of her life if this rogue, her word, were to go blind.*" (59) The same scene is reflected in *Bird Box*, especially when Malorie describes the new world they are living in: "*You can smell it, too. Death. Dying. Decay. The sky is falling; the sky is dying; the sky is dead.*" (Malerman 320).

3.2.8 Fear and Paranoia

In *Blindness*, fear is portrayed as a result of the unknown, as the characters must adjust to the sudden onset of a pandemic that causes blindness. In *Bird Box*, fear is depicted as a result of the unseen, as the characters must adjust to living in a world filled with monsters that cannot be seen. Life has become a sort of scary, dangerous, decisive moment in the so-called new world: "*The moment between deciding to open your eyes and then actually doing it is as scary a thing as there is in the new world.*" (Malerman 169). Both stories explore how fear and paranoia can lead to a loss of control and a sense of helplessness.

The books also present the idea of how fear of the unknown can lead to destruction. They also demonstrate the power of the human spirit to survive in the most difficult circumstances. In addition, they exemplify how fear can cause people to act irrationally. They also demonstrate how panic can quickly spread throughout an entire society, leading to the breakdown of social

norms and structures. Both authors use their characters to illustrate how fear can cause people to act in ways that are out of character for them—in other words, paranoia.

3.2.9 Mental Health Problems

Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* illustrate how the pandemic affects human psychology, resulting in mental health issues. In both novels, the pandemic causes mental disorders and psychological problems for many characters. Survival during the pandemic requires isolation, disruption of daily routines, and a lack of social interaction and security. These can affect mental health, leading to depression, anxiety, and other psychological issues. Additionally, fear of the unknown can increase stress levels, resulting in psychological problems.

Saramago and Malerman portray, through their characters, how people can experience grief and loss due to disruptions in their regular lives. This can lead to feelings of sadness, loneliness, and helplessness. As in *Bird Box*, Malorie declares that the inability to take action upon the crisis they are facing would lead a person to certain madness. “*It’s better to face madness with a plan than to sit still and let it take you in pieces.*” (Malerman 368). Mental health counseling and support are necessary to help people cope with the psychological impact of the pandemic.

3.2.10 Trauma

Saramago depicts trauma in *Blindness* by portraying how the characters were unable to adapt to the unexpected shift brought about by the pandemic. Meanwhile, in *Bird Box*, Malerman depicts how fear and paranoia may have disastrous consequences when people lack access to the truth. Trauma is a prominent element in both books. To investigate how people respond despite adversity, the authors use trauma. Each novel's protagonists must confront their inner problems in order to survive.

One traumatic event after another befalls the characters. Nevertheless, they keep fighting the odds, and this exploration of emotional resilience demonstrates to readers that they, too, can overcome their own traumas and find strength within themselves. For instance, the main

characters in both books confront a challenging past, yet they ultimately find the strength to progress and confront their fears. Despite all the obstacles in their way, they eventually realize that they have the power to shape their own future and take control of their destiny. They learn to accept and understand their emotions, which they then use to become more resilient. They also gain a sense of self-empowerment, knowing that they have the capacity to make changes and create a better life for themselves.

3.2.11 Resilience

In *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, resilience is an essential component of the characters' journeys. The protagonists must confront their traumas and inner struggles to survive and ultimately take control of their destiny. They learn to accept and understand their emotions, which they then use as a source of strength. Through their resilience, the characters come to recognize that they have the power to make changes and create a better life for themselves.

In the end, the characters present resilience as an empowering tool that enables them to progress and take charge of their lives. The characters in both novels are able to embrace their emotions and create a new narrative for their own lives, one that is not dependent on the challenges and changes that life throws their way, with resilience as a cornerstone. For example, when faced with a dangerous situation, the characters are able to find the strength to fight back and take control of the narrative they create.

The protagonist in *Bird Box* faces so many dangers, but she remains strong and resilient, driven by all the horror she has witnessed. "*Malorie thinks. How horrible. After all this struggling and all this survival, To die because of an accident.*" (Malerman 3). While in *Blindness*, Saramago shows how the concept of resilience and adaptation is quite present in the characters' navigation of life: "*I'm coming with you, said her husband. No, it's best I go alone; we must find out how people are surviving now; from what I've heard, everyone must have gone blind.*" (213).

3.3 Illustration of Pandemic Portrayal in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

By comparing the depictions of pandemics in Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*, it is evident that both novels explore themes of vulnerability and society's breakdown in the face of a pandemic. Both authors succeeded through their adaptation to gain front seats as representatives of the contemporary pandemic genre.

In *Blindness*, the pandemic is represented by an outbreak of blindness, while in *Bird Box*, the pandemic is represented by an evil force that forces people to go insane. The novels use blindness as a metaphor for the lack of knowledge and understanding of the pandemic and how it can lead to a breakdown of society. Both novels suggest that without knowledge and understanding of a pandemic, it can be difficult to fight against it and its effects.

In both stories, the protagonists eventually find a way to survive and overcome the pandemic's effects. By using the metaphor of blindness, it highlights the idea that a lack of knowledge can lead to a lack of control, as the characters are unable to see the full extent of the pandemic's impact. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding the situation in order to effectively combat it, as the characters are able to survive and overcome the pandemic's effects when they gain a better understanding of what is going on. For example, the characters are able to find a cure for the virus when they gain access to information regarding its origin and how it spreads, which helps them create a plan to combat it. They also learn to cooperate and work together to find a solution, rather than competing against each other. In the end, relying on their other senses, the characters are able to find a way to survive the pandemic and restore peace to their world.

However, the nature of the pandemics differs significantly. *Blindness* focuses on sight loss and its impact on individuals and society, whereas *Bird Box* emphasizes the visual threat that forces people to live in constant fear and darkness. Additionally, the tone of the two stories differs. *Blindness* is gritty and bleak, highlighting the atrocities and struggles faced by the

characters. In contrast, *Bird Box* creates a sense of suspense and tension, as the characters must rely on their senses other than sight to survive. In *Blindness*, the pandemic is white blindness, which prevents people from seeing, whereas in *Bird Box*, the pandemic is in contrast to everything you see around you, and people have to be blind to survive. For blindness, they employ smelling; they follow the smell to locate their path and supplies: “*Now and then they stopped, sniffed in the doorways of the shops in the hope of catching the smell of food, whatever it might be, then continued on their way.*” (Saramago 214). For *Bird Box*, they utilize their ears and hearing; they listen to every sound to stay alive.

how far a person can hear? . . . From birth the children have been trained to understand the sounds of the forest. As babies, Malorie would tie T-shirts over their eyes and carry them to the edge of the woods. There, despite knowing they were too young to understand any of what she told them, she would describe the sounds of the forest (Malerman 23-24).

In both stories, the main characters begin to rely on and develop their other senses in order to survive. Saramago opts for sniffing, while Malerman chooses hearing.

Overall, while *Blindness* and *Bird Box* both explore the theme of a pandemic, they differ in their portrayal of the specific threat, tone, and storytelling style. Each offers a unique perspective on the challenges faced by individuals and societies in the face of a devastating outbreak.

Unlike Malerman, Saramago has chosen to not name his characters. The writer claims that he is his own voice, as if Saramago is referring to his book ; he declares that he had written a book about a pandemic that turns people blind, and he had entitled the book *Blindness*, giving no names to the characters since they cannot see; Saramago provides a book about blindness that only people with sight can read; looking for the truth or showing the truth; the writer here

represents his own voice through each unnamed character's voice, precisely he chooses to speak through a blind writer character he created in the novel:

What is your name, Blind people do not need a name, I am my voice, nothing else matters, But you wrote books and those books carry your name, said the doctor's wife, Now nobody can read them, it is as if they did not exist (Saramago 274).

In contrast, Josh Malerman, in his novel, chooses to name all his characters. All the housemates, including the dogs, have names. The author expresses through each character the interpretation of the pandemic on their personalities; he wants to express multiple thoughts concerning the new worlds, while he deprives the children of their names until the end of the novel. Malerman gives great importance to the names; for that reason, he didn't want to name the boy and the girl in the new chaotic world, so it wouldn't reflect their personalities and impact them. We can see that Malorie names them only when she makes sure that they are safe.

‘And you two,’ Constance says, kneeling by the children. ‘What are your names?’ It’s as if this is the first time the question has ever mattered to Malorie. Suddenly there is room in her life for such luxuries as names. ‘This,’ Malorie says, placing a bloodied hand on the Girl’s head, ‘this is Olympia.’ The Girl looks at Malorie quickly. She blushes. She smiles. She likes it. ‘And this,’ Malorie says, pressing the Boy to her body, ‘is Tom.’ He grins, shy and happy. On her knees, Malorie hugs her children and cries hot tears that are better than any laughter she’s ever felt. *Relief*. (377-378).

In terms of storytelling approach, *Blindness* dredges deeper into the personal experiences and emotions of the characters, exploring the psychological implications of the pandemic. *Bird Box* leans more towards the thriller genre, focusing on the suspenseful plot and

the constant fear of the unknown. However, both novels depict the psychological and emotional toll that a pandemic can take on individuals, as well as its societal implications. The novels highlight how individuals react in times of crisis, often revealing their selfish and self-preserving natures. Despite the differences in their respective narratives, the authors of these two novels convey similar messages about human resilience and the power of the collective in times of adversity.

Ultimately, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* are a testament to the human spirit and its capacity to survive and thrive in the face of a pandemic. Through their protagonists, both authors illustrate how individuals rely not only on their own instinctive survival skills but also on the support of their community and loved ones to get through these unprecedented times. Eventually, this shows that humans are capable of both personal growth and collective progress, even in the face of tragedy and adversity. For instance, the main characters in both stories learn to navigate their new environment by developing new skills and relying on the guidance of those around them.

Additionally, both novels emphasize the importance of adaptation and resourcefulness to survive. Both books showcase the social, psychological, economic, and political impacts of a pandemic. Furthermore, both novels explore the concept of contagion beyond physical transmission. They explore the idea that emotions and psychological responses can also be contagious, influencing the behavior and well-being of individuals within a society. The novels highlight the interconnectedness of individuals and the impact that their emotions can have on one another. The authors also explore the idea that individuals and their actions can have far-reaching effects. They illustrate how small acts of kindness, bravery, and resilience can help to shape a society and provide hope and strength to those in need. By emphasizing the power of individual emotions, the novels demonstrate how creating meaningful connections between

people can lead to positive change. They also show how individual actions can result in collective consequences, with both positive and negative results.

3.4 Pandemic Depiction and Prediction in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Pandemics have always been a subject of fascination and concern for humanity. Historically, pandemics have had a profound impact on societies, disrupting social norms and systems, causing widespread illness and death, and leading to drastic changes in economic and political structures. COVID-19, for example, has significantly reshaped global society and demanded a re-evaluation of our behaviors and understandings despite pandemics. The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for pandemic literature. As societies grapple with the far-reaching ramifications of this global crisis, pandemic literature has become increasingly urgent. The literal community has turned to this genre, and the rise in demand for pandemic literature has become significant. People are drawn to this genre during times of crisis because of the need for literature that helps individuals process their experiences, gain knowledge about pandemics, and find solace in stories that reflect their own struggles and triumphs.

Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box* provide intriguing depictions of pandemics with chilling predictions that allow readers to contemplate the potential repercussions of such crises. The two novels not only capture the devastating effects of pandemics, but they also serve as a reflection on the reality of the recent pandemic, offering valuable insights into the potential consequences and the ways in which individuals and communities respond to such crises. In both novels, the characters experience a disruption of their everyday lives, which leads to a loss of control and a heightened sense of fear. In addition, the characters must navigate a new world in which they cannot rely on their sight or sense of direction. The authors use these themes to explore how people cope with uncertainty and danger in times of crisis. Furthermore, they both illustrate the chaotic life that a pandemic can create if people fail to assist one another.

The novels explore how people can unite during crisis situations and how extreme danger alters human behavior. They also explore the psychological effects of living in fear, as well as how people can survive by relying on their intuition and trusting in themselves and each other. Drawing on personal experiences and research, the authors provide an in-depth look at how human resilience and adaptability can help us overcome even the most daunting challenges. The pandemic disrupted everyday life, causing many to lose control and experience heightened fear, as both books accurately predicted. Additionally, both authors highlighted the ways in which individuals can unite to support one another during times of crisis and the ways in which fear and uncertainty shape human behavior.

While *Blindness* and *Bird Box* present unique perspectives on pandemics, it is important to note that the portrayal of a specific pandemic in the literature may vary in terms of its origin, mode of transmission, and resulting societal implications. It goes without saying that the effects of a specific pandemic cannot be easily generalized, as they depend on its characteristics both in terms of infection rates and chances of survival, as well as on the cultural and socioeconomic context in which it occurred. Not only that, but future generations can also learn from these literary works and be better prepared for similar situations. In addition to historical and sociological aspects, the psychological impact of pandemics and the literature can contribute to mental health and well-being. Thus, literature succeeds in providing escapism, encouraging empathy, and promoting resilience despite adversity.

3.4.1 Pandemic Depiction in *Blindness*

Through *Blindness*, José Saramago presents a harrowing depiction of a pandemic in which individuals suddenly lose their sight, known as "white blindness." This pandemic spread rapidly and uncontrollably, affecting the entire population of an unspecified cosmopolitan city. Saramago provides many titles and descriptions for the pandemic throughout the novel, not

only calling it the white sickness and the white evil, but he literally describes the pandemic as something sent from another world to destroy ours. On this matter, he writes:

A television commentator came up with an apt metaphor when he compared the epidemic, or whatever it might be, to an arrow shot into the air, which upon reaching its highest point, pauses for a moment as if suspended, and then begins to trace its obligatory descending curve, (115).

As the disease spreads, society starts to unravel, as people lose their ability to see and navigate the world. Saramago's portrayal of the pandemic in *Blindness* is characterized by a sense of chaos and despair. This kind of disease is something that the world has never witnessed before. People start talking about the end of the world and their apocalyptic, tragic ending as a blind world full of people who are blind. How can they survive without their sight? Without their eyes, they will be doomed.

But this blindness is so abnormal, so alien to scientific knowledge that it cannot last forever. And suppose we were to stay like this for the rest of our lives, Us, Everyone, That would be horrible, a world full of blind people, It doesn't bear thinking about (Saramago 51).

The pandemic of blindness acts as an allegory for the breakdown of social structures and moral boundaries. The novel depicts the struggle for survival as the city's citizens are quarantined and left to fend for themselves. Through vivid and disturbing descriptions, Saramago illustrates the chaos and despair that accompany the spread of the disease. The blindness pandemic in Saramago's novel serves as a metaphor for the loss of humanity as individuals within society succumb to their base instincts and struggle to come to terms with the new reality.

Furthermore, *Blindness* highlights the fragility of our current lives and the swift transformation that can occur in times of crisis. The pandemic and subsequent societal breakdown portrayed in the novel serve as a stark reminder of the fragility of our interconnected world. In addition, the novel emphasizes how quickly order can descend into chaos when people are scared and feel threatened. Saramago's depiction of the pandemic in his novel highlights the selfish and uncaring nature that can emerge in individuals during times of crisis. Saramago's novel depicts the pandemic as a reminder of our inherent vulnerability and interdependencies. Saramago's novel explores not only the physical and psychological effects of the pandemic but also its social and ethical implications.

3.4.2 Pandemic Depiction in *Bird Box*

Bird Box by Josh Malerman presents a different approach to depicting a pandemic. In *Bird Box*, the pandemic takes the form of an unseen supernatural force that drives people to madness and suicidal behaviour upon sight.

‘Did you hear me, Malorie? The story is everywhere. People are starting to say it’s related to seeing something. Isn’t that strange? I just heard CNN say it’s the one constant in all the incidents. That the victims *saw* something before attacking people and taking their own lives. Can you believe this? Can you?’ (Malerman 21).

As the characters navigate their surroundings while blindfolded to survive, this creates a sense of dread and tension throughout the novel. In *Bird Box*, the pandemic focuses more on the psychological and emotional toll on individuals than on the physical effects. This is evident in the protagonist's struggle to protect herself and her children from the unseen threat, as well as the psychological trauma experienced by those who have encountered the supernatural force. The depiction of the pandemic in Malerman's novel reflects a sense of hopelessness and

desperation as society is forced to adapt to a new reality in which survival depends on being deprived of one of their senses. “‘Look!’ Shannon says, pointing at several houses. ‘Blankets over the windows’” (27). The pandemic in *Bird Box* creates a sense of fear and vulnerability as individuals are unable to identify the source of the threat or safely navigate their surroundings. This lack of visibility mirrors the uncertainty and unpredictability that often accompany real-life pandemics.

The story further demonstrates the importance of resilience and family strength in times of crisis. Therefore, it highlights how these can help people stay alive and find a safe place to rebuild their lives. This novel accurately depicts the reality of a pandemic, including its impact on people’s lives and moral dilemmas. It emphasizes the importance of resilience in times of crisis and the strength of family and relationships in helping people cope with difficult situations. The novel also portrays the pandemic's fear and uncertainty accurately. It shows how it can upend lives and force people to make challenging decisions. Josh Malerman’s novel portrays the reality of the crisis.

3.4.3 Pandemic Prediction in *Blindness*

Saramago's *Blindness* is a haunting portrayal of a pandemic that results in mysterious and contagious blindness sweeping through an unnamed city. The novel offers a gripping account of societal breakdown as people lose sight, leading to chaos, fear, and moral degradation. Saramago’s depiction of the pandemic emphasizes the psychological and emotional toll it takes on individuals as they grapple with their newfound blindness and struggle with the pandemic. The novel does not specifically predict a pandemic, but instead presents a fictional scenario in which a pandemic of blindness occurs and explores the profound impact it has on society. Saramago emphasizes the idea that the thief predicted the pandemic while he was helping the first blind man:

the blind man gave his address, then he said, I have no words to thank you, and the other replied, Now then, don't give it another thought, today it's your turn, tomorrow it will be mine, we never know what might lie in store for us, You're right, (5).

Saramago wants to tell the readers that you are not immune to pandemics. He emphasizes this when the first blind man responds to the thief, saying, "*You cannot imagine how grateful I am. Don't thank me; today it's you. Yes, you're right. Tomorrow it might be you.*" (6).

Furthermore, the narrative of a pandemic raises questions of power and social justice. Saramago highlights the vulnerability of individuals and communities in the face of a pandemic and the breakdown of social order and morality. For example, when the government's strategy does not work, they change their strategy to adapt and digest the situation. This was a predictable scene for the COVID-19 pandemic. "*The proof of the progressive deterioration of morale in general was provided by the government itself, with its strategy changing twice within the space of some six days.*" (Saramago117). The readers could notice the similarities between the fictional pandemic by Saramago and the reality of COVID-19, in which the government was trying to overcome the pandemic:

To begin with, the Government was confident that it was possible to circumscribe the disease by confining the blind and the contaminated within specific areas, such as the asylum in which we find ourselves. Then the inexorable rise in the number of cases of blindness led some influential members of the Government, fearful that the official initiative would not suffice for the task in hand, and that it might result in heavy political costs, to defend the idea that it was up to families to keep their blind indoors, never allowing them to go out on the street, so as not to worsen the already difficult traffic situation or to

offend the sensibility of persons who still had their eyesight and who, indifferent to more or less reassuring opinions, believed that the white disease was spreading by visual contact, like the evil eye (117).

While blindness does not directly predict a pandemic, it offers a compelling exploration of the consequences and societal impact of an epidemic. The novel's depiction of the pandemic predictably reflects a deep understanding of the potential consequences and societal implications of such crises. The author's prediction of how individuals and governments would react to such a pandemic raises thought-provoking questions about the fragility of society and the potential for both heroism and corruption in times of crisis. Overall, blindness serves as a harrowing reminder of the power of pandemics to expose the worst and best aspects of human nature.

3.4.4 Pandemic Prediction in *Bird Box*

Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* accurately predicts pandemic realities. In an astonishing display of foresight, Malerman's novel has revealed uncanny parallels to the recent pandemic situation that the world witnessed at the beginning of December 2019, providing an intriguing lens through which to analyze and understand our reality. Released in 2014, *Bird Box* occurs in a post-apocalyptic world where supernatural entities cause anyone who sees them to go insane and ultimately commit suicide. The novel portrays the pandemic as an unseen, malevolent force that brings chaos and horror to the world. The readers follow the characters' struggles living in isolation and blindfolding themselves whenever they should venture outside:

‘I need your ears. I need you both to listen as carefully as you can. On the river, you need to listen beyond the water, beyond the woods. If you hear an animal in those woods, tell me. If you hear anything in the water, you tell me. Understand?’
(Malerman 11).

This premise of living in isolation and taking extreme measures to avoid danger predisposes the social distancing and mask-wearing practices that have become essential in our battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. The parallels between *Bird Box* and the COVID-19 pandemic extend beyond the themes of isolation and self-preservation.

The characters in *Bird Box* must rely on their other senses, especially hearing, to navigate their surroundings and ensure their safety. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals have had to rely on their senses and instincts to assess potential risks and protect themselves from the virus. This connection between reliance on senses and adaptation to new ways of living highlights the prescient nature of *Bird Box* in predicting the challenges we faced during the pandemic crisis.

The novel's focus on the psychological impact of the pandemic is spot-on. Malerman's vision of the chaotic reality that can be brought about during a pandemic is highly reflected in his novel. *Bird Box* warns its readers by exploring how fear can lead to irrational behavior and how difficult it is to maintain normalcy during a crisis. It also demonstrates how people can find strength in each other and how resilience can help us overcome difficult times. Explores the range of emotions and experiences associated with times of crisis. In addition, by emphasizing the importance of family and relationships, this novel provides an insightful look at the psychological impact of the pandemic. This illustrates that fear can be a powerful tool that can lead us to make decisions that are not in our best interests. Predictably, *Bird Box* enlightens its readers about the consequences of irrational decisions brought about by fear. This narrative shows how fear and panic can lead to selfish decisions and violence as some people become desperate to survive or find control.

However, if we take the time to process our emotions and look for solutions, we can find strength and resilience in ourselves and in those around us. The novel likewise offers an

insightful perspective on how people come together during times of adversity. It also shows how we can use our relationships and community to get through difficult times. The novel further portrays barbarian behavior during the pandemic. Additionally, it expresses the pandemic's trauma through its exploration of the psychological impact of fear and uncertainty. It shows how fear can lead to irrational behavior and how tough it is to maintain normalcy during a crisis. In terms of prediction, *Bird Box* does not explicitly predict a pandemic or provide detailed information about how it might unfold. Instead, it focuses more on the psychological and emotional impact of the entities on the characters and society as a whole. The emphasis is on survival and the lengths people will go to protect themselves and their loved ones.

3.4.5 *Blindness* and *Bird Box*: The Metaphors for Covid-19 Pandemic

Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box* are very accurate for the COVID-19 pandemic. These two works of literature work as metaphors for the COVID-19 pandemic; both examine the fear of the unknown and how quickly it can spread through society. *Blindness* and *Bird Box* have emerged as prominent metaphors for COVID-19, highlighting the uncertainties and challenges faced by individuals and society during this unprecedented crisis. Just as the characters in *Blindness* and *Bird Box* navigate through a world without sight, these metaphors emphasize the lack of visibility and the need for individuals to navigate through the unknown.

In addition, these metaphors shed light on the importance of adaptability and resourcefulness despite adversity. The use of blindness in *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as a metaphor for the COVID-19 pandemic illuminates the shared experience of uncertainty and challenges faced by individuals and society during the global crisis. These metaphors bring attention to the fact that, like the blind characters in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, individuals navigate through a situation where much is unknown and unpredictable. The blindness metaphor in particular underscores

the lack of visibility and the need for individuals to rely on other senses or resources to make decisions and overcome obstacles. These metaphors underscore the significance of adaptability and resourcefulness in the face of adversity, emphasizing the need for individuals in both narratives to swiftly adjust and comprehend the unfamiliar events triggered by such a crisis.

Both of these works explore themes of isolation, fear, and the unknown, all of which are relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Blindness* symbolizes how the virus has spread quickly while leaving us in the dark about the consequences. In *Bird Box*, the pandemic that spreads through sight represents the fear of the unknown and how it can be paralyzing. Both books illustrate how an invisible force can have a devastating impact on society, which is quite similar to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the novels excavate into a significant global issue that has received little attention in the post-COVID-19 era. Saramago and Malerman shed light on the psychological effects of living through a pandemic, such as fear, paranoia, and changes in social norms. They also show how quickly a pandemic can affect a population's behavior, psychology, and mental health and how people are forced to adapt accordingly. This is evident in the characters' reactions to the pandemic and the changes they must make in order to survive and cope with the situation. The authors emphasize how fear, paranoia, and social changes have become a daily reality for many people across the world.

Moreover, both novels highlight the psychological problems that can be brought along with any global crisis, a crucial issue that is neglected even in our contemporary arena. Saramago and Malerman highlighted the need for mental health support for those struggling with the psychological effects of the pandemic. The authors highlight the need for resilience and adaptability to cope with fear, paranoia, and social changes. They show how people have had to learn to cope with the situation and the psychological effects it has had on them, including

loneliness, anxiety, and depression. They also emphasized the need for support, both mental and physical, to help people manage their mental health during this difficult time.

Both books illustrate how an invisible force, such as COVID-19, can have a devastating impact on society, as well as how quickly fear and panic can spread. Both novels show how humans are capable of great resilience, and how our strength lies in our ability to come together and fight for the future. They provide an important reminder that even though we may be facing an invisible and powerful force, we can still find hope in the darkest of times. Both books serve as an inspiration to readers during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the importance of human connection and the power of collective action so that even in the midst of fear and isolation, we can still find ways to overcome crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blindness by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman are both books that use metaphors to explore different aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In *Blindness*, the loss of sight can be seen as a symbol of the collective blindness and ignorance that many people have shown towards the severity of the virus. It highlights how people are unable or unwilling to see the truth of the situation, much like the characters in the book who are literally blind. *Bird Box*, on the other hand, sees the pandemic from a different perspective. In the story, a supernatural entity drives people to madness and suicide if they see it, forcing the characters to wear blindfolds. One can interpret this as a metaphor for the fear and uncertainty that many people endured during the COVID-19 pandemic. The blindfolds are similar to the masks, which represent the precautions and safety measures that we have had to adopt to protect ourselves and others.

The books effectively use the concept of blindness as a metaphor for various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They highlight the themes of ignorance, fear, and the need to protect oneself in uncertain times. Each author presents a different perspective, resulting in unique and

thought-provoking narratives. Both novels serve as powerful metaphors for the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the psychological and societal impact of a global crisis and the resilience of individuals despite unprecedented challenges.

3.4.6 *Blindness* and *Bird Box*: Prophecy for COVID-19 Pandemic

Blindness by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman, although works of fiction, can be seen as eerily prophetic in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both novels explore the theme of a mysterious pandemic that causes people to lose sight or face dire consequences.

In *Blindness*, Saramago paints a haunting picture of an unnamed city where individuals suddenly become blind. The government responds with quarantine measures and attempts to control the situation. As chaos ensues and society breaks down, the novel explores themes of fear, isolation, and the darker side of human nature.

Similar to this, *Bird Box* depicts a world where entities drive anyone who encounters them insane before committing suicide. To survive this apocalyptic scenario, the characters must navigate their surroundings while wearing blindfolds or relying on other senses for survival. While these novels may not directly mirror the reality we have been through, where loss of vision is not linked to COVID-19, they do share commonalities with our experiences during this global crisis. They both highlight how quickly society can unravel when faced with an invisible threat and emphasize humanity's struggle for survival amid uncertainty.

In *Blindness* specifically, one quote comes to mind: "I don't think we did go blind; I think we are blind...blind but seeing." (Saramago 309). This line uttered by the doctor's wife at the end of the novel captures the metaphorical blindness that extends beyond physical sight; it speaks volumes about our collective response during times like these when information overload often leads us astray from what truly matters.

Saramago's style of writing in his novel is full of tiny details and a full description of every scene. It gives a feeling for the readers that you can see and picture every detail within the story. First, it feels as if the author is treating his readers as blind characters in his novel, and he is trying to describe for them what is around them by drawing a picture in their minds through his words. Second, it gives the impression that Saramago, by mentioning these tiny descriptions, is reminding the readers that they can see what his characters cannot see; in other words, he is trying to awaken them from their possible blindness, or more specifically, from their possible pandemic. Saramago describes every detail about the pandemic; such a description is a kind of global warning about what could happen to humanity in the face of a pandemic. Predictably, Saramago is telling his readers to take precautions for the future from unexpected pandemics and think about what has happened yet. On this matter, Saramago predictably described a scene that we witnessed during COVID-19 about the casualties and how there were no proper funerals:

There were no prayers for the dead. We could have put a cross there, the girl with dark glasses reminded them, she spoke from remorse, but as far as anyone there was aware while alive, the deceased had never given a thought to God or religion, best to say nothing, if any other attitude is justified in the face of death, (77).

Moreover, Saramago describes the horror image of the pandemic and how life becomes a harsh experience. The quarantine is similar to a prison, where death will be the fate of anyone who does not respect the rules.

To abandon the building without any authorisation will mean immediate death, or The internees will bury the corpses in the grounds without any formalities, now, thanks to the harsh experience of life, supreme mistress of all disciplines, these warnings took on real meaning, while the announcement that promised

containers of food three times a day seemed grotesquely ironic or, worse, contemptuous (87).

Likewise, *Bird Box* predictably describes the same scene of COVID-19 concerning the dead bodies and funerals: “*The hospitals didn’t answer their phones. Neither did the funeral homes. Malorie covered her, partially, with a blue and yellow scarf that Shannon loved.*” (Malerman 50).

When Malorie discovers the death of her sister, she doesn’t bury her; she abandons her body because she has no choice: “*Her hands feel weak on the wheel. Her eyes ache from crying. She feels an unyielding flow of guilt for having left her sister dead on the bathroom floor of their house.*” (Malerman 50).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government tried to control the panic by announcing fake news about the casualties. This reality was predicted in Saramago’s novel:

On the second day there was talk of some reduction in the number of new cases, it went from hundreds to dozens and this led the Government to announce at once that it was reasonable to suppose that the situation would soon be under control. (Malerman 114-115).

As for *Bird Box*, Malerman describes the exact scene concerning the fake news and how people had doubts about the virus because of the internet and media. What we have witnessed during COVID-19 strongly mirrors Malerman's predictions about the spread of news. Malorie didn’t know what to believe due to the amount of news reported on TV and the Internet.

Unlike Shanon, Malorie has doubts concerning the incidents, and all the spread new on the net and media, she is not sure about what to believe; Malorie doesn’t know what to believe. New stories appear hourly online. It’s the only thing

anybody talks about on social media and it's the only topic on the news pages. New websites are devoted entirely to the evolution of information on the subject. One site features only a global map, with small red faces placed upon the cities in which something occurred. Last time Malorie checked, there were over three hundred faces. Online, they are calling it 'the Problem'. There exists the widespread communal belief that whatever 'the Problem' is, it definitely begins when a person *sees something* (35-36).

Malorie insisted on ignoring all she heard. "*Malorie resisted believing it as long as she could.*" (36). There were many people like Malorie during the COVID-19 pandemic; they doubted the news and the reports, and because of their ignorance, they faced a tragic ending. Malerman describes how Malorie resists the truth and how she couldn't believe who was around until she lost her sister because of the pandemic.

Both novels had a futuristic view and worked as a prophecy for COVID-19, where both authors skillfully depict societies grappling with crises beyond comprehension, much like ours during COVID-19. While reading these books might seem unsettling given our circumstances, it also offers solace knowing that others have contemplated similar scenarios throughout history through literature.

3.5 Reading *Blindness* and *Bird Box* Reflections

During a global pandemic, society has undergone an unprecedented shift that has affected various aspects of daily life. Particularly affected is the way we consume and interpret literature. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, reading habits among individuals were diverse and multifaceted.

José Saramago's acclaimed work *Blindness* sinks into a society experiencing a sudden pandemic of blindness. While this fictional tale may seem detached from our current reality, it offers valuable insights into how individuals adapt and cope during times of crisis. The protagonists' struggle to navigate life without sight serves as a metaphor for our own experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Reflecting on *Bird Box*, Josh Malerman's thriller novel, readers can draw parallels between its post-apocalyptic narrative and our pandemic experience.

In both scenarios, people are forced to shield themselves from an invisible threat, whether literal monsters or an insidious virus lurking in every corner. This raises thought-provoking questions about human trauma, resilience, and survival instincts when faced with unimaginable adversity. Such circumstances resonate deeply as we face the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19. Our ability to adapt and find opportunities amidst chaos will define us not only individually but also collectively as a society. From literature to real-life events, there is much wisdom that can guide us through these difficult times. Reflecting upon Saramago's and Malerman's works, they remind us all that setback should never deter us from pursuing hope or seeking solutions during uncertainty.

By immersing ourselves in such literature, we can gain insights and perspectives that help us make sense of our own challenges. In times of uncertainty, pandemic literature has always served as a powerful tool for reflection and introspection. It allows us to explore the depths of human emotions and experiences, providing a sense of connection with characters who face adversity just like we do. Through their journeys, we gain inspiration to confront our fears head-on and discover newfound strength within ourselves.

Moreover, reading about past crises depicted in the literature offers valuable lessons on trauma, resilience, and adaptation. As history tends to repeat itself in different forms, it is crucial

for us to learn from those who came before us. *Blindness* and *Bird Box* highlight the importance of unity, resourcefulness, and determination when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Additionally, much like how art imitates life, literature often serves as an uncanny mirror reflecting society's triumphs, tragedies, and collective aspirations. As readers dig into these narratives, it becomes apparent that even amidst chaos, hope persists. Humanity's ability to not only survive but also thrive is showcased time after time by authors across cultures throughout the centuries. In this way, pandemic literature acts as both a chronicle documenting humanity's struggles and a testament showcasing its indomitable spirit.

Literature provides us with access to worlds beyond our own, where characters face their own challenges. Their stories serve as mirrors, reflecting our own struggles back at us while simultaneously reminding us that we are not alone in facing these obstacles. Saramago's and Malerman's novels have a remarkable ability to transport us from despair to hope by showcasing human resilience in its various forms. Both authors introduce us to characters who refuse to succumb despite overwhelming odds stacked against them—individuals who rise above circumstances beyond their control.

As a matter of fact, by delving into literary works that encapsulate triumph over adversity or exploring themes of perseverance and determination, we become inspired by these fictional heroes' unwavering spirits. We recognize that within each of us lies an untapped reservoir of strength waiting for discovery. When darkness looms large on society's horizons and uncertainty grips our hearts tightly, literature becomes even more vital than ever before. Through books penned by authors throughout history, be they classic novels or contemporary depictions, we find solace among chaos, a glimmer of hope amid despair, and reassurance within pages filled with carefully crafted words. As readers immerse themselves in captivating narratives woven intricately between sentences, pages transform into portals leading towards

enlightenment, fueled by knowledge shared across generations past. Literature has always been humanity's faithful companion, a guiding light beckoning weary souls forward along uncharted paths. Its timeless wisdom resonates deeply with those who are willing to listen closely, absorb its teachings, and allow them to shape and rebuild the chaos.

3.6 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* from Fictions to Functions

At first glance, both *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman may appear as mere tales of survival against an unknown threat that forces characters to navigate their surroundings without sight. However, upon closer examination, we discover profound layers beneath their seemingly straightforward plots.

Saramago's *Blindness* presents us with a world where a pandemic causes sudden mass blindness among its inhabitants. As chaos ensues within society's crumbling structures due to this sensory deprivation crisis, Saramago skillfully explores themes such as loss of identity amidst collective suffering as he claims: "*Inside us there is something that has no name; that something is what we are.*" (261). They identify each other by their professions and what they represent in society, confirming that only their abilities could define them:

Number one, he paused, it seemed he was about to give his name, but what he said was, I'm a policeman, and the doctor's wife thought to herself, He didn't give his name, he too knows that names are of no importance here. Another man was introducing himself, Number two, and he followed the example of the first man, I'm a taxi-driver (57).

The characters begin to use numbers to recognize each other: "*The third man said, Number three, I'm a pharmacist's assistant. Then a woman spoke up: Number four, I'm a hotel maid, and the last one of all, Number five, I work in an office. That's my wife*" (57).

Similarly, tackling themes of isolation and vulnerability caused by a mysterious force driving people to madness if they lay eyes upon it, *Bird Box* offers a chilling portrayal of humanity struggling for survival while blindfolded. Beyond being mere thrillers or horror stories, the two works serve as allegories for broader societal issues plaguing contemporary existence. The true strength lies in how these fictional narratives transcend entertainment value alone. They encourage readers to question fundamental aspects related to human behavior, such as trust, fear, and empathy. Throughout history, literature has served as a mirror, reflecting the complexities of the human condition. With that in mind, it is no surprise that these works have resonated deeply with audiences.

As we explore into the functions of *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, it becomes evident that they serve as cautionary tales. They force us to confront our own blindness, not just in a literal sense but also regarding the truths we choose to ignore or overlook. The characters' physical blindness serves as a metaphor for our collective ignorance of pressing issues such as climate change, inequality, or even the fragility of human relationships.

Both works explore the idea of how social, psychological, and physical blindness can impact the individual and the community. They demonstrate how blindness can be an empowering force that allows for a deeper understanding of the world, as well as a source of strength and perseverance. Despite the common perception of blindness as a disadvantage, these works demonstrate its potential as a tool for self-understanding and unexpected connections with others. By showing how blindness can be a source of insight, it highlights the importance of empathy and seeing past the surface level of things. It also serves to challenge common preconceptions of disability. By showing how blindness can be a source of insight, it reveals the potential within each of us to recognize our own gifts and use them to make a positive impact in our lives and in the lives of others. It also encourages us to look beyond the surface

of things to find a deeper understanding of the world. It helps us think differently and recognize that each person has a unique set of experiences and viewpoints that can be valuable. It also reminds us that we all have the capacity to grow and learn from each other, regardless of our abilities. Overall, the transition from fiction like *Blindness* and *Bird Box* to functional narratives is remarkable. These stories transcend their initial purposes and become powerful tools for introspection and reflection.

3.6.1 Aesthetic Reading for *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Aesthetic reading emphasizes the emotional and sensory experience of reading. The aesthetics of *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman as pandemic literature lie in the exploration of themes such as isolation, fear, and resilience in the face of an invisible and deadly threat. In terms of the narrative perspective of both novels, *Blindness* adopts a third-person perspective, offering a broader view of the pandemic and its impact on different characters. Therefore, the reader is wildly engaged in the plot from different perspectives while providing multiple interpretations. Conversely, *Bird Box* follows the journey of a single protagonist, Malorie, providing a more personal and focused perspective on the pandemic.

Saramago's *Blindness* is a surrealist exploration of human behavior in a post-apocalyptic world, while Malerman's *Bird Box* is a psychological thriller that follows a family's struggle for survival. Both books powerfully depict the pandemic experience. While *Blindness* is more concerned with the philosophical implications of the pandemic, *Bird Box* is more concerned with its physical and psychological effects. Both books effectively explore the impact of pandemics on society. Both books have garnered praise for their powerful messages and have gained widespread popularity. These are essential reads for anyone wanting to understand the impact of the pandemic on our lives.

Blindness examines the implications of how society reacts to a pandemic and how it affects our freedom and autonomy. *Bird Box* focuses more on the physical and emotional trauma associated with a pandemic, as well as how it has a long-term impact on mental health. Both books provide insight and evoke emotion, making them powerful tools for understanding how pandemics can affect our lives. Both narratives offer a unique perspective on our resilience and strength, demonstrating how we can come together to overcome even the most difficult times. They also remind us of the importance of hope in difficult times and how it can be a source of strength and courage. Ultimately, both novels provide a hopeful reminder that we can and will emerge from this pandemic stronger than ever. Saramago insists on spreading hope and optimism despite the horrors of the pandemic, claiming that:

Nothing lasts forever, be it good or bad, the excellent maxims of one who has had time to learn from the ups and downs of life and fortune, and which, transported into the land of the blind, should be read as follows, Yesterday we could see, today we can't, tomorrow we shall see again, with a slight interrogatory note on the third and final line of the phrase, as if prudence, at the last moment, had decided, just in case, to add a touch of a doubt to the hopeful conclusion (116).

Shedding light on the aesthetic reading of *Blindness*, the reader can immerse themselves in Saramago's unique writing style. They can pay attention to his extensive dialogues, lack of proper punctuation, and the way he blends characters' thoughts and actions. Saramago's style of writing is full of details, which provokes the reader to picture each scene in the book. The description provided in the novel makes the reader feel the sensory deprivation with the characters. This aesthetic reading may evoke emotions and prompt contemplation about the fragility of human connections and the resilience of the human spirit.

Similarly, the aesthetic reading of Malerman's novel focuses on evocative imagery, suspenseful storytelling, and exploration of human psychology and survival instincts. Malerman uses short chapters with no chronological order of the events. The narrative style is full of flashbacks and interior monologue. Malorie jumps in her memory from one chapter to another, which makes the readers incapable of situating the time and place of events. Besides, the sensory experience of imagining blindfolded characters moving through a dangerous environment heightens the reader's emotional response and engagement with the story.

Both books demonstrate the power of looking out for one another, as well as how kindness and compassion can make a difference. They emphasize the need to have faith, to trust ourselves and each other, and to never give up hope. Ultimately, these books offer a powerful reminder that we can make it through anything if we come together. We must remember that we are all in this together, and our collective strength will guide us through. There is no challenge too great that we cannot overcome. We have the power to create a better future for ourselves and our communities.

By focusing on hope, these books encourage us to dream big and believe that anything is possible when we work together. They also emphasize the importance of taking care of each other and that we are all connected in this journey. They remind us that we have the power to make positive changes in our lives and in the world, and that we must never give up on our dreams. These books provide us with the inspiration and motivation to keep striving for a better future and show us how to take action and work together to create a more equitable and sustainable world. They also showcase the power of unity and collaboration, as well as how our collective efforts can make a difference. These books remind us that our actions and efforts can have a lasting and positive effect by highlighting the hope and courage they offer.

Overall, the belletristic side of *Blindness* by Saramago and *Bird Box* by Malerman offer beauty, hope, and optimism, even in a post-apocalyptic world. They demonstrate how the strength of one's will and the power of human connection can bring people together to create a better future. These novels, despite the apocalyptic genre's darkness, serve as a reminder that hope and beauty persist even in the most dire circumstances. They show that, with the right mindset, anything is possible. By emphasizing the importance of perseverance and strength of will, the novels offered a powerful reminder that hope and optimism can be found even in the toughest of times. Saramago's novel showed that with the right attitude and strength of will, it is possible to overcome blindness and find success. Malerman's novel demonstrated how the power of human connection can bring people together to create a better future.

Both books demonstrate that, even in times of adversity, we can still come together and make a difference. They remind readers that, although the world may seem dark, there is still hope for a brighter future. We can use these books' lessons and stories to find the courage to face our own struggles and challenges. They can be a source of strength in difficult times and remind us that, no matter how dark the world may seem, we can all make a difference. They also come to appreciate the importance of having faith and trusting in one another to create a better future. This is especially true when the characters face overwhelming odds or are in a situation over which they have no control. To survive, they must learn how to use their skills and resources to their advantage.

We can apply this lesson to life in general because the people around us can often help us get through difficult times. Believing in the strength of the group gives us the courage to face any challenge and the resilience to overcome it. Many stories demonstrate the power of community and togetherness, which we can apply to our own lives. We must learn to turn to our community for support and to work together to overcome any obstacles.

3.6.2 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as Entertainment Fictions in Postcovid-19 Pandemic

In a post-COVID-19 pandemic, literature plays a vivid role in helping readers get away from negativity, fear, stress, and anxiety. Many people turned to reading as a means of distraction from the surrounding reality, and pandemic literature, meanwhile, worked as a stressbuster during the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic. People focus more on pandemic narratives, from the classics to contemporary realizations. Readers want to prospect into such literary narratives, first to entrain themselves and, second, to look for a window of hope as they follow the struggles of these fictional characters and how they survived in these difficult moments. As contemporary pandemic narratives, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* functioned as entertainment tools and an escape for people stuck at home. They offer readers a chance to explore different worlds and situations, reducing boredom and stress. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, both books have grown exponentially in popularity as pandemic narratives. Consequently, these books offer readers a way to explore the current events of the world with a deeper understanding. *Blindness* and *Bird Box* also provide comfort and hope during difficult times. Both stories offer the message that, no matter how dark it may seem, a way out will always be found. They provide a sense of escapism and a reminder that there is always something to look forward to. People have expressed that they find comfort in the stories because they serve as a much-needed distraction from the current situation.

The books have also been praised for their vivid descriptions and characters, drawing readers into the stories. People have reported that the stories have helped them relax and forget their worries, even if only temporarily. Many readers escaped into the world of the novels, and it was a welcome reprieve from worrying about the pandemic. This is likely due to the immersive nature of reading and the ability to focus on the story and characters rather than worries or stress. Reading can help create a sense of escapism and provide an outlet for anxiety and stress.

It is an enjoyable way to pass the time and take your mind off a situation. Reading can also foster empathy and understanding of different people and perspectives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people turned to pandemic literature for comfort and hope. Such literary texts provide an escape from the anxieties and stress experienced during the pandemic, allowing readers to focus on the characters and stories instead. Additionally, the act of reading itself can help pass the time and offer a much-needed distraction from the surrounding situation. In addition, pandemic literature can provide readers with relief because they can relate to the characters in the stories. They can also find solace in knowing that they are not alone in their struggles. Furthermore, it can be a source of hope. Readers can take comfort in the fact that, despite the hardships faced, the characters in the stories persevere and come out on the other side.

During times of disaster, pandemic literature brought refuge and awareness. It enables humanity to investigate the probable effects of our actions and examine alternative responses to pandemic risks. It also serves as a reminder that, in the face of hardship, it is possible to endure and prosper. Fictional works like *Blindness* and *Bird Box* instill a sense of hope and optimism in the future, demonstrating our ability to persevere and overcome adversity.

3.6.3 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as Escapist Fictions

Escapist literature is a form of writing that offers readers relief from anxiety and fear. Pandemic literature functions as an allegory of real-world events, allowing readers to explore the social and psychological implications of a pandemic. It can provide a safe space for readers to explore their own anxieties and fears, as well as a way for them to process their own experiences in a surreal and fantastical way. By engaging with pandemic literature, readers can gain insight into the human experience of living through a pandemic, providing a way for them to connect with others and find comfort in shared experiences.

Blindness and *Bird Box*, as pandemic genres, can help readers escape the fear caused by the COVID-19 pandemic or any other pandemic. Saramago and Malerman present two works of escapism literature that provide readers with a way to escape the pandemic's fear and anxiety. These works provide readers with a sense of hope and possibility that can enable them to cope with the pandemic or any possible crisis. Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* offer readers a safe space to explore and grapple with the horror of the pandemic. By exploring the characters' journeys and struggles, readers can understand their own struggles. Furthermore, the characters in the stories can provide solace. Readers may also find comfort in the messages of hope and resilience in both works. This will enable them to face their own fears and anxieties. Through their messages of hope and resilience, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* help readers gain the courage to confront and overcome pandemic trauma. The books also provide readers with a safe space to explore their own feelings and fears, allowing them to gain a better understanding of them. As a result, readers can gain the courage and strength to face their own crisis. Moreover, they can ultimately overcome the pandemic trauma.

No matter how difficult the situation, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* remind readers that there is always hope and resilience that we should embrace. On this matter, Malerman suggests that humans are creatures built on hope. The books provide readers with a safe space to process and explore their own emotions and fears without judgment or criticism. This gives them the courage to confront their fears and anxieties and, ultimately, gain the strength to overcome the trauma of the pandemic. For instance, in *Blindness*, the characters find hope and strength in one another, and together they survive the darkness of the pandemic and find a way to carry on. In the end, the characters find solace in the fact that they have been able to help each other through such a difficult time. This serves as a reminder that we can all come together and overcome challenging times. However, it teaches us that it is important to reach out to others when faced with adversity, as it will not only help us find strength in one another but also enable us to find

comfort in our shared experiences. This ultimately gives us the courage to push forward and find hope even in the darkest of times.

Escaping the pandemic horror through literature is a great way to find solace and gain strength. *Blindness* and *Bird Box* provide readers with a safe space to explore and grapple with the pandemic's struggle, despite the depicted horror. Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box's* messages of hope and resilience remind readers that no matter how difficult the situation, there is always hope and resilience to embrace. Reading these stories can give readers the courage to confront and overcome the pandemic trauma, as well as the strength to push forward.

Therefore, in times of crisis where darkness seems prevalent, picking up a book can be more than mere escapism. It can offer solace, a glimmer of hope, and a reminder that, despite the odds stacked against us, the human spirit remains unyielding. No matter how dire circumstances may seem, literature reminds us that resilience, determination, and hope will guide our path towards brighter days ahead. In the face of adversity, literature acts as a beacon that illuminates our way and provides us with the necessary tools to navigate through life's challenges. It serves as a testament to the power of imagination and creativity, offering insights into different perspectives, cultures, and experiences.

3.6.4 Efferent Reading for *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Efferent reading is defined as reading with a focus on gathering information or extracting meaning from the text. In the realm of pandemic literature, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* shed light on the didactic side of pandemics. These novels offer valuable insights into the human condition and the societal implications of a pandemic, exploring themes such as fear, survival, and the breakdown of social order.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a surge in research on pandemics and their consequences, a smaller stream of research has examined pre-pandemic literature in the context of the current climate. Thus, there is a growing emphasis on reinterpreting and analyzing pandemic literature to gain a deeper understanding of the lessons and messages contained within these works and how they relate to our current situation.

These two books can provide readers with insight into the struggles of the blind and the effects of a world without sight. Both works explore themes of resilience, adaptation, and perseverance despite overwhelming obstacles. Additionally, they offer a unique perspective on the power of the human spirit. The authors of both books have managed to capture the courage, challenges, and hopes of the blind in a way that readers can relate to, regardless of their own experiences. They explore how the power of the human spirit enables individuals to triumph over difficult circumstances. Both books serve as crucial reminders of the resilience of human will and spirit, and their potential to overcome adversity. They inspire readers to be brave, to never give up, and to have faith in ourselves and our abilities. The main term here is "*human will and spirit*." This refers to the inner strength and fortitude that each of us has to overcome obstacles in our lives. We can cultivate and develop this inner strength to help us achieve our goals. We can use these pieces of art as powerful tools to shape our lives and make a positive difference in the world.

Both authors offer different lessons that we can learn from the crisis to ensure our survival. The efferent reading of Saramago's novel involves examining the characters' experiences, narrative structures, and themes of human vulnerability and resilience. The reading involves identifying and understanding the themes of societal collapse, the fragility of civilization, and the vulnerability of human nature. The description of the characters' daily struggles through the

novels enlightens us about the precautions that we can take to be prepared if we face future pandemics, crises, and quarantines:

All these circumstances and reasons have led us to conclude that the best food for humans is what is preserved in cans and jars, not only because it is often already cooked, ready to be eaten, but also because it is so much easier to transport and handy for immediate use. It is true that on all these cans, jars and different packets in which these products are sold there is a date beyond which it could be risky to consume them and even dangerous in certain cases, but popular wisdom was quick to put into circulation a saying to which in a sense there is no answer, symmetrical with another saying no longer much used, (Saramago 247-248).

Throughout the process, both writers shape the strength of resilience in the characters, helping us to persevere and find creative solutions to the obstacles we face. The novels give us the courage to confront and overcome adversity. These two works of literature can also serve as reminders of the power of resilience and our ability to adapt and survive even in difficult times. Despite the fact that both novels contain a lot of horror and distraction, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* show that we can still find hope in the darkness and that we can come together as a collective to fight for a better future. The books provide an important reminder that, even though we may be facing an invisible and powerful force, we can still remain resilient and find strength in our ability to work together.

Blindness by Saramago and *Bird Box* by Malerman explore the idea of blindness and its impact on individuals and society. These works highlight how blindness can be an allegory for the experience of life—the challenges, joys, and uncertainties that arise. They also suggest that, with the right attitude and strength of will, it is possible to overcome blindness and find light.

All aspects of life can benefit from this inspirational message. It encourages us to look beyond our physical limitations and strive for success. It is a reminder that, no matter how challenging life can be, we can all find a way to persevere and reach our goals. This concept is based on the belief that where there is a will, there is a way. This suggests that if we have the right attitude and determination, we can overcome any obstacles that stand in our way, no matter what our physical limitations may be. It is a reminder that, with the right mindset, anything is possible.

These books inspire us to come together and make a positive change in our own lives and in our communities. We can take action to create a better tomorrow and contribute to a brighter future for all. They also highlight the importance of taking action to protect one's health and safety while facing the unknown. In both works, the characters must rely on each other and their own inner strength to survive. The characters in both works must confront their fears and come together to protect themselves and their loved ones.

3.6.5 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as Survival Fictions

Blindness by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman are two captivating novels that fall into the survival genre. Both books explore the theme of blindness, both literal and metaphorical, as characters navigate a world plunged into chaos. Saramago's *Blindness* presents a haunting tale in which a pandemic of sudden blindness spreads rapidly throughout society. The story follows a group of individuals who find themselves quarantined in an asylum as they struggle to survive amidst the breakdown of social order. As darkness engulfs their lives, they must rely on their instincts and adaptability to overcome adversity. This encapsulates how *Blindness* forces its characters to confront not only physical challenges but also ethical dilemmas that arise from their shared predicament.

Similarly exploring themes related to loss and adaptation in a dystopian setting, *Bird Box* takes readers on a suspenseful journey through post-apocalyptic America. Malerman introduces the reader to Malorie Hayes in this novel, as she navigates an eerie landscape where mysterious creatures drive people mad and induce suicidal tendencies. Malerman skillfully builds tension throughout *Bird Box* using sensory deprivation as his main survival tool; blindfolding becomes essential for survival. The narrative alternates between past events leading up to present-day struggles; each chapter leaves readers craving more information while simultaneously heightening anticipation for what lies ahead. *Bird Box* encourages its characters to forge their own paths in an uncertain world. Malorie's determination and resourcefulness serve as a testament to the survival of the human spirit.

Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* offer thought-provoking insights into survival when faced with unimaginable circumstances. Saramago's exquisite narrative combined with Malerman's gripping storytelling captivates readers, leaving them pondering questions about humanity, adaptability, and our capacity for hope in dire situations. These novels push their characters to extreme limits while challenging readers' perceptions of what it means to survive against all odds.

Bird Box is a novel that tells the world about the challenges that we might face during a global crisis. On their journey for survival, the characters remind the readers how to pay attention to every detail. The novel works as survival fiction, providing readers with different lessons regarding survival and continuity. The title of the novel represents an alarm system for danger. The characters find a way in which they can sense the presence of the creatures by using the birds as an alarm system; whenever they start moving, it means there is danger nearby.

‘What’s in the box?’ Cheryl asks. Tom raises it higher. His eyes are glassy.

Distant. ‘In the *box*, Cheryl,’ he says, holding it out with one hand and lifting the

lid a little with the other, 'are birds.' The housemates gather around the box in a circle. 'What kind are they?' Olympia asks. Tom slowly shakes his head. 'We don't know. Found them in a hunter's garage. We have no idea how they survived. We think the owners left them a lot of feed. As you can tell, they're loud. But only when we're near. We tested it. Whenever we got close to the box, they got louder.' 'So that's dinner?' Felix asks. Tom smiles a tired smile. 'An alarm system. 'Alarm system?' Felix asks. Jules says, 'We're going to hang the box outside. By the front door. We'll be able to hear them in here.' *Only a box of birds*, Malorie thinks. Yet, it *does* feel like progress (Malerman, 170-171).

Furthermore, both fictions can provide insight into how future writers should approach writing about pandemics. Public health messaging and policies can benefit from this information. For instance, portraying pandemics as difficult to contain could negatively impact public opinion and policy decisions. Therefore, understanding how pandemics are portrayed in literature could help inform policymakers of the potential consequences of their decisions and actions.

By understanding the potential effects of how pandemics are portrayed, policymakers can make better-informed decisions that are in the best interest of the public. This could also help writers create stories that are more authentic and accurate. The depiction of pandemics would help to reduce the spread of misinformation and create a more informed public. This, in turn, can help to reduce panic and increase public trust in healthcare systems, allowing for more effective responses to pandemics. Ultimately, such fictions function as a source of help to protect the public and reduce the impact of pandemics on society. Reading *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, considering the survival instincts depicted, offers profound insights into pandemic

predicaments. The books emphasize survival, optimism, and determination despite difficult circumstances. Both novels provide a variety of coping strategies to assist readers in understanding the crisis and conceptualizing new ways to live. By embracing responsibility, refusing defeat, and cultivating resilience, we can navigate such challenging times with hope, strength, and resilience. On top of that, all narratives describing humanity's hardships are literary giants on their own terms. A testimony to a tenacious spirit, a reminder that the ability to transform and inspire may be found inside the pages of a book, even in the darkest of circumstances. Consequently, it is essential to embrace literature's gift with broad perspectives and receptive minds, for through its words we can find peace, hope, and eventually the determination to persist towards a brighter future.

Conclusion

The third chapter explained how *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman are both excellent examples of the pandemic genre. Both novels used the concept of "blindness" in order to explore the themes of fear, isolation, and hope in a post-apocalyptic world. This chapter explained how both narratives effectively captured the experience of the pandemic and provided insight into the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Despite publishing and releasing both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* before the COVID-19 pandemic, their narrative themes and imagery eerily foreshadowed the impending pandemic. This chapter looked into how Saramago and Malerman, through these texts, provided a unique insight into the experience of the pandemic and its effects on society. Moreover, the analysis shed light on the different approaches taken by authors to depict the devastating impact of a pandemic on society and individuals. Through an in-depth analysis of the narrative structures and character dynamics, this chapter sought to uncover the nuanced interpretations of survival, isolation, and the unraveling of societal norms within the context of a global health crisis. The comparative study endeavored to offer valuable insights into the diverse artistic renderings of pandemics in

contemporary literature, enriching the understanding of the genre's impact on readers and the broader cultural discourse.

Chapter Four: A Literary Exploration of Trauma and Resilience in *Blindness and Bird Box*

Introduction

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4.7 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as Contemporary Traumatic Narratives

4.8 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* from Traumatic to Healing Narratives

Conclusion

Introduction

The exploration of trauma in literary criticism has gained significant importance, providing deeper insights into various works of literature. This chapter explores the concepts of trauma and resilience theories to analyze José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*. Each novel explores the depths of trauma and resilience, illuminating the psychological toll a sudden and catastrophic pandemic inflicts on individuals, as well as their capacities to endure and recover.

The analysis peels back the layers of how the protagonists navigate personal catastrophes with resilience and community support. We dissect the means by which these characters harness their inner strength to confront their challenges directly and explore the importance of a supportive community in their path to recovery. By drawing parallels between *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, we underscore the critical roles that resilience and collective encouragement play in overcoming both individual and shared adversities. Moreover, this inquiry provides an understanding of how to foster resilience and strengthen support networks in times of need. It also critiques the use of blindness as a metaphor for trauma and the quest for resilience within both narratives. Saramago's and Malerman's stories offer vivid illustrations of individuals facing destabilizing events that challenge their identities, beliefs, and ability to navigate through an unpredictable world.

4.1 Trauma Theory as an Interpretive Framework for *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Experiencing a life-shattering event, whether as a one-time incident or an ongoing ordeal, is known as trauma, or the process of becoming traumatized. It encompasses a range of intense feelings and emotions. Psychological trauma, in particular, can leave deep, long-lasting scars. Prior traumatic experiences and haunting memories significantly shape individuals' psyches.

In her book *Trauma Fiction*, Anne Whitehead raises an intriguing question about the paradoxical nature of trauma and its representation in fiction. Anne Whitehead challenges the narrative of trauma in fiction, characterizing it as an overwhelming event or experience that defies language or representation (n.pag.). This question serves as a thought-provoking starting point for the analysis of *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman, as both novels navigate the complexities of trauma within their narratives.

These novels serve as metaphors for trauma, especially within the context of contemporary narratives commonly associated with the age of trauma. Saramago's and Malerman's narratives both offer compelling portrayals of trauma through their use of blindness as a metaphor. The characters deal with a complex and deeply personal experience that can have profound effects on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Both authors use blindness as a metaphor to depict the debilitating effects of trauma and the challenges individuals encounter in navigating their traumatic experiences.

However, trauma theory offers a vital lens for understanding these pandemic narratives. Trauma profoundly shapes the portrayal of pandemics in both *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. Delving into the depths of human suffering and struggle and exploring their consequences, Saramago and Malerman illuminate the complexities of trauma.

Both novels invite readers into worlds ravaged by mysterious calamities, where characters grapple with their innermost fears and adapt to life without the crucial sense of "sight." Through the lens of trauma, these novels explore the resilience of the human spirit and the complexities of survival in extreme circumstances. *Blindness* is about a sudden, unexplained pandemic that spreads rapidly throughout the population. *Bird Box* explores a mysterious force that drives people to harm themselves or others, emphasizing that the only defense is to avoid looking at it. Both novels use this apocalyptic scenario as a metaphor for the characters' traumatic

experiences. When disaster strikes, it serves as potent symbols for personal upheaval and societal trauma. The theme of trauma underpins the narrative arc in both novels. As a result, trauma theory provides an insightful tool for interpreting these two works and understanding the psychological effects of such extreme events on individuals and society.

Saramago and Malerman skillfully probe into the emotional and mental turmoil of their characters, portraying the fear, despair, and resilience that come with such traumatic experiences. The novels reflect the profound psychological impact of ocular trauma and visual impairment, enhancing our understanding of the catastrophic consequences that individuals and societies face when dealing with sudden visual loss. Vision loss significantly alters the characters' ability to perform regular tasks and maintain their lifestyle, highlighting the psychological adjustments and lifestyle changes that accompany it.

Additionally, they reflect on how eye trauma can lead to significant socioeconomic impacts, including loss of workdays, echoing similar findings in related research. Within these compelling novels, Saramago and Malerman artfully depict the profound impact of visual impairment on individuals' lives and society at large. They not only highlight individual struggles but also underscore the sweeping aftermath that follows such widespread trauma, a testament to the authors' ability to transcend mere storytelling by touching upon profound human experiences.

Trauma plays a significant role in the narratives of *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, as experienced by the respective characters. Both Saramago's novel and Malerman's post-apocalyptic thriller employ trauma as a potent metaphor for blindness, shedding light on the complexities of human perception, the limitations of understanding, and the transformative power of resilience. Trauma as a metaphor for *Blindness* and *Bird Box* provides insight into how certain limitations paradoxically enhance awareness and human connection. The

characters' development and outlook shape the symbolic representation of trauma and its impact on them.

4.1.1 The Trauma of the Blindness Vs the Terror of the Unseen

Trauma is often characterized as a physical or psychological threat to one's integrity, sense of self, safety, or survival. It stems from extremely stressful incidents that shatter an individual's sense of safety, leaving them vulnerable and defenseless in an unsafe and dangerous environment. Typically, traumatic events involve a threat to one's life or safety, such as betrayal, verbal abuse, or significant loss. The protagonists in *Blindness* and *Bird Box* encounter terrifying situations that challenge their determination to survive.

These novels explore the theme of sensory deprivation and its psychological impact on individuals and society as a whole. Through their compelling narratives, Saramago and Malerman seeks into the depths of human emotions and resilience when confronted with insurmountable challenges. While both novels share similarities in their exploration of sensory deprivation, their approaches and execution differ significantly. First, it is important to consider the depiction of sensory deprivation in both novels. Saramago's *Blindness* depicts sensory deprivation as a literal loss of vision. The pandemic manifests as white blindness, depriving the entire population of sight. The narrative technique achieves this by omitting visual descriptions and relying solely on other senses to depict the world.

Saramago depicts a world where a sudden pandemic of white blindness robs people of their sight without warning or explanation. The loss of vision becomes a metaphor for the loss of humanity as the characters grapple with fear, desperation, and the breakdown of social order.

but fear was getting the better of all of them. The voice came *again*, Unless within the next three minutes someone appears to collect the containers, we shall

take them away. This threat failed to overcome their fear, only pushed it into the innermost caverns of their mind, like hunted animals that await an opportunity to attack (96).

Through their collective trauma, Saramago explores the fragility of civilization and the potential for both the worst and the best of human nature to emerge in times of crisis. The characters in *Blindness* undergo both physical and psychological trauma. As they navigate through a world plunged into white blindness, they must confront their deepest fears and find strength within themselves to survive. Saramago's traumatic narrative explores into the depths of human resilience, highlighting the ways in which trauma can either shatter individuals or reveal their inner strength and capacity for compassion.

In *Bird Box*, Josh Malerman portrays sensory deprivation through the inability to see. The characters wear blindfolds to avoid seeing the mysterious force that drives people to commit acts of violence. The blindfolds represent survival; individuals deprive themselves of sight so they can confront the pandemic. This contrast in depiction highlights Saramago and Malerman's different approaches in their respective novels. While the depiction of sensory deprivation in both novels is crucial to understanding the central theme, it is equally important to analyze their respective functions. In *Blindness*, the depiction of sensory deprivation serves to explore the fragility of human civilization and the breakdown of societal norms when facing a pandemic.

Similar to *Blindness*, *Bird Box* presents a post-apocalyptic world filled with an unexplained and deadly threat. In this scenario, the characters must cover their eyes to avoid witnessing a mysterious entity that triggers insanity and ultimately leads to their demise. The trauma in *Bird Box* is twofold: the fear and psychological strain caused by the unknown entity and the emotional turmoil of navigating a world without sight. The characters in *Bird Box* must confront their fears head-on, relying on their instincts and resourcefulness to survive. Malerman

skillfully explores the psychological toll of trauma, depicting the characters' struggle to maintain their sanity and find hope in a world filled with darkness and danger.

Then she felt the true scorching sensation of fear. Not the kind that comes to a woman as she drives with a blackened windshield, but the sort of fear that hits her when she's wearing a blindfold and suddenly knows there is someone else in the room (262).

Through their experiences, the novel raises profound questions about the nature of fear, the limits of human endurance, and the lengths individuals will go to protect themselves and their loved ones. In the narratives, isolation trauma further exacerbates the protagonists' pain. Cut off from society due to physical barriers or sensory deprivation techniques externally imposed, individuals face challenges such as those depicted in the novel *Blindness* or self-imposed isolation, as shown in *Bird Box*. They must confront loneliness along with their existing traumas. This adds another layer of complexity to their struggles, as they grapple not only with external threats but also with internal demons stemming from solitude.

The pandemic in *Blindness* affects individuals and leaves them in a state of complete white blindness. The protagonists face the loss of their fundamental sense of self, leading them into a terrifying existence. The blindness becomes not just a physical condition but also a metaphor for the loss of humanity and morality. The trauma experienced by the characters is profound as they struggle to adapt to their new reality and navigate the chaos and despair that ensue.

On the other hand, *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman takes a different approach to sensory deprivation. In this novel, the protagonists encounter a world where venturing outside is tantamount to certain death. The terror lies not in blindness but in the unseen creatures that drive people to madness and violence. Blindfolded, the characters must rely solely on their other senses to navigate their surroundings and survive. The traumatic dilemma they face is the

constant fear and uncertainty of the unknown as they strive to protect themselves and find safety.

Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* dig deep into the human psyche, exploring the psychological impact of trauma and fear. These novels push the protagonists to their limits, testing their resilience and challenging their beliefs. Through their struggles, Saramago and Malerman examine themes of survival, trust, and the fragility of human nature. The characters confront their own fears and the darker aspects of humanity due to the traumatic dilemma they face. The protagonists' traumatic dilemma is central to the narrative. These novels highlight the resilience and strength of the human spirit, even during unimaginable challenges. By exploring the themes of sensory deprivation and the psychological impact it has on individuals, Saramago and Malerman create gripping and thought-provoking stories that resonate with readers long after the final page.

The loss of sight in *Blindness*, which not only represents a physical affliction but also serves as a metaphor for a deeper existential crisis, traces the exploration of trauma and pain in these narratives. This crisis is manifested in the characters' pain and struggle to maintain their humanity and moral compass despite chaos and desperation. Additionally, *Bird Box* confronts the characters with trauma and pain as they navigate a blindfolded world. Looking at an unknown entity drives people to madness and ultimately results in their death. Within the novels, the characters grapple with the traumatic impact of their respective dilemmas.

Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box* offer compelling narratives that explore the theme of trauma. Through their exploration of the loss of sight and the challenges faced by the characters, these traumatic novels shed light on the complexities of the human experience in times of extreme adversity. They serve as a reminder of the indomitable human spirit and the strength that can emerge even in the darkest of circumstances.

4.1.2 Interpreting *Blindness*

Trauma can be caused by various factors, such as illness, anxiety, insecurity, betrayal, and the death of loved ones. Common causes of psychological trauma include sexual abuse, workplace discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic violence, and childhood events. Childhood trauma can significantly contribute to aggressive behavior. Furthermore, catastrophic events like war and disease contribute to psychological trauma. However, the essential point is that different people will react differently to comparable circumstances. Psychoanalysis won't traumatize everyone who experiences the same traumatic incident. Various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, history, war, politics, and literature, interconnect with trauma, with literature being particularly crucial.

Trauma theory offers a valuable interpretive framework for comprehending the traumatic narrative in *Blindness* by José Saramago. The virus spreads rapidly throughout the country, striking people with a sudden white blindness they have never experienced before.

The doctor asked him, Has anything like this ever happened to you before, or something similar, No, doctor, I don't even use glasses. And you say it came on all of a sudden, Yes, doctor, Like a light going out, More like a light going on . . . He pushed the apparatus aside, rubbed his eyes, then carried out a second examination from the start, without speaking, and when he had finished there was a puzzled expression on his face, I cannot find any lesion, your eyes are perfect. . . . the problem is the unusual nature of your case, personally, in all my years in practice, I've never come across anything like it, and I daresay no such case has ever been known in the entire history of ophthalmology, (Saramago 15-16).

This apocalyptic scenario can be seen as a metaphor for the characters' traumatic experience as well as a reflection of the collective trauma experienced by society in the face of a catastrophic event. According to the Library of Congress classification, *Blindness* falls under the fictional genre of allegory with an apocalyptic theme (Kareem and Farhan). Applying trauma theory to José Saramago's contemporary pandemic novel allows for a deeper understanding of the characters' psychological and emotional experiences as they navigate through the traumatic events of sudden blindness and its aftermath. We can interpret this sudden loss of vision as a metaphor for traumatic events that disrupt the stability of life. The characters in the novel experience not only the physical and practical challenges of living without sight but also the psychological trauma of losing a fundamental sense.

Blindness was spreading, not like a sudden tide flooding everything and carrying all before it, but like an insidious infiltration of a thousand and one turbulent rivulets which, having slowly drenched the earth, suddenly submerge it completely. Faced with this social catastrophe, already on the point of taking the bit between their teeth, (Saramago 116).

The use of blindness as a metaphor throughout the novel adds a layer of complexity to the trauma they experienced. Trauma theory can explain the traumatic experience of the characters in the novel, shedding light on the psychological impact of this loss and the ensuing breakdown of social order. "*Sadly, the futility of such hopes soon became manifest; the government's expectations and the predictions of the scientific community simply sank without trace.*" (Saramago 116). The characters in the novel struggle with fear, vulnerability, and loss of identity as they navigate this traumatic event.

Through the lens of trauma theory, we can analyze how Saramago explores the lasting effects of trauma on both the individual and collective levels. The narrative's power dynamics

and control further accentuate the traumatic nature of the events in *Blindness*. In this dystopian world, those who retain their vision seize power and oppress the blind, exacerbating their trauma. We begin to notice how the soldiers start giving orders to the blind in the mental asylum. In fact, the way they address the blind reveals their traumatic dilemma and fear:

At that moment, a loud, gruff voice was raised, by someone whose tone suggested he was used to giving orders. It came from a loudspeaker fixed above the door by which they had entered. The word Attention was uttered three times, (Saramago 41).

The government delivers the orders in a harsh and threatening manner. The government is fearful of the virus spreading, which leads to hysteria and panic. Survivors, driven by their traumas, exhibit aggressive behavior towards the blind: “*The government and nation expect every man and woman to do their duty. Good night.*” (Saramago 42). One can observe that the government issues orders in a harsh manner without providing any explanations. They are killing all those who disobey their orders, which has brought a great deal of disruption and chaos to the mental asylum. The blinds were treated like animals. This can be seen through the narrator's description of the shouting scene:

The shouting had died down, now a confusion of sounds was coming from the hallway, these were the blind, driven like sheep, bumping into each other, crammed together in the doorways, some lost their sense of direction and ended up in other wards, but the majority, stumbling along, huddled into groups or dispersed one by one, desperately waving their hands in the air like people drowning, burst into the ward in a whirlwind, as if being pushed from the outside by a bulldozer. A number of them fell and were trampled underfoot. Confined in the narrow aisles, the new arrivals gradually began filling the spaces between the beds, and here, like a ship caught in a storm that has finally managed to reach

port, they took possession of their berths, in this case their beds, insisting that there was no room for anyone else, and that latecomers should find themselves a place elsewhere (Saramago 64).

Not only that, but Saramago also fictionalizes the consequences of the traumatic experience through the thugs, a group of blind internees guided by the leader of the thugs who take over the hospital and begin controlling the food supply. Initially, the leader of the thugs insists that the other internees surrender their belongings for supplies. Subsequently, he joins the other thugs in collectively raping all of the confined women. Saramago demonstrates how traumatic experiences can lead to aggressive behavior, devoid of reason, ultimately stripping humans of their humanity.

After a week, the blind hoodlums sent a message saying that they wanted women. Just like that, Bring us women. This unexpected demand, although not altogether unusual . . . The reply was curt and intransigent, Unless you bring us women, you don't eat. Humiliated, the emissaries returned to the wards with this order, Either you go there or they will give us nothing to eat (Saramago 159-124).

We can explore how the loss of sight profoundly affects the characters' identities, relationships, and perceptions of the world through trauma theory. The principal characters all experience psychological trauma to varying degrees. For instance, The Doctor, the protagonist, undergoes shock and fear due to sudden blindness and feels overwhelmed by the need to rely on his wife for assistance. He must also come to terms with the new reality of his life and learn to trust himself to find a way.

His wife, known as the doctor's wife, undergoes a similar process of learning to cope with the trauma and finding the inner strength to confront her fears. She is the only character who remains with sight, the sole survivor in a world of blind people. Her trauma lies in her survival; overall, she is incapable of seeing all the chaos, cruelty, and barbarism around her. She could

not bear the sight of blind internees fighting. On this matter, she expressed, "*You have no idea what it is like to watch two blind people fighting*" (Saramago 127). The scene was so distressing that the doctor tried to console her by saying, "*Fighting has always been, more or less, a form of blindness*" (Saramago 127). The doctor employs the metaphor of blindness to describe fighting, as anger and lust deprive people of their senses, transforming them into blind animals fighting for survival.

In addition, the doctor's wife exhibits symptoms of survivor guilt stemming from the collective trauma; she feels responsible for everyone and is unable to take care of everybody simultaneously. "*What use am I when my main concern is that no one should find out that I can see?*" (Saramago 127). The doctor's wife witnesses too much horror, violence, injustice, and brutality, which leads her to lose faith, believing that there is no good and there will be no good in this world after all that she has witnessed. Eventually, the doctor's wife kills the leader of the thugs. She rationalizes her actions by arguing that the leader of the thugs was a criminal and deserved his fate, but in the process, she also becomes a criminal herself. Moreover, when the fire breaks out and most of the blind are trapped in the mental asylum, they burn to death. The doctor's wife observed every detail of the fire, leading her husband and some blinds outside. In the outside world of the blind, our protagonist kept her secret, afraid of the consequences of revealing the truth. Her traumatic experience shatters her faith in humanity and distorts her perception of the world. The doctor's wife didn't believe that there was still good in the world after all she had seen so far. Her trauma leads her to question any tiny hope or good in reality, and she doubts everything around her. "*No, replied the doctor's wife, no one has come. Perhaps it was a rumor*" (Saramago 1).

The novel depicts blindness as a metaphor for the collective trauma the characters and society at large have experienced. The sudden onset of blindness represents a rupture in their lives, shattering their sense of stability, safety, and normalcy. The traumatic nature of blindness

is evident in the characters' reactions as they struggle to comprehend and cope with their newfound condition. As they lose their ability to see and navigate the world around them, the characters in the book experience a loss of agency and control over their own lives. This loss of sight disrupts not only their individual lives, but also their collective identity as a society. As Saramago states in the text:

we're so remote from the world that any day now, we shall no longer know who we are, or even remember our names, and besides, what use would names be to us, no dog recognises another dog or knows the others by the names they have been given, a dog is identified by its scent and that is how it identifies others, here we are like another breed of dogs, we know each other's bark or speech, as for the rest, features, colour of eyes or hair, they are of no importance, it is as if they did not exist, (55).

The characters must grapple with the reality of their new blindness and the fear of the unknown. Fear can cause blindness, and a traumatic situation can lead someone to become blind. "*Fear can cause blindness, said the girl with dark glasses*" (Saramago 123). The girl with the dark glasses explains what fear can do to the human body, driven solely by her fear. Saramago emphasizes the internal psychological processes of the characters as they attempt to come to terms with the trauma of their sudden blindness.

Never a truer word, that could not be truer, we were already blind the moment we turned blind, fear struck us blind, fear will keep us blind, Who is speaking, asked the doctor, A blind man, replied a voice, just a blind man, for that is all we have here (123).

Other characters, such as the girl with the dark glasses, the first blind man, the wife of the first blind man, and the man with an eye patch, each experience their trauma differently. They must confront the challenge of assisting others in such a dire situation. Ultimately, all the

characters must come to terms with the trauma of the unexpected event and find the courage within themselves to move forward. However, the characters must endure the psychological trauma of not being able to see and having to rely on others for help. The event is a powerful metaphor for the trauma of life's unexpected surprises and the courage it takes to face them. The characters must learn to cope with the new reality of their lives and find the strength within themselves to move forward. They must learn to accept help from others and trust themselves to find a way. In the end, it is their courage and determination that enable them to overcome the trauma and move on.

This unexpected white blindness event is symbolic of trauma because it is unexpected, disruptive, and overwhelming. Saramago's novel is not only about the disease or pandemic that turns people blind. As a traumatic narrative, the novel serves as a reminder to humanity about the true blindness that lies within their souls. Through this, Saramago suggests that we humans are actually blind. He is trying to convey that we live in a very cruel society, which is the harsh reality we fail to perceive. "White blindness" serves as a metaphor to illuminate humanity and help us see clearly. It symbolizes the need for light to expose the darkness we are immersed in but cannot see. This blindness serves as a reminder of our true nature. Overall, the above can be illustrated through the doctor's declaration about the eyes and what they represent. He believes that the soul exists in the eyes of humans, and now that they have lost their sight, they have lost the last signs of humanity: "*I know, I know, I've spent my life looking into people's eyes; it is the only part of the body where a soul might still exist, and if those eyes are lost,*" (Saramago 127)

In his book *Blindness*, Saramago reflects on and depicts trauma through his characters' internal psychological processes as they struggle to come to terms with sudden blindness. He emphasizes the shock, fear, and overwhelming nature of trauma and how it can disrupt a

person's life. He also demonstrates how the characters need to discover courage and inner strength to deal with the trauma and progress. The characters must learn to accept help from others and trust themselves to find a way. The blindness in the novel represents the loss of perception, understanding, and connection that individuals can experience in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

4.1.3 Interpreting *Bird Box*

Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* explores the psychological effects of trauma in a different way. The novel depicts a world where creatures plague society, causing intense hallucinations and inciting violent acts upon sight. To survive, the characters must wear blindfolds and avoid looking at these creatures. Through the experiences of the characters in *Bird Box*, Malerman examines the psychological effects of trauma as a result of the sudden pandemic. Constant fear, hypervigilance, and a damaged sense of security are all evident in the characters' behavior and emotions throughout the novel. Similar to Saramago's *Blindness*, trauma theory offers an analysis of how the characters in *Bird Box* deal with and react to the traumatic events they experience. We can effectively analyze *Bird Box* through the lens of trauma theory. Trauma theory provides an interpretive framework for understanding the psychological effects of traumatic events on individuals, as well as their subsequent challenges in articulating their experiences coherently and restoring a sense of normalcy.

The traumatic reading of *Bird Box* reveals the profound significance of trauma in shaping the characters' experiences and their journey towards survival. The protagonist's journey revolves around overcoming severe depression, learning to feel hope, and reconnecting with others once more. Malorie's detachment from the rest of the human world is evident from the beginning of the novel; her journey is fraught with panic, fear, stress, and hysterical behavior: "*The birds in the trees go quiet. She holds her breath, thinking of the children. What happens*

to their boat's nose? Is it a creature? She thinks it is hysterical. Please, no, God, let it be an animal. Please!" (46). Malerman describes how Malorie's interior monologue is full of hysterical conversations, and her voice is always uttered stressfully because of her traumatic experience. "*You did well,' Malorie said. Her voice is caged with stress.*" (Malerman 47).

By applying trauma theory to *Bird Box*, it becomes evident that the novel challenges the conventional narrative structure and investigate the long-lasting effects of trauma on the characters' psyche and their ability to navigate a perilous world. Trauma theory posits that traumatic events disrupt an individual's sense of time and narrative coherence, leading to a fragmented and disjointed recounting of their experiences. This is evident in *Bird Box*, as the characters, who are confronted with an unseen and unknown force that drives people to madness and suicide when looked at directly, are unable to fully comprehend and articulate their encounters. The interaction between Tom and Jules, as they embark on a three-mile walk with the huskies in search of supplies during their journey, reflects the aforementioned scenario. The fact that they had no reaction towards the dead bodies they encountered in their journey shows how their traumatic dilemma is affecting their mental state: "*He rises, and the two continue. It all feels too fast. Things are moving too quickly already. In the old world, discovering a dead body in the street would have taken hours to assimilate. Yet, they continue.*" (Malerman 176). Moreover, the trauma they experience destabilizes their sense of reality and disrupts the linear progression of time.

The characters in *Bird Box* experience a range of traumatic events, such as the loss of loved ones. All the characters have experienced the loss of a family member or a loved one. The conversation between Malorie and Don expresses how they are still suffering from the long-term trauma of loss. "*I'm okay,' she says. 'I think a lot about the baby.'* Don smiles. *When he*

does, Malorie sees sadness in his features. Don, she knows, also lost a sister. All the housemates have experienced devastating losses." (Malerman 85).

By witnessing horrific deaths and struggling to survive in a world where they cannot trust their eyes. These events lead to feelings of fear, anxiety, and hopelessness as the characters struggle to cope with their new reality. At the same time, they must find the strength and courage to continue fighting for survival. The novel constantly presents the characters with difficult decisions, requiring them to find the strength and courage to persevere. As they battle against the unknown and unseen force threatening their lives, they must also process the traumatic events they have experienced and find ways to cope. These characters must make difficult decisions at every step of their journey and must persevere in their fight for survival, regardless of how challenging the situation may appear. They must also grapple with the mental and emotional toll of the trauma they have endured and find strength within themselves to carry on.

Malorie's trauma is evident throughout the novel. The mysterious events force her to flee her home with her two children. They experience a range of traumatic events, such as witnessing horrific deaths and struggling to survive in a hostile world. Throughout the novel, she must make difficult decisions and confront her own mortality in her battle for survival. Despite the traumatic events, Malorie can find strength and courage within herself to keep fighting. She musters the courage to keep going, no matter the challenges she faces, and this serves as an inspiring message of hope.

The novel explores the protagonist's physical and psychological trauma. Malorie experiences a range of traumatic events, such as the loss of her sister, Tom, and the other housemates. She witnesses horrific deaths and delivers her baby in a chaotic and horrifying atmosphere while struggling to survive in a world where they cannot trust their eyes. During

her journey down the river, she experienced significant physical pain in addition to her pregnancy and delivery.

The pain in Malorie's shoulder is so exact, so detailed, that she can see its outline in her mind. She can see it move as her shoulder moves. It's not a bright pain like it was when it happened. Now it's deep and dull and throbbing. Muted colours of decay rather than the explosive hues of impact. She imagines what the floor of the rowboat must look like right now. *Piss. Water. Blood.* The children asked her if she was okay. She told them she was. But they know when they're lied to. Malorie has trained them beyond words (Malerman 189).

These events lead to the characters' struggle to cope with their new reality. Additionally, they must grapple with the mental and emotional toll of the trauma that they have endured, which can manifest in physical symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, difficulty concentrating, and sleep disturbances. As they battle against the unknown and unseen forces threatening their lives, they must also find ways to cope with the trauma they have experienced. This can be especially difficult for survivors of violence and abuse, as they often feel that they have no control over their lives. Malorie's decision to leave the house to join the survival group down the river took four years. She took time to travel with the children and join another company. She was traumatized by her experience with the housemates and could not establish a connection with other survivors again.

Trauma victims may also struggle with trusting others and may find it challenging to make quick decisions without considering all possible consequences. They also struggle with feelings of panic, hysteria, and fear. Cathy Caruth's discussions of trauma theory is evident in the novel *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman, where the characters must discover ways to cope with the psychological and physical trauma they have endured. The novel explores the effects of trauma

on the characters and how they must grapple with the mental and emotional toll of trauma in order to survive. In addition, the characters must find strength and courage within themselves to keep fighting, even when the situation seems hopeless. This message serves as an inspiring reminder of hope and reflects the idea that resilience can help overcome trauma. Cathy Caruth's literary trauma theory comes to life in Josh Malerman's harrowing narrative. The characters must discover coping mechanisms to deal with the psychological and physical trauma they have endured in order to persevere.

The trauma theory helps to explain the characters' reactions to the events they are facing, including their attempts to cope with the traumatic events and their feelings of hopelessness and fear. It provides insight into the choices the characters make and how those choices affect their relationships with each other. Thus, it helps to explain the characters' actions as they attempt to survive in this hostile new world.

4.2 Characters' Psychological State of Mind: *Blindness* Vs *Bird Box*

Psychological research has shown that pandemics can have a significant impact on mental health. Various studies have indicated that the recent global COVID-19 pandemic has led to widespread psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, stress-related disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These symptoms can be observed not only in those who have been directly affected by the virus but also in the general population as a result of the fear and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, along with changes in daily routines and social isolation. Since literature is the depiction of reality, many authors, through their artistic creations, succeed in crafting fiction that portrays the effects of a pandemic on human psychology through fictional characters. Pandemics also affect fictional characters. In José Saramago's *Blindness*, the characters exhibit symptoms such as paranoia, apathy, and despair

as they struggle to cope with the physical and emotional toll of the disease on themselves and their community.

As the first blind man goes blind, he becomes traumatized at the moment he loses his sight. He starts weeping and screaming in panic: *"I am blind, I am blind, he repeated in despair as they helped him get out of the car, and the tears welling up made those eyes, which he claimed were dead, shine even more."* (Saramago 4). The first blind man suffers from paranoia and panic attacks. Nonetheless, he comes across with posttraumatic stress disorder, which resulted in temporary memory loss at the moment of the incident's impact; he has what is widely known as trauma memory loss. *"Tell me where you live, please, and at the same time, the engine started up. Faltering, as if his lack of sight had weakened his memory,"* (Saramago 5).

Moreover, the characters' psychology is also influenced by their emotions and reactions to the pandemic outbreak, as well as the fear and uncertainty it brings to their lives. There were no doctors or medical assistance available; the government deceived the visually impaired individuals; they were placed in a mental asylum to eliminate them and meet their demise: *"We're locked up here; we're all going to die in here. This isn't right. Where are the doctors we were promised? This was something new; the authorities had promised doctors, medical assistance, perhaps even a complete cure."* (Saramago 65). People experience a whirlwind of emotions, including fear, paranoia, and anxiety.

Consequently, Saramago uses the mental asylum as a metaphor to show that a pandemic can result in psychological disorders. When the government was looking for a location for quarantine, they selected the mental asylum, seemingly implying that they had already labeled visually impaired individuals as psychologically and mentally disturbed.

So that leaves the mental hospital, Yes, Minister, the mental hospital, Well then, let's opt for the mental hospital, Besides, to all appearances, it's the place that offers the best facilities because not only does it have a perimeter wall, it also has the advantage of having two separate wings, one to be used for those who are actually blind, the other for those suspected of having the disease, (Saramago 37).

Alongside Saramago's *Blindness*, Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* takes the front seat in expressing the psychological effects that pandemics can bring. Malerman in *Bird Box* exemplifies the pandemic through a mysterious force that leads people to commit suicide, killing each other, and driving them insane. He presents the pandemic's effect on human psychology in the pandemic itself, despite the fact of the infected people and how this would reflect them. The way he describes the scene is totally insane, full of rage and madness, and people cannot control themselves. Survivors who witness horrifying incidents, massive killings, and the deaths of near-dear ones will be psychologically disturbed.

She hangs! *She hangs by her cord!* 'Don't. Please, God, don't let this man describe it to me.' She hangs by her cord! The most incredible thing I've ever seen! She hangs by her cord!' There is laughter, joy in his voice. The thing moves behind her. Malorie is at the epicentre of all this madness. Old madness. The kind people used to get from war, divorce, poverty, and things like knowing that your friend is – 'Hanging by her cord! By *her cord!*' 'Shut up!' Malorie screams blindly. '*Shut up!*' (Malerman 350-351).

This highlights the fact that pandemics have not only physical health implications but also significant psychological effects on individuals and societies. Various forms of artistic expression, including literature, reflect these effects. Real-life events often influence the

expression of an author's feelings and thoughts in a literary work. It employs terminology to express the character's state of mind, emphasizing their attitude and behavior. Both psychology and literature investigate human existence, with psychology emphasizing real-world human experiences and literature emphasizing the author's imagination. Literary works often depict psychology as the internal conflict between characters, but it can also serve as a tool for analysis.

Saramago's *Blindness* uses physical blindness as a metaphor for the characters' psychological blindness. The loss of their most fundamental sense plunges individuals into a state of uncertainty, fear, and despair. Saramago skillfully portrays the psychological descent of the characters, capturing the disorientation, chaos, and desperation that result from their inability to see. Through vivid and introspective prose, the author compels readers to confront their own fears and anxieties surrounding the unknown. *Bird Box* takes a different approach to exploring the psychological impact of the unknown. To survive, the characters must wear blindfolds and rely on their other senses to navigate the world. This constant tension between the desire to see and the need to avoid has a profound effect on their mental state, affecting their ability to reason logically. Malerman succeeds in depicting and predicting suspense, capturing the characters' fear and paranoia throughout the plot. By focusing on the characters' struggle to adapt and survive in a world they cannot fully comprehend, *Bird Box* highlights the resilience of the human spirit despite unimaginable trauma.

It is critical to accurately depict physical disabilities in literature, such as sudden loss of vision, while exploring the impact of sensory deprivation on mental abilities. Both authors use fictional characters to depict the psychological disorders caused by the pandemic, leading to severe trauma at a unique level.

4.3 Traumatic Dilemmas of the Characters: *Blindness* vs. *Bird Box*

In both novels by Saramago and Malerman, the characters face traumatic dilemmas that challenge their understanding of themselves and their place in the world. These traumatic dilemmas stem from the loss of a crucial sense for their survival: sight in *Blindness* and the inability to look in *a Bird Box*.

In both works, the use of blindness as a metaphor symbolizes the challenge of recognizing trauma and its victims, as well as the protagonists' struggle to find ways to cope with the trauma. Both authors illustrate how trauma can be so influential that it can shape one's life and destiny. José Saramago and Josh Malerman both demonstrate how trauma can cause a person to be blind to the reality of their situation and how challenging it is to come to terms with it. They also demonstrate how individuals can find the strength to overcome trauma and lead a more fulfilling life.

Saramago achieves this by depicting the protagonist's struggles with his traumatic past and his gradual healing journey, whereas Malerman illustrates the character's inner battle with trauma and its impact on their decisions and perspective on life. Both authors demonstrate how trauma can be a powerful force, but it can also be overcome with courage and determination.

Analyzing the trauma endured by these main characters requires us to dig deeper into Cathy Caruth's discussions on post-traumatic stress and pain. Trauma is not just an individual experience but a collective one, affecting entire communities or societies. By examining the characters' pain from this perspective, we gain a broader understanding of how their suffering resonates beyond personal boundaries. Individuals, families, and communities experience collective trauma, reflecting the impact of profound uncertainty, isolation, and loss of basic

sensory perceptions. This challenging time's immense suffering highlights the crucial role of compassion and community in navigating the future.

Saramago focuses on the collective trauma of physical blindness, which leads to the breakdown of societal norms and the loss of human decency. The characters in the novel exhibit ruthless and selfish behavior as they struggle to survive in a world of darkness. For instance, their quarantine in an asylum swiftly plunges them into chaos and violence. They form factions and engage in power struggles, resorting to theft, rape, and murder to fulfill their own needs. One character, known as the king of ward three, takes advantage of his position of power and manipulates others for his own gain. He hoards food and resources, using them as leverage to control and exploit those around him. This self-centered behavior underscores the characters' personal trauma as they struggle with their recently acquired blindness.

In Malerman's novel, the trauma is more individualized. To survive, the characters must live their lives blindfolded. Malorie, the protagonist, exemplifies this individual trauma by navigating a perilous journey while blindfolded to protect herself and her children. Malorie's experiences highlight the immense psychological toll that the trauma has taken on her. She becomes hyper-vigilant and constantly on edge, fearing for her life and the lives of her children. Desperate to survive, she makes difficult decisions that challenge her moral compass.

Overall, both authors explore the effects of collective and individual trauma on their characters. In *Blindness*, collective trauma leads to a breakdown of societal norms and exposes the darker side of human nature. In *Bird Box*, individual trauma forces characters to adapt to a world of darkness and confront their deepest fears.

4.3.1 Doctor's Wife Vs Malorie

The portrayal of trauma experienced by the main characters in Saramago's and Malerman's novels is quite prominent through the female characters, especially in the protagonists of both texts, The Doctor's Wife in *Blindness* and Malorie in *Bird Box*. Thus, trauma theory suggests that women have a unique experience of trauma, which can result in a range of complex emotions, such as guilt, regret, and fear. In Saramago's novel, the female characters experience a significantly higher level of trauma compared to the male characters. When the thugs controlled the supplies, they demanded to rape the women in exchange for food. The women sacrificed themselves to save the lives of others; they were treated as mere commodities and subjected to atrocious situations. This completely traumatizes some of them and, ultimately, leads the doctor's wife to murder the leader of the thugs. However, the doctor's wife endured greater torment than the other women. She grappled with the trauma of being raped and also bore witness to the events, as she was the only character who could see everything.

The doctor's wife experiences a great deal of trauma throughout the story. First, when her husband is blinded and she has to care for him, and then when she is raped by the thugs and kills their leader. “*The quarantine was no dream, said the doctor's wife. Certainly not, nor was it a dream that we were raped, nor that I stabbed a man*” (Saramago 280). This trauma creates a difficult dilemma for her, as she is unable to speak up about her experience because of the stigma associated with rape. She faces a difficult decision: either she shares her experience and exposes herself to social shame, or she chooses to remain silent and endure ongoing suffering. This dilemma reflects the ideas presented by Cathy Caruth in her discussions of trauma. She argues that trauma survivors often struggle to articulate their experiences due to the stigma associate Caruth's theories suggest that the fear of societal judgment or ridicule often silences

survivors. by society. This fear of judgment can be a powerful deterrent for survivors to speak up about their experiences.

As a result, trauma often leaves survivors feeling helpless, preventing them from speaking out about what has happened to them. This dilemma is a powerful example of the difficulty many rape victims face when deciding whether to speak up or stay silent. As a result, they frequently find themselves in difficult situations that lack a clear resolution. The doctor's wife is also able to witness the extreme cruelty and lack of empathy displayed by the guards in the mental asylum towards the blind. This is in stark contrast to the care and compassion she shows her husband, despite his blindness.

This further contributes to her traumatic dilemma, as she is unable to do anything to help the blind individuals in the asylum and is forced to witness their suffering without being able to stop it. She is left with an inner conflict between her moral principles and her affection for her husband, who is involved in a system that perpetuates such cruelty. This conflict creates a deep sense of guilt and despair that only intensifies her trauma. In *Bird Box*, the protagonist, Malorie, faces a traumatic dilemma when she must decide whether to take her children on a perilous journey to safety or stay in the house with the unseen monsters that roam the outside world. She is torn between her desire to protect her children and her fear of the unknown. In Malorie's case, she is struggling to make decisions in the face of trauma while simultaneously feeling the weight of the guilt and regret she has for putting her children in such a precarious situation. She is trapped in a cycle of fear and self-doubt that hinders her from making decisions that could ultimately benefit her and her children. Her trauma causes her to doubt her own capabilities and judgement, making it difficult for her to take the necessary steps to protect her children. The fears, doubts, memories of the past, and uncertainty about the future can be traced through Malorie's interior monologue:

For years now the only thing you've been allowed to see is the faces of your housemates and the faces of your children. The same colours. The same colours. The same colours for years. YEARS. Are you prepared? And what scares you more? The creatures or yourself, as the memories of a million sights and colours come flooding towards you? What scares you more? (Malerman 207).

This illustrates the difficult balance between protecting her children and facing the consequences of her choice. She is now confronted with the possibility of losing them in a world full of danger and uncertainty. As Malorie is forced to make increasingly difficult decisions to keep her children safe, she is also compelled to confront the reality of the choices she has made and the consequences that accompany them. She is also filled with guilt and regret for having put her children in such a dangerous position. This can also be seen when she was forced to leave her sister's dead body: *"Her hands feel weak on the wheel. Her eyes ache from crying. She feels an unyielding flow of guilt for having left her sister, dead, on the bathroom floor of their house."* (Malerman 50).

Malorie's traumatic dilemma demonstrates how challenging it can be to make decisions in the face of trauma and how it can shape one's destiny. Moreover, she experiences the delivery of her baby in a very crucial situation, and many women suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder during pregnancy and childbirth. For Malorie, both stages were full of stress, fear, and anxiety. Malerman reflects on her torture and justifies her traumatic behavior in the delivery scene. She suffers from the pain of childbirth, betrayal by one of her housemates, and the loss of loved ones; all her housemates were exposed to the virus and died. Malorie was thinking about her child and how they had already experienced the feelings she had witnessed.

Suddenly, strangely, Malorie feels another wave of peace. Despite the thousand blades that pierce her lungs, neck, and chest, she understands that no matter what she does, no matter what happens, the baby is coming out. What does it matter

what kind of world she is bringing this baby into now? Olympia is right. It's *happening*. The child is coming, the child is almost out. And he has always been a part of the new world. *He knows anxiety, fear, paranoia. He was worried when Tom and Jules went to find dogs. He was painfully relieved when they returned. He was frightened of the change in Don. The change in the house. As it went from a hopeful haven to a bitter, anxious place. His heart was heavy when I read the ad that led me here, just like it was when I read the notebook in the cellar* (Malerman 333).

Both protagonists demonstrate how trauma can be experienced differently while also sharing some commonalities. The protagonists must confront their trauma and find a way to cope with it. Both examples demonstrate the challenges of finding a way to heal and progress. The doctor's wife is able to find a way to cope with her own trauma. Some research has reported that a significant percentage of trauma survivors, such as rape victims and widows, report feeling stronger and wiser. They believe that they are better people after recovering from their traumas (Koss & Burkhardt 1989). The doctor's wife became stronger after overcoming her post-traumatic stress disorder.

Meanwhile, Malorie struggles to find a way to break free from her trauma. However, both characters eventually find a way to heal and move forward. Both writers demonstrate how these two female characters heal from post-traumatic stress disorder in the novels by establishing caring attachments to others and finding a meaningful purpose in life, which ultimately leads them to become leaders. The doctor's wife is the leader and a caring person in her group, while Malorie is a protective and strong mother. This conveys a powerful message that healing from trauma is possible and finding a way to move on is achievable. It also shows that everyone's journey to healing is unique and requires strength and courage to take the

necessary steps to find peace. This will provide comfort to those going through similar experiences and serve as inspiration to push forward and find a way to heal. It also shows that seeking help is necessary to heal and accept the past.

4.3.2 Wounded Mind and Character

The wounded mind and the wounded characters are present in both traumatic novels, *Blindness* by Saramago and *Bird Box* by Malerman. In both stories, the main characters must confront their inner demons as they struggle to survive in a dystopian world. In *Blindness*, the main character's blindness serves as a metaphor for her inability to perceive reality and its impact on her mental state. In *Bird Box*, the characters must remain blindfolded to survive, which symbolises their fear of facing their true selves and the world around them. The wounded mind in both novels is a result of the characters' traumatic experiences, according to trauma theory.

In *Blindness*, the main character's blindness symbolises the trauma she has endured and her incapacity to face reality. In *Bird Box*, the characters' fear of the unknown and their physical blindness are direct consequences of the trauma they have endured. Both stories illustrate how trauma can lead to a wounded mind and how this can affect a person's ability to cope with the world around them. In both stories, the characters' physical blindness symbolises the psychological trauma they have endured. It serves to emphasise the struggles of the characters as they try to cope with trauma and its effects. Furthermore, *Bird Box* uses the unknown entity as a metaphor for psychological trauma, highlighting the often overlooked, unseen consequences of trauma. For instance, Malorie is constantly haunted by an unknown entity that causes her to be unable to trust anyone or anything, a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Malorie thinks of George and his video, the failed experiments. She remembers how she almost blinded her children in an act of sacrificial desperation. *Constance can see. She isn't blind. Had you found the courage four years ago,*

Malorie thinks, *who knows what would have happened to you. To the children.* Rick leans on Constance for support. 'If you had been here, you would understand.' Malorie is frightened. But she *does* understand. And in her desperation, she wants to trust these people. She wants to believe she has led the children somewhere better (Malerman 375).

This fear of the unknown reflects the challenge of overcoming the psychological trauma that Malorie and other characters experience. It is also a reminder that trauma is often hidden and invisible, yet it can still have a profound effect on a person's life.

The wounded mind becomes a focal point for understanding how traumatic experiences shape character development. As Cathy Caruth eloquently states, "*Trauma destroys memory but also compels one to remember*" (n.pag.). This sentiment rings true as we witness characters grappling with their past traumas while simultaneously trying to survive in hostile environments. One crucial aspect is identifying who becomes a victim of this trauma. In both novels, it is not just physical blindness or an external threat that causes distress; rather, it is the psychological impact on individuals' minds that leaves lasting scars. The characters are forced to confront their deepest fears and navigate a world filled with uncertainty.

4.3.3 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder of Characters

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a complex psychological condition that can profoundly affect individuals who have experienced traumatic events. Posttraumatic stress disorder typically occurs during or immediately after a traumatic experience. It could be a result of many stressful incidents, such as sickness, death in the family, violence, rape, betrayal, war, and global disasters.

However, this disorder has a dual impact on individuals, affecting them both physically and psychologically. People who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder experience various outcomes, including nightmares, memory loss, isolation, stress, anxiety, insomnia, fear of social

connections, flashbacks, trust issues, and irrational fears. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) emerges as a recurring theme throughout these studies. The surviving characters exhibit symptoms such as hyperarousal, intrusive thoughts or memories related to their traumatic experiences, avoidance behaviour towards triggers associated with those events, and emotional numbing. Their struggle against posttraumatic stress disorder demonstrates how deeply ingrained trauma can be within an individual's psyche. Psychological actions can cause trauma, but an individual's psychology is more relevant to its effects. Psychological trauma, however, exists. This is the real effect that someone who has had a traumatic experience will face. This effect is known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

In Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*, the protagonists are confronted with horrifying circumstances that leave lasting emotional and psychological scars, leading to the development of symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder. In *Blindness* the characters are subjected to the sudden pandemic of white blindness, which results in a chaotic life. As a result, the characters experience intense fear and trauma, witnessing countless acts of violence and degradation. This trauma is evident in their behaviors and reactions, even after their sight is restored. They exhibit symptoms of intrusion, which are characterised by recurring and distressing memories or nightmares of the traumatic event.

Apart from the inconsolable sadness caused by the blindness from which they inexplicably continued to suffer, the blind internees, this at least was in their favour, were spared any fits of depression produced by these and other similar atmospheric changes, proven to be the cause of innumerable acts of despair in the remote past when people had eyes to see (Saramago 95).

A study in *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* linked increased brain activity in regions responsible for processing fear to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The emotional

impact of traumatic experiences is a significant concern for both immediate and long-term health. Traumatic events have a lasting effect on our emotions, leading to flashbacks, nightmares, and increased feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, and guilt. (Psychology Today)

Additionally, negative thoughts and mood disruptions are evident in the characters of *Blindness* as they grapple with feelings of guilt, shame, and hopelessness. These negative emotions are a direct result of the traumatic events that individuals have experienced and are consistent with the diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. In *Bird Box*, the protagonist, Malorie, is confronted with a post-apocalyptic world where mysterious creatures induce madness and suicide in people who see them. In a similar vein to the characters in *Blindness*, Malorie grapples with intrusive thoughts and memories of the traumatic events she has witnessed, persisting even after seeking refuge in a safe place.

Visions of the old world rush through her mind, but with each memory comes a leash, a chain, and an instinctive feeling that tells her this man and this place might be good, might be bad, might be better than where she is now, might be worse, but she will never be free again (Malerman 358).

These intrusive thoughts manifest as vivid flashbacks and nightmares, causing significant distress and impairment in Malorie's daily functioning. Furthermore, Malorie exhibits avoidance behaviors to protect herself from potential traumatic event triggers. For example, she blindfolds herself whenever she ventures outside, avoiding any visual stimuli that could potentially expose her to dangerous creatures.

Yet, in the mania of the moment, she holds tight to the concept of the blindfold.

No matter what tools she might pack, no matter what household object might be

used as a weapon, she knows that the blindfolds are their strongest protection. (Malerman 7-8).

The symptoms displayed by the characters in both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* align with the diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. The characters in both novels exhibit symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder following traumatic events. The posttraumatic stress disorders of the characters in both narratives are evident in their behaviors and reactions even after their traumatic events. For instance, both sets of characters exhibit symptoms of intrusion, experiencing recurring and distressing memories or nightmares related to the traumatic events they have encountered. Following Malorie's journey, we notice that whenever she takes an action, her thoughts bring her back to her past traumatic experiences, even when she reaches the end of the river.

As she approaches the second channel from the right, it feels like she is rowing with the years. The memories. She rows with the self she was when she found out she was pregnant, when she found Shannon dead, when she answered the ad in the newspaper. She rows with the self she was when she arrived at the house, met the housemates for the first time, and agreed to let Olympia in. She rows with the person she was when Gary arrived. She rows with herself, on a towel in the attic, as Don pulled the blankets from the windows downstairs (Malerman, 367-368).

The characters are forced to find strength within themselves to confront their fears and anxieties in order to make it through the ordeal. As the characters struggle to survive, they must deal with their own mental and emotional trauma. They must confront their fears and anxieties to cope with the situation and overcome it. It is only by persevering that they can find the strength to continue. This journey of self-discovery is a key element of the posttraumatic stress

disorder depicted in the novels. The characters are faced with a situation that is beyond their control, and they must confront their inner fears and anxieties to help them understand their reactions and emotions.

4.4 The Characters' Trauma Recovery

There are several ways to explore how the characters in *Blindness* by Saramago and *Bird Box* by Malerman recover from the trauma of the pandemic. First, through the analysis of the psychological impact of the pandemic, the effects of the pandemic trauma on the characters' mental health and how their experiences in isolation and fear have shaped their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Furthermore, the pandemic's trauma may have contributed to the physical ailments and changes experienced by the characters. This could include symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, weakened immune systems, or other health complications.

Furthermore, the characters' journey towards recovery depicts their healing process. This may involve seeking professional help, leaning on support systems, or engaging in self-care activities. Both narratives explore themes of hope and resilience, with the characters discovering hope and resilience amidst the pandemic's trauma.

However, Saramago and Malerman focus more on the individual journeys of the protagonists in both novels. Each character in both novels has unique experiences and reactions to the trauma. While exploring their individual journeys of recovery and how they cope with the aftermath. The doctor's wife in *Blindness* and Malorie in *Bird Box* encounters numerous challenges and acquires valuable lessons that contribute to their personal development. The trauma recovery of both female protagonists—the doctor's wife and Malorie— explore the psychological journey of individuals who have experienced trauma and their process of healing and regaining control of their lives. Both characters undergo intense and harrowing experiences

that leave lasting emotional scars. Through their personal journeys, the authors portray the complex and arduous process of trauma recovery, emphasizing the significance of resilience, support, and self-discovery in overcoming the effects of trauma.

4.4.1 The Recovery of the Doctor's Wife's Trauma

In *Blindness*, Saramago portrays the characters' trauma recovery through his female protagonist, the doctor's wife. Despite being able to see unlike the other blind characters, she is the one who has a significant impact on pandemic trauma. The recovery of the doctor's wife's trauma is explored in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*. The doctor's wife experiences tremendous trauma throughout the novel, as she not only loses her sight while everyone around her is blind but is also subjected to difficult and harrowing conditions and experiences. Caruth's book examines the psychological aspects of trauma, exploring how it impacts the individual and their ability to recover. Saramago describes the doctor's wife's abstract feelings when the pandemic ended:

It is possible that we have come to the end of this blindness, it is possible that we will all recover our eyesight, hearing those words, the doctor's wife began to cry, she should have been happy yet she was crying, what strange reactions people have, of course she was happy, my God, it is easy to understand, she cried because all her mental resistance had suddenly drained away, she was like a newborn baby and this cry was her first and still-unconscious sound (Saramago 306).

Furthermore, according to Judith Herman, a significant figure in trauma theory, she believes that "*the recovery from trauma is dependent on victims regaining their rights and the establishment of new social relationships.*"(136). Reviewing trauma and subsequently understanding it is a key part of trauma treatment. Moreover, Dori Laub and Judith Herman,

both trauma theorists and therapists, agree that one cannot face trauma alone and that recovery is only possible through establishing new relationships (136). Only in this way will the traumatized be able to create a secure living environment and re-establish psychological needs such as trust, safety, closeness, and identity. The doctor's wife's painful experience exposed the wounds of every survivor of the pandemic and highlighted the traumatic ordeal.

According to Judith Herman's *The Book of Trauma and Recovery*, the trauma recovery of the doctor's wife in Saramago's *Blindness* involves a complex and intricate process. Through the plot, the doctor's wife faces the trauma of not losing her sight in a world struck by a pandemic of blindness, unlike the rest of the characters. Surrounded by the blind, she goes through various stages of recovery, from denial and fear to acceptance and resilience. Through her experiences, Saramago explores the psychological and emotional impact of trauma, as well as the transformative power of resilience and inner strength. When the doctor's wife sees the pictures and statues in the church, she is deeply moved and finds comfort in their beauty and serenity. She finds solace in religious imagery, which helps her cope with her traumatic experience. She is also able to gain a sense of hope and strength by seeking inspiration and courage from the images of saints and martyrs. The religious imagery allows her to feel a sense of peace and understanding, helping her find the strength to continue fighting for her husband and her blind companions.

The Book of Trauma and Recovery by Judith Herman provides a comprehensive understanding of trauma and its impact on individuals' lives. Drawing on research, case studies, and therapeutic approaches, the book offers insights into the process of trauma recovery, emphasizing the importance of validation, self-care, and support. It highlights the resilience and capacity for healing that individuals possess, encouraging readers to explore their own paths to recovery. Overall, *Blindness* presents compelling narratives of trauma recovery and offers

valuable perspectives on the human capacity to confront and overcome adversity. The *Book of Trauma and Recovery* further amplifies these narratives by providing theoretical grounding and practical insights into the recovery process of the doctor's wife.

4.4.2 The Recovery of Malorie's Trauma

The recovery of Malorie's trauma in *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman can be analyzed according to Cathy Caruth's concept of the wound and the voice, as explained in her book *Unclaimed Experience*. The wound symbolizes the traumatic experience itself, whereas the voice represents the narrative or expression of that trauma. In the context of Malorie's trauma, the wound can be seen as her harrowing experiences and the psychological impact they have on her. This includes the loss of loved ones, the constant fear, the survival instincts she develops, and the isolation she feels. Trauma leaves a profound mark on individuals, shaping their thoughts, emotions, and actions. Those who have experienced trauma often develop the practice of isolating themselves because, in general, being alone is considered safe.

Malorie believes that life on its own is manageable. After her experience, she can cope with being alone and does not need to worry about it. For Malorie, while others may be unpredictable, there is less risk to manage when she is by herself with the children. On the other hand, the voice in Malorie's recovery refers to her ability to articulate and make sense of her experiences. Through narration and storytelling, Malorie attempts to give voice to her trauma, both as a means of understanding it herself and as a way to communicate her struggle to others. By expressing her trauma, she can begin the process of healing and find catharsis.

Malorie sits up, wounded, clutching her blindfold. *My name is Tom.* Birds strike her body. They thud against the boat. But she is not thinking of them. She is thinking of Tom. *Hello! I'm calling you from Riverbridge. Two seventy-three*

Shillingham. My name is Tom. I'm sure you understand the relief I feel at getting your answering machine. It means you still have power. So do we ... Malorie starts shaking her head. *no no no no no no no no no no no. 'NO!'* (Malerman 320).

Malorie's recovery unfolds throughout the book. Throughout the novel, there are pivotal moments where Malorie's emotional wounds and inner voice intersect. This occurs when she bravely confronts her fears and establishes connections with other survivors. She follows Tom's voice through the river, reflecting on her past experience riding to the housemates' house:

The Boy heard it first. Tom's voice. Recorded and played on a loop. Motion activated. For her. For Malorie. If ever she decided to take the river. Whenever that day would come. Tom, sweet Tom, speaking out here all these years. Trying to make contact. Trying to reach someone. Trying to build a bridge between their life in the house and a better one, somewhere else. *They used his voice because they knew you'd recognize it. This is it, Malorie. This is the moment you're supposed to open your eyes* (Malerman 320-321).

In fact, Malorie's narration and expression of her trauma contribute to her healing process and eventual recovery. In *Bird Box*, Malorie is confronted with the traumatic reality of a post-apocalyptic world, where the sight of mysterious creatures drives people to madness and death. As she navigates this dangerous world, Malerman investigates her character's journey of trauma recovery, depicting her gradual healing and growth through her experiences and interactions with others.

4.5 Impact of Trauma Theory on *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Trauma theory offers a valuable interpretive framework for analyzing works such as *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. These novels explore the psychological effects of trauma from various perspectives and depict the resilience of individuals and societies in the face of extreme events. By applying trauma theory, we gain a deeper understanding of the characters' experiences and the broader implications of trauma in our lives. The theory has a significant impact on our comprehension and analysis of narratives. It allows us to understand the underlying psychological and emotional experiences of the characters and how these experiences shape their actions and behaviors.

Trauma is often depicted as a delayed event, something that is not immediately assimilated or processed by the individual. Applying trauma theory to these traumatic novels enhances our understanding and interpretation of such traumatic events. Trauma novels explore the idea that trauma can cause a person to psychologically detach from the world around them. In both novels, the characters experience trauma that causes them to disconnect from reality and rely on their own internal strength to survive. This helps to explain the protagonists' decisions, motivations, and reactions to their challenges. This insight into the characters' experiences helps deepen our understanding of their journeys and how their decisions affect the plot.

Moreover, trauma theory also helps to explain the characters' inner struggles as they attempt to cope with their pasts and move forward. It is a powerful tool for understanding how literature reflects the human experience. Trauma theory is a crucial component of literary analysis that can assist in gaining a deeper understanding of characters and how their experiences influence the narrative. It can also help to appreciate how literature reflects the human condition and the role of our own experiences in understanding the characters we read about. Through trauma theory, we can identify how characters are affected by their experiences,

how they cope with them, and how they are changed by them. It allows us to connect with the characters on a deeper level and explore the various ways in which trauma can shape the human experience.

Furthermore, by exploring the effects of trauma in literature, we can gain a better understanding of our own experiences and the role that trauma can play in our lives. This can help us find ways to heal, process our own experiences, and develop greater compassion for those around us. As we can observe, in both novels, the protagonists are tormented by a sudden pandemic or the deaths of their relatives. Their inner conflict is explored throughout both books, ultimately leading to the protagonists' self-realization and healing. Trauma theory offers a profound insight into the intricate psychological journeys of the characters, illustrating how trauma manifests and influences their thoughts and behaviors, as well as the diverse coping mechanisms they utilize.

Viewing the characters from this perspective allows us to grasp the profound complexity of their experiences and the resilience they demonstrate when confronted with unimaginable circumstances. We can gain a greater appreciation of how trauma shapes our thoughts, behaviours, and relationships. By applying this theoretical framework, we can gain insight into how to better support and care for ourselves and those around us.

Moreover, we can learn how to build resilience when we encounter adversity. We can also recognize the importance of seeking professional help when necessary and how to advocate for the mental health needs of ourselves and our loved ones. Furthermore, we can learn how to identify and challenge unhelpful beliefs, manage difficult emotions, and create meaningful connections with others. Additionally, we can learn how to develop healthier coping strategies and build our self-confidence. We can learn to practice self-compassion, give ourselves permission to make mistakes, and grow. We can learn to recognize our own strengths and build

on them. Finally, we can learn to take care of ourselves mentally and emotionally by engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation.

Blindness by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman offer profound explorations of the impact of trauma on individuals and society as a whole. Through their masterful storytelling techniques and insightful character development, these authors offer readers valuable insights into the human condition during times of crisis.

4.5.1 Trauma in *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as a Catalyst for Change and Transformation

Trauma can act as a catalyst for change and transformation in the novels *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. It compels characters to face their fears, adjust to the new realities forced upon them, and ultimately discover inner strength and resilience. Both authors explore the theme of trauma resulting from a sudden loss of sight or vision. In both novels, the traumatic events of losing one's sight in *Blindness* and facing a mysterious force that drives people to madness in *Bird Box* force the characters to confront their deepest fears and vulnerabilities. This confrontation with their own fears becomes a catalyst for change as the characters are propelled out of their comfort zones into a new, unfamiliar world.

In *Blindness*, the characters' loss of sight not only strips them of their physical abilities but also challenges their perceptions of themselves and others. They are forced to question their own identities and confront the darkness within themselves. In *Bird Box*, the characters are similarly faced with a terrifying force that jeopardizes their sanity and survival. They must confront their deepest fears and make difficult choices to protect themselves and their loved ones. The traumatic events in both novels also compel the characters to adapt to their new realities.

Additionally, traumas are intense pressures that exceed physical and psychological abilities, often resulting in individuals being known as trauma survivors. Significant traumas, such as war and tremendous grief, can be effectively managed. Trauma professionals should avoid reinforcing public perceptions of trauma victims as damaged individuals. Pathological reaction warnings suggest that the disorder is anticipated, potentially resulting in adverse outcomes in trauma therapy treatments. Professionals should reconsider their perspectives and portray trauma as a challenging yet potentially liberating experience that can enhance the resilience of one's personality. People should be provided with more than just healing; it offers them additional choices and freedoms to reinvent themselves.

However, trauma serves as a catalyst for change and transformation in both novels. These texts explore the consequences of a sudden loss of sight and the ensuing struggle for survival. The characters in these books undergo significant personal transformations as they navigate trauma and its aftermath. In *Blindness*, the blind characters are quarantined in an abandoned mental asylum. As they grapple with their new reality, they are forced to confront their weaknesses and prejudices. The trauma of losing sight forces individuals to confront their deepest fears, question their moral values, and re-evaluate their relationships with others. Through this process, they undergo a profound transformation as they band together, learn to adapt, and rediscover their humanity. Similarly, in *Bird Box*, the characters are thrust into a world where sight is a sign of death. To survive, they must live with their eyes closed or wear blindfolds whenever they venture outside.

The trauma of the unknown and the constant threat of danger push the characters to their limits and force them to confront their darkest fears. As they navigate through the treacherous landscape, the characters evolve, shedding their former selves and adapting to their new reality. They learn to rely on their other senses and survive in darkness.

During these moments of trauma, both novels present teachable moments for both the characters and readers. These teachable moments arise from the characters' experiences of blindness and the challenges they face as a result. This loss of sight in *Blindness* forces the characters to rely on their other senses and adapt to their new reality. Through their experiences, these blind characters teach us the importance of resilience and adaptability despite adversity. Saramago conveys the importance of facing trauma head-on and the strength of human resilience during hardship. In his work, he demonstrates that although trauma can be difficult and painful, it can also serve as a catalyst for growth and self-discovery.

He emphasizes the need for courage and strength, as well as the power of accepting help from others, to move forward and heal. Ultimately, the author demonstrates that by confronting trauma directly and embracing the power of human resilience, individuals can discover hope and recovery. Through his writing, Saramago argues that while trauma is challenging and painful, it also presents a significant opportunity for gaining insight and personal growth. He encourages individuals to recognize their own courage and strength, as well as accept help from others, to heal and move forward. Saramago demonstrates that by embracing resilience and courage, we can discover hope and healing even in the face of trauma.

Similarly, in *Bird Box*, the characters must learn to live without their sense of sight. They are constantly faced with the fear of what they may see if they remove their blindfolds, and this fear forces them to rely on their intuition and trust their instincts. These teachable moments underscore the significance of resilience, trust, intuition, and self-reliance in navigating challenging situations. Blindness, whether caused by a sudden pandemic or the need to avoid seeing something horrifying, presents unique challenges that require individuals to adapt and overcome. In both books, the characters are faced with a devastating condition that leaves them helpless, immobilized, and stuck.

Blindness is a profound affliction, and its impact is underscored in both narratives. The consequences of the pandemic in Saramago's *Blindness* range from depression and loss of jobs to jeopardized relationships and dire economic conditions. In Malerman's *Bird Box*, the characters are compelled to exist in a world where they must wear blindfolds to prevent seeing something that induces madness, ultimately resulting in their demise. As they face constant danger and uncertainty, they undergo personal growth and transformation, learning to trust one another and finding hope amidst despair.

Both novels depict characters who are faced with unimaginable challenges and forced to confront their innermost fears. The trauma they experience not only tests their physical and mental resilience but also prompts them to reconsider their beliefs, values, and priorities. As they navigate through the darkness, both literally and metaphorically, they are forced to re-evaluate their relationships, confront their vulnerabilities, and find the strength within themselves to adapt and survive. Ultimately, the trauma becomes a catalyst for profound personal growth and transformation. The characters emerge from the ordeal with a newfound perspective on life and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. It is through these traumatic experiences that individuals can shed their previous limitations and embrace a more authentic and evolved version of themselves.

In both novels, trauma serves as a catalyst for change and transformation. It strips away the characters' preconceived notions, exposes their vulnerabilities, and challenges their beliefs. The traumatic experiences they endure push individuals to evolve, question their place in the world, and redefine their identities. Ultimately, the characters in both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* emerge from their ordeals profoundly transformed, with a newfound understanding of themselves and the world around them. As a result, these novels teach resilience and the ability to find strength

in the face of adversity. Resilience is a recurring theme in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. Overall, the consequences of blindness are extensive and varied.

Blindness has a profound impact on individuals and the society they inhabit. Furthermore, the challenges faced by individuals with blindness extend beyond personal hardships. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, has caused unprecedented levels of psychological and physical trauma worldwide. Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box* provide insight into how such unexpected events can cause profound shock, fear, and disruption in people's lives. Through the characters' experiences, both writers emphasize the importance of facing trauma head-on, finding courage and strength within to cope with it, and moving forward. Moreover, they demonstrate how the need for assistance from others can be a crucial aspect of the healing process. By exploring the psychological impact of trauma, Saramago and Malerman remind us of the importance of resilience, hope, and healing even in the midst of traumatic events.

4.6 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* from Trauma to Resilience

Trauma and resilience are recurring themes in Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*. In both novels, the characters are confronted with unimaginable and traumatic situations that challenge their physical and psychological well-being. *Blindness*, set in a world where a pandemic of sudden blindness afflicts society, explores the resilience of individuals as they navigate a dystopian existence. Similarly, *Bird Box* depicts a post-apocalyptic world where the sight of unknown creatures drives people to madness and suicide.

In both novels, the characters are compelled to confront their deepest fears and endure profound loss. These traumatic experiences provide a backdrop for exploring resilience and the human capacity to overcome adversity. Ultimately, both texts explore themes of survival and

resilience in the face of trauma. The characters in these novels are compelled to confront their deepest fears and discover the resilience to persevere despite formidable challenges.

Nevertheless, these characters are not only physically affected by their loss of sight but also psychologically impacted by the chaos and brutality that ensues. The blindness and loss of sight pandemics in both novels serve as a metaphor for the darkness that can consume humanity, highlighting the potential for both individual and collective trauma. Consequently, the characters are thrust into a world where social structures collapse, and they must navigate through an environment marked by violence, exploitation, and despair. Thus, the novels explore how people respond to trauma and the different ways in which they cope with their circumstances.

Both narratives demonstrate that the absence of sight can result in an enhanced sense of strength and resilience. They also demonstrate how the characters can use darkness to gain a newfound appreciation for life. Ultimately, they show that the power of the human spirit can never be underestimated. By learning to rely on their other senses, both characters are able to gain a new perspective on their lives and the world around them. They learn to appreciate small things and find the courage to move forward, despite their blindness. This testifies to the strength of the human spirit and its ability to overcome even the most difficult obstacles.

4.6.1 The Portrayal of Resilience in *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

The plot of *Blindness* revolves around a pandemic of blindness that spreads throughout a city, leading to social, political, and psychological chaos. The story follows a group of characters, including the doctor's wife, the old man with the black eye patch, the girl with dark glasses, and the boy with a squint. The central themes of the novel include the fragility of society, the loss of humanity, and the resilience of the human spirit. In *Blindness*, the characters' responses to adversity, particularly their reactions to losing sight, vary significantly. Some characters become overwhelmed by fear and desperation, resorting to violence and selfishness.

Others form alliances, seek solace in companionship, and demonstrate kindness and selflessness. These contrasting responses showcase the diverse range of human nature when faced with adversity.

Resilience theory helps us understand the characters' responses to adversity in *Blindness* by emphasizing the importance of internal and external resources. Some characters exhibit innate resilience, relying on their personal strengths and coping mechanisms to adjust to challenging circumstances. Others find resilience through social support, forming connections, and relying on the collective strength of the group to overcome obstacles. Resilience theory helps shed light on the complex interplay between individual resilience and the influence of external factors in shaping characters' responses.

Similarly, the portrayal of resilience in *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman explores the characters' responses despite a dangerous and mysterious threat. Resilience theory can help us understand how these characters cope with and adapt to the challenges they encounter throughout the novel. Resilience theory emphasizes individuals' ability to bounce back from adversity. In *Bird Box*, this is exemplified through the characters' determination to survive despite the perilous circumstances. In the novel, the characters are faced with the challenge of surviving in a world where they must keep their eyes closed to avoid seeing mysterious creatures that drive people to suicide. This situation requires individuals to be resilient and adapt to a new way of living.

‘It wasn’t a matter of choice,’ Rick continues. ‘We blinded ourselves with whatever we had – forks, kitchen knives, our fingers. Blindness, Malorie, was the absolute protection. But that was the old way. We don’t do that anymore. After a year, we realized we’d fortified this place enough to lighten this awful burden on our shoulders. So far, we’ve had no security lapses.’ (Malerman 275).

One way resilience is portrayed in *Bird Box* is through the characters' ability to cope with uncertainty and fear. Despite the constant danger they face, they find the strength to continue living and protecting themselves and their loved ones. This resilience is vital for their survival and is a central theme in the novel. Another aspect of resilience in *Bird Box* is the characters' ability to form connections and support each other in times of crisis. They rely on one another for emotional and physical support, thus forming a sense of community and shared responsibility. This support system helps individuals find the strength to confront their fears and move forward, even in challenging circumstances. Moreover, resilience is depicted through the characters' ability to adapt and learn from their experiences. They constantly adapt their strategies for survival, learning from past mistakes and finding new ways to navigate the dangerous world around them. This ability to learn and evolve is a key factor in their resilience and capacity to endure in such challenging conditions.

The protagonist, Malorie, exemplifies resilience as she navigates the world blindfolded, relying on her senses and instincts to protect herself and her children. The characters in *Bird Box* demonstrate various responses to the threats, reflecting different levels of resilience. Some individuals succumb to fear and panic, while others display extraordinary strength and adaptability. By analyzing the characters' reactions through the lens of resilience theory, one can gain a deeper understanding of their motivations and the impact of the traumatic events on their mental and emotional well-being. The main characters, led by Malorie, demonstrate high levels of resilience while others struggle to cope. The novel explores the portrayal of resilience by examining how the characters respond to extreme situations. Resilience theory enhances our understanding of their behavior. The theory suggests that individuals can adapt to and recover from catastrophes. Malorie, the protagonist, develops resilience as she navigates a world inhabited by menacing creatures with her children. Her determination, resourcefulness, and

ability to adapt despite danger sharply contrast with the experiences of secondary characters, such as Tom and Olympia, and their varying degrees of resilience.

Overall, resilience theory helps us understand the responses of the characters in *Bird Box* by highlighting their ability to cope with uncertainty, form connections, and adapt to their circumstances. By analyzing how resilience is portrayed in the novel, we can gain deeper insights into the characters' actions and motivations, as well as understand the larger themes of survival and human resilience.

4.6.2 Tracing Trauma Through the Lenses of Resilience Theory

Resilience theory provides a valuable interpretive framework for analyzing the themes of trauma and survival in both *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. Both novels explore the psychological and emotional impact of experiencing trauma, as well as how individuals adapt and overcome adversity to rebuild their lives. Resilience theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals and communities can effectively respond to and overcome adversity. In both novels, resilience is depicted as a crucial factor in the characters' ability to cope with trauma and rebuild their lives. The concept of resilience in these novels goes beyond mere survival; it involves the characters' ability to function and thrive despite their traumatic experiences. Resilience is not portrayed as an innate trait possessed only by certain individuals but rather as a quality that can be nurtured and developed.

Resilience theory can offer valuable insights into understanding the responses of the characters in *Blindness*. Resilience theory is a psychological concept that explains how individuals adapt and bounce back from adversity. Saramago portrays a society struggling with a sudden pandemic of blindness. The characters in the novel face the challenge of navigating a world without sight, which results in chaos, fear, and violence. Among despair and

hopelessness, there are individuals who display resilience. These individuals have the ability to bounce back and overcome their traumatic experiences, finding ways to adapt and survive in the chaos. This can be seen through the doctor's resilience, as Saramago states:

Even in the anguish of a situation like this, with a night of anxiety ahead of him, he was still capable of remembering what Homer wrote in the *Iliad*, the greatest poem about death and suffering ever written, A doctor is worth several men, words we should not accept as a straightforward expression of quantity, but above all, of quality, as we shall soon see. He summoned the courage to go to bed without disturbing his wife, not even when, muttering and half asleep, she stirred in the bed and snuggled up to him. He lay awake for hours on end, the little sleep he managed to snatch was from pure exhaustion (27-28).

We can trace resilience throughout the novels in the characters' responses, their ability to cope with the crisis, how they maintain a sense of hope, and how they find inner strength. They either experience setbacks and ultimately bounce back or struggle to maintain resilience under the circumstances. The characters demonstrate resilience, enabling them to maintain their composure, make rational decisions, and support one another in the midst of a crisis.

Saramago highlights in various scenes how the characters exhibit resilience by overcoming obstacles, finding creative solutions, or demonstrating emotional strength. Additionally, he focuses on the characters of the doctor's wife to demonstrate how individuals' resilience evolves throughout the story. The doctor's wife emerges as a resilient figure who maintains her compassion and empathy despite the chaotic environment. She takes care of others, shares her food, and tries to maintain a sense of order within the asylum. Her actions highlight her ability to adapt and find strength in helping others, even in dire circumstances. This resilience is particularly evident in her character, who emerges as a source of strength and

stability for those around her. Her ability to remain calm, resourceful, and compassionate in the face of unimaginable chaos showcases her resilience and highlights the power of human adaptability.

In *Bird Box*, Malerman presents a world where the sight of a mysterious entity drives people to madness, ultimately leading to their death. Similar to Saramago's novel, the characters face a traumatic event that threatens their survival. However, unlike *Blindness*, the characters in *Bird Box* are forced to live in a constant state of blindfolded darkness as a means of protection.

This constant state of blindness adds an additional layer of complexity to their journey of resilience. They must rely on their other senses and develop new strategies to navigate the world and stay alive. Malerman chooses to focus on developing the sense of hearing as the primary strategy for resilience and survival.

How far can a person hear? Rowing blindfolded is even harder than Malorie had imagined. Many times already, the rowboat has run into the banks and got stuck for a period of several minutes. In that time she was besieged by visions of unseen hands reaching for the blindfolds that cover the children's eyes. Fingers coming up and out of the water, from the mud where the river meets the earth. The children did not scream, they did not whine. They are too patient for that. But how *far* can a person hear? The Boy helped get the boat loose, standing and pushing against a mossy trunk, and now Malorie paddles again. Despite these early setbacks, Malorie can feel they are making progress. It is invigorating. Birds sing in the trees now that the sun has come up. Animals roam amidst the thick foliage of the woods that surround them. Fish jump out of the water,

making small splashes that electrify Malorie's nerves. All of this is heard. None of it is seen (23-24).

Through the lens of resilience theory, we analyze how the characters in *Bird Box* showcase their ability to adapt and thrive in this challenging environment. In the context of these novels, resilience theory can be applied to understand how the characters cope with the challenges and adversities posed by their blindness. Resilience theory suggests that individuals have the capacity to adapt and bounce back from difficult situations. The protagonist, Malorie, displays resilience throughout her journey. She demonstrates resourcefulness by blindfolding herself and her children to protect them from the dangerous force. Despite facing constant fear and uncertainty, she remains determined to survive and protect her loved ones. Her ability to adapt to her new reality and make difficult decisions showcases her resilience. The novel focuses on the psychological, social, and emotional aspects of resilience, highlighting the strategies and resources individuals employ to cope with adversity.

Applying resilience theory to analyze the sensory deprivations depicted through blindness in these novels, we explore various aspects, including the individual resilience demonstrated by the protagonists of both novels. Both novels demonstrate resilience in dealing with face blindness by employing strategies to adapt to and overcome the challenges imposed by their condition. Their resilience is explored through their emotional responses, problem-solving skills, and ability to find meaning and purpose despite their blindness. In *Bird Box*, Malerman portrays the characters' daily struggle to discover new ways to adapt and survive in their altered world: "*Thoughts like these remind her of Tom. Sweet Tom, who spent every hour of every day trying to figure out how to survive in this awful new world.*" (47).

In addition, the characters' resilience can be demonstrated through their social support. Social relationships play a vital role in fostering resilience. The characters in these novels rely

on their interpersonal connections to navigate the challenges of blindness. Both writers demonstrate the significance of the support they receive from family, friends, or community groups and how these relationships impact their resilience. Saramago describes the blind people walking outside in groups, emphasizing the idea that living in a community and survival can be achieved through collaboration and engagement within a community. Malerman also emphasizes this idea through Malorie's decision to join a community, clarifying that she cannot ensure her safety with her children alone: "*Now, here, hugging the children, it feels to Malorie like the house and the river are just two mythical locations, lost somewhere in all that infinity. But here, she knows, they are not quite as lost. Or alone*" (Malerman 378).

Furthermore, coping mechanisms are another important aspect that can be observed through resilience theory. In both novels, the characters demonstrate how human beings are born with survival instincts that enable them to cope with any adversity, as evidenced by the coping mechanisms they employ to deal with their blindness. The characters in the story rely on imagination, memory, or other senses to compensate for their visual impairment. In addition, they adapt their daily routines and develop new skills to maintain their independence and functionality.

Moreover, resilience outcomes are an important aspect that can be highlighted through the lens of resilience theory. Through this, we can evaluate the overall resilience outcomes for the characters in the novels. Examine the characters' resilience levels and how they influence their personal development, relationships, and capacity to overcome the obstacles of blindness. Furthermore, this framework enables us to contemplate the possible long-term impacts of their resilience on their well-being and quality of life. By using resilience theory as an interpretive framework, we can deepen our understanding of the portrayal of blindness in these novels and gain insights into the characters' experiences and resilience.

This framework posits that individuals can adapt and recover from adversity, which can be applied to the characters in both novels facing the challenge of dealing with blindness. In Saramago's *Blindness*, the characters demonstrate resilience as they navigate through the chaos and uncertainty caused by sudden blindness. They must adapt to their new reality by finding ways to communicate, survive, and maintain their humanity. This resilience is evident in the protagonist's determination to protect her loved ones and preserve their dignity in the midst of a society that descends into chaos. Similarly, in Malerman's *Bird Box*, the characters must confront a world where opening their eyes to the outside world can lead to madness and death. The threat of blindness and the necessity to depend on other senses to navigate their environment create a sense of vulnerability in the characters. However, their resilience emerges as they find ways to survive and protect each other, emphasizing the human capacity to adapt and endure in the midst of their crisis.

By applying resilience theory as an interpretive framework, one can dig deeper into the characters' mental, emotional, and physical responses to their blindness. This analysis can help understand how they overcome obstacles, find inner strength, and maintain a sense of hope. Resilience theory also enables an exploration of the enduring impact of these experiences on the characters' personal growth and development.

This lens offers a comprehensive understanding of the human experience portrayed in these novels, providing a unique perspective on the themes of resilience, survival, and the enduring human spirit. Both novels also emphasize the importance of social support as a protective factor for resilience. In *Blindness*, characters who form connections and rely on each other for support are more likely to withstand the challenges they face. In *Bird Box*, Malorie finds strength in forming bonds with other survivors who share a common goal of survival. Overall, applying resilience theory to these novels highlights how certain characters are able to

adapt, maintain their humanity, and find strength in challenging circumstances. It underscores the importance of personal strengths, social support, and coping mechanisms in promoting resilience in the face of trauma.

4.6.3 The Impact of Resilience Theory on *Blindness* and *Bird Box*

Resilience theory helps us understand the psychological and emotional factors that influence the characters' responses in the pandemic narratives *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. Through this framework, we can explore the characters' attitudes, beliefs, and support systems that impact their resilience. Furthermore, readers explore a variety of lessons in facing pandemics by analyzing how the characters' past experiences, personal traits, and social interactions shape their ability to adapt to and cope with the challenges they face. Moreover, one can gain a deeper understanding of their development, struggles, and triumphs throughout the novels. This analysis will enable us to understand the significant role resilience plays in their individual journeys and how it contributes to the overarching themes of the story.

Applying this theory to the characters in the novels allows the reader to explore their psychological and emotional responses to the onset of blindness and how they navigate through difficult conditions. The characters demonstrate resilience by adapting to new circumstances. Their ability to adjust to the loss of sight, both individually and as a group, they demonstrate resilience by finding alternative ways of perceiving and interacting with the world around them. This could involve developing new communication methods, relying on other senses, or finding creative solutions to daily challenges. Additionally, both authors depict the characters' emotional resilience throughout the narratives. However, resilience theory explores how individuals cope with the fear, uncertainty, and loss associated with blindness. It highlights their ability to manage their emotions, regulate stress, and maintain a sense of hope and purpose

despite their circumstances. The principal characters demonstrate strength, determination, and a refusal to be defeated by their sensory deprivation.

4.7 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* as Contemporary Traumatic Narratives

In recent years, the exploration of trauma in literature has become increasingly prevalent. One popular theme that has emerged is the idea of confronting the unknown and its psychological effects on individuals. Two notable examples of contemporary traumatic narratives that explore this theme are the novels *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. Both works offer a compelling exploration of trauma through the perspective of sensory deprivation, focusing on blindness in Saramago's *Blindness* and the inability to see in Malerman's *Bird Box*.

By examining the ways in which these narratives depict trauma and its consequences, we can gain a deeper understanding of the psychological impact of facing the unknown. Trauma often arises from unexpected or uncontrollable events that disrupt an individual's sense of safety and security. The unknown, in this context, represents a threat to one's ability to navigate the world and understand their surroundings. Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* explore this concept by presenting characters who are forced to confront a world devoid of visual information. This sensory deprivation magnifies their vulnerability and heightens their sense of unfamiliarity, leading to a profound traumatic impact.

Blindness and *Bird Box* offer compelling narratives that explore the traumatic impact of facing the unknown. Through their portrayal of sensory deprivation and the resulting trauma, these works compel us to confront our own fears and anxieties about the unfamiliar. By delving into the depths of the human psyche, researchers provide a nuanced understanding of the psychological effects of trauma and the resilience of the human spirit amidst adversity. These

contemporary traumatic narratives serve as powerful reminders of the importance of empathy and compassion in a world that is often uncertain and unknown.

Blindness by Saramago and *Bird Box* by Malerman are both considered contemporary traumatic narratives that explore the themes of blindness and survival in a dystopian world. In *Blindness*, Saramago explores the theme of blindness as a literal and metaphorical condition, depicting a world where a pandemic of blindness spreads, resulting in chaos and moral degradation. The narrative exposes the vulnerability of human nature when faced with adversity. *Bird Box*, on the other hand, tells the story of a society plagued by mysterious creatures that drive people to madness if they are seen. Malerman captivates readers by focusing on the psychological aspects of fear and isolation as the characters navigate a post-apocalyptic world while blindfolded. However, there are notable points that identify both novels as contemporary traumatic narratives.

Overall, the central theme in both novels is the sudden pandemic that relates to trauma. *Blindness* explores the concept of collective blindness and its representation of societal breakdown. *Bird Box* focuses on the psychological trauma caused by the mysterious creatures and the characters' struggle for survival. In addition, in the narrative structure, both authors use narrative techniques to depict the traumatic experiences. In *Blindness*, for instance, Saramago uses a unique narrative style with long, meandering sentences and minimal punctuation to create a sense of confusion. The flickering of tense and subject allows readers to glide between first and third person, creating a sense of chaos and disorientation that mirrors the experiences of the characters who are suddenly struck blind. The plot immerses the reader in a blend of stream of consciousness and wry objectivity. The density of the long, multi-voiced paragraphs may appear slightly intimidating at first encounter.

In *Bird Box*, Malerman focuses on the psychological horror of surviving in a world where seeing the outside world means certain death. Malerman effectively builds tension through vivid sensory details and a fast-paced, gripping plot. His choice of a nonlinear narrative, along with the protagonist's interior monologue and stream of consciousness, heightens suspense and mirrors the characters' fragmented experiences. The techniques employed by both authors are contemporary literary techniques.

Furthermore, the development of characters in both novels and how they respond to trauma are particularly important. The characters in both narratives cope with, adapt to, or succumb to the traumas they face differently. Both authors illustrate the protagonists' journey and their psychological transformation throughout the narrative. Moreover, symbolism plays a significant role in representing trauma in both novels. The symbolic significance of blindness in Saramago's work and its reflection on the characters' loss of humanity. In *Bird Box*, the symbolism of the blindfold and its connection to protection and vulnerability despite trauma are discussed.

In fact, social commentary is present in both works regarding contemporary issues, including Saramago's commentary on societal collapse and human nature in *Blindness*. *Bird Box* explores fear, isolation, and the breakdown of social order in the face of an unknown threat. Actually, these social commentaries provided by both authors are very relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, both *Blindness* by Saramago and *Bird Box* by Malerman offer valuable insights into contemporary traumatic narratives. By studying and incorporating elements from these works, we can enhance our writing and create an engaging and impactful narrative.

4.8 *Blindness* and *Bird Box* from Traumatic to Healing Narratives

Both books depict characters who are struggling to adapt to an environment where they can no longer depend on their physical senses. In *Blindness*, the characters navigate a world in which everyone is suddenly struck blind, while in *Bird Box*, the characters must maneuver an environment where sight could mean certain death. In both novels, the characters must find a way to survive without sight, relying instead on their other senses and instincts. Both stories examine the strength and resilience of the human spirit despite adversity. Through the characters' experiences, both stories explore how humans adapt and cope with extreme and unfamiliar circumstances. They also illustrate how resourceful and creative people can be when their vision is compromised and how they can use their other senses to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Both novels serve as healing narratives during trauma by providing a sense of hope and understanding. They demonstrate that even in the darkest of times, there is still the possibility of finding a way forward. Through the characters' struggles and triumphs, the novels offer a glimpse of a better future. They provide a space for readers to grapple with difficult emotions and experiences and to recognize that there is still a way forward. Additionally, the novels provide a sense of community, demonstrating how it is possible to overcome adversity when people come together. By helping readers understand that they are not alone in their struggles and that it is possible to find hope and resilience even in the darkest of times, these novels provide a powerful tool for healing and growth. This is why these novels can be so powerful. They offer readers the opportunity to explore challenging topics in an accessible and nonjudgmental manner, while also providing comfort by showing that strength can be found in the collective experiences of the characters and stories. Through this, readers can gain insight into their own emotions and experiences and begin to find a path forward.

By observing how these characters navigate their pain and trauma, readers can glean strategies for their own emotional healing. Through this process, individuals can recognize their own emotions and experiences and comprehend what it takes to overcome them. This can provide readers with valuable insight into resilience and emotional growth. It can also inspire readers to look inward and recognize what they need to do to take care of their emotional well-being. By reading stories of characters who can confront and work through their pain, readers can gain a better understanding of their own emotions. Readers can recognize the strategies that the characters use to heal and apply them to their own experiences. This can help readers build emotional resilience and start to recognize the importance of taking care of their mental health. Through reading traumatic narratives, readers can gain insight into how other people cope with difficult emotions. This can give individuals an idea of how to approach their own struggles and help them develop a healthier relationship with their emotions.

Blindness and *Bird Box* can help people heal from the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic by offering insight into how different characters have dealt with pandemics in the past. Through reading these stories, readers can understand how to confront and work through their own pain. Additionally, they can recognize the importance of connecting with others and of one's mental health. This can provide readers with strategies for resilience and emotional healing, ultimately helping them find hope and strength in the collective experience of the characters and stories.

Conclusion

The chapter concludes that both novels, *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman, are traumatic narratives. It discusses how understanding the effects of trauma and resilience can help readers better comprehend the themes of the two works. Applying trauma theory broadens our understanding of the plot as well as the characters' reactions to the pandemic. This theory enlightens our understanding of human behavior when facing

catastrophes. It facilitates our understanding of the characters' brutality within the plot; moreover, it deepens our perceptions of today's world. The application of trauma theory to these traumatic narratives highlights the importance of trauma literature in the contemporary theoretical arena.

Moreover, the narratives provide a unique insight into the realities of trauma and its effects on individuals and society. These novels, with their messages of hope, resilience, and strength in the face of adversity, will help readers better cope with their own struggles. This chapter provides an interpretation of both novels using resilience theory. The analysis focuses on how the characters utilize their resilience to confront the traumas they face and how having a supportive community aids them through their struggles. At the introduction This chapter concludes that both novels offer poignant insights into the human condition and the resilience of individuals in the face of trauma.

Furthermore, both explore and consider the role of social resilience throughout their journey. The characters form connections, support each other, and collectively build resilience. This serves as an effective lesson for humanity as it emphasizes the importance of community, empathy, and solidarity in overcoming adversity. In both novels, the characters offer emotional support, share resources, or collaborate to navigate the challenges of blindness. The theory emphasizes the importance of resilience and hope in the face of adversity. Furthermore, it provides a deeper understanding of the themes covered in both novels, such as strength, courage, and determination. Resilience theory can offer a deeper insight into the psychological and emotional journeys of the characters. By examining their ability to adapt, cope, and support one another, we can gain insight into their resilience.

General Conclusion

Pandemic literature holds up a mirror to the readers' deepest and most pressing concerns about the present moment and examines diverse possible responses to the fear of such natural disasters. This thesis demonstrates the portrayal of pandemic literature in two selected contemporary narratives: *Blindness* by José Saramago and *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. This research work attempted to position the texts as a response to and repository of contemporary fears about global pandemics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked renewed interest in narratives that explore the themes of isolation, fear, and survival. As we have examined the narratives of *Blindness* and *Bird Box*, it is evident that both novels effectively capture the human experience, providing profound perspectives and valuable insights into human behavior in times of crisis and dealing with fear and isolation. Through an analysis of these two narratives, the thesis have gained insight into the ways in which literature reflects and shapes our understanding of pandemics. Both works skillfully portray the themes of trauma and resilience. As humanity continued to navigate the complexities of the COVID-19 global pandemic, these narratives served as poignant reminders of the strength of the human spirit and the enduring power of hope.

The present research argues that while pandemic literature as a genre might initially seem relevant only to its particular moment of production and consumption, as it addresses specific kinds of medical fears, a deeper look reveals that it has boundary-crossing capabilities as it reflects multifaceted, wider-reaching human concerns. Therefore, we can view pandemic literature as a repository of archetypal, primordial concerns about human survival and extinction, along with time-specific and culture-bound fears. The work claims that in addition to their delineation of tangible medical threats, these texts allow their authors and readers to think about unsettling questions about the human condition, what it means to be human even

during the anticipation of extinction, and which human traits are deemed worthy of protection, continuity, and sacrifice.

The prescient role of pandemic literature becomes evident as it serves as both a mirror and a lamp for civilization's darkest hours and most radiant aspirations. Its pivotal importance lies in offering insight during seismic global events that deftly dissolve the distinctions between life and text. In this research, different approaches were followed to explore how pandemic literature has reflected people's perceptions of such global disasters. The research offered a comprehensive overview of the theoretical framework that guided the rest of the study. By exploring key concepts such as comparative literature, reception theory, trauma theory, and resilience theory, this thesis established a strong foundation for subsequent analysis. We also examine the interdisciplinary relationship between psychology and literature, highlighting the psychological lenses through which we receive literature. Overall, this research set the stage for a robust and insightful investigation of the research problem.

Notably, the analysis provided a comprehensive exploration of the portrayal and prediction of pandemics in the novels *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. It delved into the genres of the works as well as their representation of various aspects such as quarantine, struggle, trauma, mental health problems, and resilience. In addition, the study examined the illustrations of pandemics, both in terms of depiction and prediction, and explored the metaphors and prophecies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it considered the different perspectives of reading novels, ranging from aesthetic and efferent readings to their function as entertainment and survival fictions.

This thesis attempted to explore psychological and cultural trauma in selected works by José Saramago and Josh Malerman. Exploring how psychological traumas are disrupted through internal or external destructive forces, these novels share a similar traumatic experience

of sensory deprivation through a sudden pandemic. Literary trauma seems to suggest connections and similar mechanisms affecting individual and broader cultural pathologies. The selected narratives provide a psychological and experiential investigative framework, making these connections easier to see.

In literary studies, trauma provides scenarios that confront readers with subjective endurance despite crisis and conflict. In fact, literary trauma presents how defensive responses are created by many types of wounding. In what has become a canonical text for trauma literary theory, In this expository mission, the work delicately unraveled the intricate tapestry woven by trauma and the renaissance spirit of resilience as evinced in the seminal works *Blindness* and *Bird Box*. This thesis delved into a literary sanctum where the dissonance of human suffering meets the harmonious potential for inner recovery. The thesis investigates deeply into trauma theory, using it as a hermeneutic compass to navigate the existential complexities depicted in these narratives. The analysis probed the chasms of the psyche afflicted by trauma, contrasting the manifest horror of sightlessness with the visceral dread of the invisible unknown. The interpretative lens was sharpened to highlight how *Blindness* and *Bird Box* became mediums that refracted the unspeakable into a language that resonates with shared humanity.

Delving into characters' psychological odysseys and interpreting their sufferings and cognitive morasses as they endure and grapple with nightmarish realities. This exploration of wounded minds sheds light on how post-traumatic stress disorder permeates fictional lives, illustrating a poignant parallel with our collective vulnerabilities. Personal vignettes capture the quintessential element of human endurance, trauma recovery, in exquisite detail. Resurgent journeys, such as those belonging to the Doctor's Wife and Malorie, are exalted not merely as plot devices but are elevated to archetypal narratives that sing an ode to healing.

As we assemble insights from trauma theory, we unearth its role as a transformative force—a crucible within which change is not just expected but viscerally effected. We further evolved this analysis to examine how these narratives not only depict but also revere resilience, making profound assertions about the indomitable human spirit. The research also explored how these contemporary works serve as narratives of stark remembrance, keeping alive the embers of collective consciousness over individual and social traumas.

Through this analysis, the thesis concluded that trauma can contribute to personal transformation in several ways. First, experiencing trauma can often lead to heightened self-awareness and introspection. A traumatic event forces individuals to confront their deepest fears, vulnerabilities, and emotions. This confrontation can lead to a process of self-reflection and self-discovery as individuals grapple with the impact of trauma on their lives. Second, trauma can also serve as a catalyst for personal growth and resilience. Through the process of healing and recovery, individuals may develop newfound strength and resilience that they may not have otherwise discovered. Trauma can force individuals to confront their limitations, face their fears, and develop coping mechanisms to navigate through adversity. This process of overcoming trauma can lead to personal transformation and inner strength development.

A comparative method was followed to find differences and similarities in trauma by studying the works of José Saramago's *Blindness* and Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*. It is evident that both novels explore the theme of trauma. Each author approached this theme uniquely, shedding light on diverse experiences and reactions to traumatic events. Despite the differences in their narrative approaches, both authors bring to light valuable insights into the impact of trauma on the human psyche and the resilience of individuals in facing unimaginable challenges. Simultaneously examining these two works allows for a deeper understanding of

the complexities and universal themes of trauma. However, the depiction of trauma reveals both similarities and differences.

Both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* are compelling narratives that explore into the concept of trauma stemming from vision loss, as well as the survival instincts that emerge in these circumstances. While they share certain similarities in the portrayal of trauma, they also differ in their approaches and themes. In terms of similarities, both narratives explore the psychological impact of living in a world of darkness.

The novels depict the struggles and fear experienced by characters who are unable to see. This loss of visual perception amplifies feelings of vulnerability, fear, and disorientation. Both narratives highlight the loss of control and the need for adaptation in extreme circumstances. Additionally, both stories showcase the bonding and resilience that can emerge among individuals facing similar traumatic experiences. Trauma in both books takes a toll on mental health, and the sudden and catastrophic nature of the events leads to increased stress, anxiety, and paranoia. The characters struggle to maintain their sanity and must constantly confront their fears. Themes of trust, psychosocial adaptation, and resilience in the face of trauma emerged in both narratives. Trauma manifested as mental and emotional stress in both novels. The characters in *Blindness* struggle to adapt to their new reality and cope with anxiety, fear, and desperation. Similarly, the characters in *Bird Box* faced constant psychological strain due to their inability to see and the constant threat of danger. The characters' sense of isolation is another commonality between the two stories. In *Blindness*, an abandoned mental asylum quarantines blind individuals, cutting them off from the outside world. In *Bird Box*, the characters must remain indoors or wear blindfolds to protect themselves from external threats. Thus, due to the pandemic in both stories, individuals are driven by a strong survival instinct. They must adapt to their newly impaired state and navigate a perilous world filled with

unknown dangers. The necessity to rely on other senses and develop alternative strategies to survive creates a shared sense of urgency and resourcefulness among the characters.

However, there are also key differences between the two narratives. *Blindness* emphasized the external threat of a rapidly spreading pandemic of blindness. The primary focus is on the physical survival of the characters and their struggle for basic needs such as food and shelter. In *Bird Box*, the true threat lies in the characters' inability to see the creatures, which causes them to go insane and commit suicide. Internal conflict and psychological horror are prominent features in *Bird Box*. In *Blindness*, the loss of sight is caused by an unknown pandemic that discriminates against the entire population. On the other hand, in *Bird Box*, the characters must blindfold themselves to avoid seeing supernatural creatures that cause people to become suicidal. *Blindness* digs deeper into trauma's societal impact. As the pandemic spreads, social order crumbles, and individuals resort to primal instincts, leading to violence and chaos. The story explored the dark side of human nature and the breakdown of social norms. *Bird Box*, on the other hand, focused more on individual survival and the formation of smaller communities. The portrayal of the impact on society is relatively limited. While both novels explored the concept of trauma, its nature differed.

In *Blindness*, trauma arises from the loss of sight and the subsequent breakdown of society. In *Bird Box*, trauma stems from fear and survival instincts triggered by the need to avoid seeing mysterious creatures. *Blindness* followed a linear narrative structure, with a focus on character development and the progression of the pandemic. In contrast, *Bird Box* used a non-linear narrative, shifting between past and present events. This narrative style added complexity to the story, enhancing the suspense and mystery surrounding the trauma. The story of *Blindness* unfolds in an apocalyptic world where blindness triggers chaos and societal collapse. The atmosphere is somber, gritty, and focused on the harsh realities faced by the characters. In

contrast, *Bird Box* has a post-apocalyptic setting with a constant sense of tension and suspense due to the unseen threat.

Notably, both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* offered unique viewpoints on trauma, sharing commonalities such as sensory loss, isolation, the impact on mental health, the emotional stress resulting from trauma, and survival instincts. However, they differed in the nature of the threat, cause of blindness, nature of trauma, societal implications, narrative approach, and overall setting and atmosphere depicted in the narrative, creating unique portrayals of the traumatic experience.

Blindness is focused on a mass pandemic of blindness that spreads rapidly, causing societal breakdown and anarchy. The trauma experienced by the characters is not limited to the loss of vision but also encompasses the chaos and violence that ensue. In contrast, *Bird Box* revolves around a supernatural entity that incites madness and forces individuals to commit suicide upon its sight. Here, the inability to look at the external world drives trauma as characters navigate through dangerous environments blindfolded. Another notable distinction is the thematic exploration of hope and human connection.

Overall, *Blindness* and *Bird Box* provided insightful perspectives on the psychological effects and survival instincts associated with vision loss trauma. While they shared similarities in their exploration of fear, adaptation, and resilience, they diverged in their narrative focus and thematic underpinnings. These stories served as powerful reminders of the human spirit and the capacity to overcome adversity, even in the darkest of times.

Meanwhile, resilience can be seen as a common theme in Saramago's *Blindness* and Malerman's *Bird Box*. In both narratives, the characters found themselves in an environment in which one of their senses was compromised. The characters face extreme circumstances that

test their ability to cope and survive. In both cases, the characters must adapt and find ways to navigate their surroundings without relying on their impaired senses. In both novels, the characters realized that their chances of survival increased when they gathered in groups. They formed communities and relied on each other for support and protection. This highlighted the importance of unity and strength in numbers when facing a threatening world. In both narratives, the characters faced numerous challenges and obstacles that tested their resilience. They must overcome physical and psychological difficulties by relying on their survival instincts.

While both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* depict resilience in the face of adversity, there are some differences in how they are portrayed. *Blindness* emphasized humanity's resilience despite darkness and despair, highlighting the potential for rebirth and rebuilding. *Bird Box*, on the other hand, focused more on the themes of motherhood and sacrifice, as the protagonist strived to protect her children amid chaos. The different natures of the threats added a unique flavor to each story, along with the perception of threat. The characters in *Blindness* were aware of their blindness, which impacted their ability to navigate and communicate. On the other hand, in *Bird Box*, the characters must blind themselves, rely on their other senses, and avoid seeing the entities to survive.

Overall, while both *Blindness* and *Bird Box* explored resilience in the face of challenging circumstances, they differed in the nature of the threat and its perception. Both narratives showcased the indomitable human spirit and our ability to adapt and survive in adverse situations. The two dystopian novels explored the themes of survival and resilience in the face of a mysterious threat. Both stories revolved around characters dealing with a world-changing event.

In addition, the dialogue between the two novels has revealed the significance of pandemic literature. In fact, the need for pandemic literature has become evident, underscoring the importance of capturing and reflecting on the experiences, emotions, and societal implications resulting from this unprecedented event. Writers who investigate into the realm of pandemic literature have the power to shed light on the complexities and nuances of this unique period in human history.

Overall, the exigency of contemporary pandemic literature can be traced for multiple reasons. First, authenticity: readers seek literature that accurately portrays the impact of the pandemic on individuals, communities, and societies as a whole. Capturing the raw emotions, challenges, and even the positive aspects experienced during these challenging times is crucial. Second, the exploration of themes: pandemic literature explores several themes related to the pandemic, such as isolation, resilience, mortality, social inequality, economic disruption, and the role of science and technology. Incorporate these themes into your writing to create a comprehensive depiction of the human experience during a pandemic. Third, literature should aim to represent diverse voices and experiences impacted by the pandemic.

By incorporating various perspectives, writers can cultivate empathy and understanding among readers, thus fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by different communities. Moreover, writers use symbolism and metaphor to convey deeper meanings and evoke emotional responses. These literary devices can help readers connect with the pandemic themes and experiences on a deeper level. Finally, in the reflection and critique section, readers engage in thoughtful reflection and critique of various aspects of the pandemic, including government responses, medical advancements, societal structures, and individual behavior. This analysis can provide valuable insights into the lessons learned and areas for improvement in readiness for future crises.

The exigency of pandemic literature calls for writers to embrace the unique opportunity to document, analyze, and reflect on the extraordinary events of our time. By incorporating authenticity, exploring diverse perspectives, and employing symbolism and metaphor, writers can contribute to a rich body of literature that not only records history but also provides solace, understanding, and inspiration to readers.

This study investigated psychological, personal, and collective trauma in selected contemporary pandemic narratives. In fact, trauma in literary studies exposes scenarios that provide the reading community with subjective perseverance in the face of adversity. Notably, literary trauma shows how defensive reactions emerge from different types of injuries. Trauma narratives have emerged over the past three decades as personal responses to devastating events such as war, colonization, pandemics, natural disasters, sickness, poverty, and sexual and physical assault.

Thus, this research claimed that in the case of trauma literature, exigency arises from the increasing recognition of the psychological and emotional impact trauma has on individuals and society as a whole. It is important to examine the significance and urgency of the trauma literature in this field.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of trauma literature in understanding and addressing the psychological effects of traumatic experiences. Both personal experiences and societal factors contribute to this heightened interest. Trauma literature refers to the body of scholarly works that investigate the various aspects of trauma, including its causes, manifestations, and therapeutic interventions. These studies are crucial in shedding light on the complex nature of trauma and guiding individuals and communities toward healing and recovery. Moreover, in the age of traumatic experiences, trauma literature

has gained significance due to its ability to raise awareness about mental health issues, promote healing and resilience, and foster empathy and understanding among individuals.

Trauma literature plays an important role in raising awareness about trauma's prevalence and impact. It sheds light on various forms of trauma, such as physical abuse, sexual assault, war experiences, and natural disasters. By providing vivid depictions and narratives, trauma literature captures readers' attention, enabling them to comprehend the intensity and complexity of traumatic experiences. This heightened awareness contributes to reducing the stigma surrounding trauma and encourages individuals to seek help and support.

Another significant aspect of trauma literature is its potential to promote healing and resilience. Through storytelling, trauma survivors find solace in knowing that they are not alone in their experiences. By sharing their stories, survivors create a sense of community and provide inspiration to others who may be going through similar difficulties. Trauma literature can contribute to breaking down barriers and reducing the social isolation often associated with trauma. Additionally, trauma literature often explores the journey of healing and the various coping mechanisms that individuals employ. This exploration can guide readers in their own healing process, offering a sense of hope and strength.

The demand for trauma literature also stems from its potential to drive research and innovation in the fields of psychology and mental health. By examining narratives and analyzing literary texts, researchers can gain insights into the diverse manifestations and effects of trauma, leading to the development of more effective therapies, interventions, and prevention strategies. Moreover, trauma literature contributes to fostering empathy and understanding among individuals. By delving into the intricate emotions and psychological effects of trauma, readers can develop a deeper sense of empathy toward survivors. This increased comprehension leads to a reduced tendency to blame or judge survivors, as well as a greater inclination toward

offering support and guidance. Through exposure to diverse narratives, trauma literature broadens perspectives and generates a more inclusive and compassionate society. On top of that, with its societal reflection, trauma literature serves as a mirror for society, reflecting the impact of various traumas on different communities and generations. Through literary works, authors can explore the complex interplay among trauma, identity, culture, and sociopolitical contexts, contributing to a broader understanding of societal issues and fostering empathy and compassion.

The urgency of trauma literature stems from the need to comprehensively understand and effectively respond to the psychological impact of traumatic events. This need is particularly relevant in today's world, which is characterized by an increasing prevalence of traumatic experiences and their far-reaching consequences. Over the last two decades, there has been a significant emphasis on the role of cultural and ethnic factors in the experience of stressful and traumatic events. This recognition reflects the acknowledgment that trauma is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon but rather influenced by cultural and ethnic factors that shape individuals' experiences and responses to trauma. By studying trauma literature, we gain a deeper understanding of how cultural and ethnic factors can moderate trauma's consequences and influence the healing process.

Overall, the exigency for trauma literature emerges from its ability to raise awareness, promote healing, and foster empathy. By exploring the prevalence and impact of trauma, this genre of literature aids in destigmatizing mental health issues and encourages individuals to seek help. Moreover, it provides a platform for survivors to share their stories, thus fostering a sense of community and promoting healing and resilience. Ultimately, trauma literature has the power to shape societal attitudes and create a more empathetic and understanding world.

However, it would be interesting, for further research, to develop a comparative study between the adaptation of these contemporary pandemic narratives into influential movies and how they represent trauma and resilience. The adaptation of pandemic and traumatic narratives into movies presents a complex and evolving area for further research. Exploring the impact of these narratives on different cultural and social contexts and the ethical considerations involved in adapting real-life events into fictionalized works could provide valuable insights for filmmakers, scholars, and audiences. In addition, delving into the psychological effects of consuming such narratives through the medium of film and how they shape individual and collective memory would contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of cinema in processing and representing trauma.

Further research in this field can enrich our understanding of storytelling, resilience, and human experience in times of crisis. This comparative study would shed light on the ways in which cultural perspectives influence the representation of trauma on screen. It could also provide a deeper understanding of the impact of these representations on global audiences. Additionally, there is a need for research that investigate into the reception and interpretation of pandemic and trauma narratives in films. Understanding how audiences engage with and interpret these narratives can provide important insights into the social and psychological aspects of consuming such content. Furthermore, an investigation into the ethical considerations and responsibilities of filmmakers when adapting real-life traumatic events into fictionalized works would contribute to the ongoing discourse on the representation of trauma in cinema. This line of research would offer guidance for filmmakers and scholars grappling with the challenges of balancing artistic expression with ethical considerations. Overall, further research in this area has the potential to deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between cinema, trauma, and collective memory, as well as contribute to the development of ethical and culturally sensitive approaches to storytelling in times of crisis.

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