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## **Universality and Cultural Depiction of COVID-19 in Saudi Literary Works<sup>(\*)</sup>**

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## Universality and Cultural Depiction of COVID-19 in Saudi Literary Works

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### ABSTRACT

The World Health Organization declared the outbreak of coronavirus disease (covid-19) as a public health emergency that should be of international concern. The number of victims is increasing dramatically in daily basis. The quick outbreak of the pandemic results in many consequences. The study goes for analyzing and interpreting five selected poems by Jassim Assaheeh, Abdullatif Yousef, Dr Shitawi Alghaithi, and Yousef Abdulmohsen who are well-known Saudi poets. It explores the poetic reflection of and reaction towards covid-19 disease. It also traces the social, economic, psychological and emotional impacts of the frightening COVID-19 outbreak. The study finds out how Saudi poets represent the global effects, their universal messages of hope, and the social integrity and responsibility to stop the virus outbreak.

**Key words:** Corona Pandemic; universal impacts; crisis; isolation; universal messages.

## عالمية التصوير الثقافي لكوفيد-19 في العمل الأدبي السعودي

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### الملخص

يعد تقشي مرض فيروس كورونا (كوفيد -19) حالة طوارئ صحية عامة يجب أن تكون مصدر اهتمام دولي طبقا لإعلان منظمة الصحة العالمية حيث أن عدد الضحايا يتزايد بشكل كبير على أساس يومي. كما ان للتقشي السريع للوباء العديد من العواقب. فتقوم هذه الدراسة على تحليل وتفسير خمس قصائد مختارة لجاسم الصحيح، وعبد اللطيف يوسف، والدكتور شتيوي الغيثي، ويوسف عبد المحسن، وهم شعراء سعوديون معروفون. كما انها أيضا تستكشف الانعكاس الشعري لمرض كوفيد -19 ورد الفعل تجاه هذا المرض. وهي أيضا تتبع الآثار الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والنفسية والعاطفية لتقشي COVID-19 المخيف. وتخلص الدراسة الى كيفية تمثيل الشعراء السعوديون لتلك الآثار، ورسائلهم العالمية للأمل، والاستقامة والمسؤولية الاجتماعية لوقف تقشي الفيروس.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** جائحة كورونا، التأثيرات العالمية، الأزمة، العزلة، الرسائل العالمية

## Introduction and Review of literature

The world health organization (WHO), on Jan 30, 2020, declared the outbreak of coronavirus disease (covid-19) as a public health emergency that should be of international concern. It is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. (WHO, 2020). Humanity, with all the technological advancement and the extreme scientific power the developed countries have, is fighting an invisible enemy, which seems to put all medications and research studies in vain. Because of the unseen coronavirus, hundreds of millions of people are infected and millions are killed. It is one of the most serious catastrophe in the human history.

Therefore, curfew, canceling public gathering, school closure, remote working, home isolation, telephone or online health consultation, and provision of essential life support are essential procedures in the present time to stop and interrupt the transmission of the virus in addition to personal hand hygiene and wearing personal protective equipment such as facemask. These strategies and procedures should be enforced because there are no treatment options for this viral disease until now as well as no any pharmaceutical intervention is declared central for management of covid-19. (Heymann & Shindo, 2020; Sahin & Erdogan, 2020; Huang, Wang & Li, 2020). Hence, literary figures use social media for many reasons like offering advice, describing the dangers of the pandemic, spreading hope and guiding the public to more protection and care.

## Review of Literature

The poetic analysis of COVID-19 pandemic poetry is rare because they are still not widespread as well as the contemporary pandemic is still attacking the world. There are mere collections of poems revealing unique experiences of poets from all over the world. One of these collections is a book entitled "Covid-19 Pandemic Poems" V. III by Cape Comorin Publisher, India. It contains 50 poems exposing each and every effect of the world crisis. (Silvest, et al, 2020). Some poems, from this collection, by different national poets, are cited in the analysis section of this study to assert the universality of cultural depiction and messages of hope drawn by the selected Saudi poets.

Another collection is "Lockdown Poems". It is a part of Ledbury Poetry Festival. All poems, about 300 poems, reflect what is going on in the world at the present time and the huge challenges confronting the whole world. (Garner, 2020).

In a short commentary, Rafael Campo (2021), a medical practitioner, discusses three poems that reflects what is happening in the medical centers, communities, and the world as well. The poems are full of wisdom and



hope; they inspire in a time characterized by loss, suffering, and resilience caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. For the poem "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, Campo says, "*The end-rhymes repeatedly chant "master/disaster, master/disaster", creating a baseline of reassurance and the dialectic of a psyche finding its way through loss.*" He describes our respond to the loss as to think it a disaster. "*Write It*" in the last line explores the uncertainty of medical efforts which still in vain till the moment. The second poem states what health care workers feel of imposing strict isolation on the virus affected persons who suffers till die alone. "What the Last Evening Will Be Like" is the third poem. It is a reference of, "last evening", death and tiredness of keeping loved ones and friends distant. (Campo, 2021).

The Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama becomes sad because of the great effects of coronavirus on humans. The exhibition of the Japanese artists' works rescheduled because of the pandemic. Over the globe, there are millions of people lost their jobs and deeply affected as the pandemic touches the lives of everyone on earth by way or another. Kusama has written a poem entitled "*Disappear from this Earth*" to encourage people and spread hope. She calls the pandemic as "*terrible monster*". She offers a message of hope and unity in this dark time that distances our souls from each other. She portrays wandering, solitude, and loneliness as well as lack of harmony of human kind stating that "*we find ourselves on the dark side of the world*" but still hope will shine for a "*splendid future*". She also appreciates the great medical workers' efforts in fighting "*the terrible monster*" of coronavirus across the world (Keener, 2020).

There is a huge number of studies from all over the world trace the terrible social, economic, emotional, and psychological impacts of the global crisis. Few of them will be briefly discussed here to manifest the universality of Covid-19 effects presented by various scholars from different countries.

Pereznieta and other (2021), in his study "Social Costs of the COVID-19 Pandemic", declares that there are serious social impacts imposed by the crisis like poverty level and income loss, the demolish of the labour market and working conditions, and gender dimensions. Another study by Kiran (2020) explores in details three main social issues, which are more strengthened during the global crisis of Covid-19. They are "inequality", "revival of social values", and "changes in daily life spaces". While a study published by the department of Economics and Social Affairs in the United Nations (2020), entitled "Everyone Included: Social Impact of Coveid-19" sets it out clearly, as various communities are deeply affected. It says, "*The COVID-19 outbreak affects all segments of the population ..... including*

people living in poverty situations, older persons, persons with disabilities, youth, and indigenous peoples". (United Nations, (2020).

A study by Roy (2020) goes for analyzing the impact of the pandemic on five economic sectors. They are tourism, oil industry, aviation industry, financial sector, and healthcare sector. It clearly traces the sever economic and financial downturn faced by each sector. There is extreme pessimism resulted by lack of jobs and income sources as well as the negative news flow into the market. Also "Economic Impacts of Coronavirus Disease (CVID-19) in Developing Countries" is a study by Rodela and others (2020) indicates many economic implications in developing countries like unemployment, poverty, lack of economic chances, and the high cost of health care. The study asserts the global partnerships to face economic challenges over the entire globe.

Not only the common man is subjected to psychological stress as an effect of the sudden outbreak of covid-19, but also the health care workers. People who are in high risk of infection are the fighters in frontlines – health and medical workers. Hence, the WHO has released some guidance on mental health and psychological considerations including psychological first aid for frontline workers. Some of those guidelines released by WHO are:

*It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family,*

*Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required (WHO, 2020).*

Emotional and psychological impacts are also explored by many scholars. Jassim and others (2020) trace the psychological impact of Covid-19 isolation and quarantine. The study concludes that the individuals experienced isolation and quarantine reported depression and high psychological distress. A study of rapid review by Brooks and others (2020) shows the negative psychological effects of quarantine during coronavirus period including confusion, anger, and stress. While Pedrosa and others (2020) aim to analyze how human behavior undergoes changes during the pandemic period. The study concludes that preventive procedures like quarantine, isolation, and social distancing influence the behavior leading to psychological disorder.

Shawqi a university student and a researcher says that because of Covid-19, mosques, schools, universities, and all public places are closed ... and people are prevented from meeting each other. He adds that terror and death



spread throughout the universe as well as economy retreat, the markets raced and we stand in astonishment. It is the wisdom and greatness of God, for the ghost that haunts the world is nothing but a very small creature that cannot be seen with the naked eye.

Saudi literary figures play a primary role for guidance, spread a light stream of hope, and inform people about the pandemic through the widespread Saudi media. The chosen poems for this study represent the destructive effects of this pandemic in all humanitarian aspects and draw the horizons of a new world through a rebirth of the earth as portrayed by Jassim Assaheeh.

The study goes for interpreting and analyzing five poems of four Saudi poets who already have great social effect through their writings and social media. The first poem is entitled "*Corona and the Earth is Reborn Once Again*" by Jassim Assaheeh. The second poem, which is rich by myths, deep meanings, and universal depiction of the crisis, is entitled "*The Plagues*" by Abdullatif Yousef. Then two poems by the famous writer and poet Dr Shitawi Alghaithi and they are "*Eid Silence*" and "*An Isolation Night's Sigh*". The last one is a famous lyric entitled as "*2020 Turns Us Old*" by Yousef Abdulmohsen.

This study aims to explore and portray the Saudi poetic reflection of and reaction towards covid-19. It tracks the social, economic, psychological, and emotional effects of the disease from the literary figures point of view. The study also explores the frightening outbreak of covid-19, which will constitute a prolific and most critical theme for literary writers over the world.

## Methodology

This study is a qualitative and comparative study based on interpretation and analysis of the selected poems. The selected poems are written in Arabic by four Saudi poets and the researcher carries out the duty of interpretation and contacts the concerned poets for more clarification. The comparison is mainly for how the selected poets culturally depict the hazardous consequences of Covid-19 and their universal messages as well. There are also some excerpts taken from other poems by various poets from different backgrounds to show the universality of this pandemic influences.

## Analysis of the Selected Poems

Five poems will be interpreted and analyzed in details in this study. The first poem is entitled '*Corona and the Earth is Reborn Once Again*' by Jassim Assaheeh. The second poem is '*The Plagues*'; by Abdullatif Yousef. Then two poems by Dr Shitawi Alghaithi and they are '*Eid Silence*' and '*An Isolation Night's Sigh*'. The last one is a lyric entitled as '*2020 Turns Us Old*'



by Yousef Abdulmohsen. They are written in Arabic. Those poems construct a cultural depiction of Saudi reaction and universal themes and messages. The poems contain various figurative images and myths to enrich the depiction and show the suitable procedures to stop the severe outbreak of the virus as well as its effects and their consequences. They will be compared with each other as well as with other poems by prominent poets from different cultural backgrounds. The analysis will trace various pillars such as the description of the virus and its rapid outbreak, the social, economic, emotional and psychological impacts, prevention measures, and the universal message of hope.

### **Describing Covid-19 and its Rapid Outbreak**

Assaheeh in his poem 'Corona and the Earth is Reborn Once Again' gives many figurative images describing Coronavirus (Covid-19) like invader, hidden, ghost, newly born, tyrant, stubborn coward, and a universal killer.

*A murderous mystery; a hidden hand behind the horizon,*

He portrays the efforts of all medical teams, governments, and the common man as if they are in a battle field to resist and defeat this invader which annoyed peace and happiness of the whole world. This fight is surrounded by obscurity as the hand that kills people hides beyond the horizon. While Yousef in his poem 'The Plagues' uses many descriptions of the epidemic, drawing some old myths like 'Sisyphus', 'Alexander', and 'Prometheus' that enrich the poem's meaning and its cultural depiction to high extent. In referring to old legends, the poet wants to convey that the virus is unseen and mysterious and out of human's ability.

Assaheeh gives in a frightening metaphor:

*We are wrestling with a fierce ghost*

*While he is still at the age of Al-Waleed (newborn)*

It portrays coronavirus as a ghost that grows more dangerous while we, in vain, are fighting to stop it. It grows stronger in its initial stages as it is just born. The sudden and dreadful outbreak of the newly born enemy is a symbol of its strength and destructive nature.

*No matter how this absolute mighty and stubborn*

*Tyrannizes and overpower*

Coronavirus is described as a tyrant and stubborn coward. It still threatens the humans by its claws and fangs as well as he personifies death walking as humans "On the feet of a fugue fighter" but using the pandemic legs.

Assaheeh draws some images to describe the symptoms of the disease.

*It rains (fever) from a flash of lightning*

*It falls (cough) from thunderbolt*





The fever that seems to fall down from flashing lightening and the cough which seems to come from thunders. The speed of the outbreak is described as if the virus is carried by the witches on the shoulders of the devils and jinn. He says, "*It was as if the witches carried it flying*". The image is also shown in a poem by A, Sajeeth Hussain. He describes the virus as "*Coronavirus, the big black witch*". (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.33). However, Yousef, in 'The Plagues' portrays the pandemic outbreak as a punishment similar to that of Sisyphus.

*Like a wave, like a long night*

*Like Sisyphus rock*

In case of Sisyphus of the Greek mythology, no answer has been given yet to the question of why he rolls a great stone constantly (Zelazko, 2020). It is like a wave which is also described by Thobre Pandit in his poem 'The Corona wave', "*A wave of uncertainty*". The wave in Pandit words is of uncertainty. (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.28). Then he tracks the disease symptoms like "*Fever fueling*". The disease tries to pull the fever towards the poet exactly as Sisyphus tries to pull the rock to the peak tirelessly;

*Sisyphus; a disease*

*Rolling the plague rock towards me*

Another myth is that of Alexander, legend of power "*Like the avatar of mad Alexander*", who is defeated by fever. So fever kills Alexander and now it kills many people without any distinguishment between the powerful or the weak.

Coronavirus is given a universal attribute by Assaheeh as he describes it as the universal killer. With reference to an ancient myth of Prometheus, "*Oh fire thief*" who is the thief of the sacred fire, Yousef portrays coronavirus as one of those plagues the beautiful lady brings to us as punishment.

### Social Impacts of Covid-19

The pandemic is very ferocious and violent assailant that locks up life gates and enforce humans to a terrible collective, global, and social isolation as Assaheeh shows in his poem 'Corona and the Earth is Reborn Once Again':

*Here in the cave of our isolation, we enter*

*We surrender emotions to ingratitude*

*The love weather is an assassination venture*

In such terrible isolation at all levels – home, street, city, country, and the world, emotions are shattered and frozen as lovers keep away from each other. This loneliness and isolation is also portrayed by Nora Marasigan in her poem 'The Prophetic Cure'. She says,

*People stuck at home,*



*Doing whatever they can alone. (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.6)*

Dr Alghaithi also suffers like others, therefore he evokes his social responsibility by addressing the social issues and effects of the plague. He, in his poem, 'Eid Silence' explores also the separation of lovers from each other for fear of infection so they are heart broken. Shamaila Ijaz says, in her poem 'Emotional Quarantine', "*I am exhausted, broken, worn out but I see sun shine*". (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.44) Even the air, we breathe, has become foreign to us under conditions we have not tried before.

*Eid is silent*

*No talk of Takaya (setting rooms).*

Social gatherings and family meetings are replaced by a vacuum, and the man becomes trapped in the walls of his home. Houses become caves and shelters to escape the plague, the hidden killer. Osler, an Italian writer, asserts that social distancing practices such as canceling public events, avoiding gatherings, and other precautions are also strongly recommended by the public health official. (Osler, 2019).

In all the noise that sweeps the world and what the hearts of human beings tremble with, there are many questions about this isolation imposed on the world in which all people are imprisoned because of this epidemic, but all the answers are wishes that are not alive but dead wishes. Alghaithi says:

*There in the noise of hearts*

*A thousand questions.*

*The answers are dead interests.*

He presents as well the outbreak of the pandemic that leads to stop all forms of pleasure and joy. The poet says neither Eid celebrations nor the songs that people used to celebrate during the holly seasons are celebrated. They are stopped because of the quarantine. In such a case, people stopped visiting families and relatives because of fear of infection and as a precautionary measure. The visits during the Eid days are considered one of the most important social customs and Sunnahs, and they are to strengthen family ties during the holidays, but this silent Eid differs from all earlier Eids because of the pandemic and the social ban that pervaded all the land.

*Eid is silent about new songs*

*The chants on the lips are straying*

*The door is locked*

*And a heart will not see in the streets of yesterday*

*Its inamorata.*

The Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia issued health protocols that state the isolation as "*Isolate yourself from others: You should stay in a separate room from the rest of the household especially the elderly, people with*



*chronic diseases, or pregnant women, and avoid close contact with pets".* (MOH. 2021). Hence, people close their doors and the girls do not go out to the beaches or gardens or public celebration places to celebrate Eid. In the other poem of Alghaithi, 'An Isolation Night Sigh', he sadly portrays his solitude saying *"I pass my solitude, answer myself"*. In this pandemic time, those around him are absent, and the soul is stripped as if it has died and becomes remains. And his life because of isolation becomes a barren desert. A poem entitled 'Life with Coronavirus' by A. Sajeetha Hussain describes the isolation and absence as a countryside lockdown phenomenon. (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.33).

In '2020 Turns us Old', Abdulmohsen says that in the midst of the spread of the virus and the measures imposed, the person becomes deprived of seeing his loved ones and his family, and the meeting with them becomes a wish, but a dream of dreams.

*You deprive us of seeing loved and dear ones '  
Meeting them becomes the heads of hopes*

As a result of this pandemic that has swept the world, the world undergoes a tremendous change in the lives and relationships of people.

*People and laws changed because of you '*

The laws that govern the lives of individuals, their movements, and their actions have changed.

The poem 'The Plagues', by Yousef, goes deeper criticizing the social structure that strengthens the sufferings of working class people overall the world showing the injustice practiced in the world today. He confesses:

*I'm not a socialist in faith  
But your capitalism... in the recorded  
Is a delayed death.*

He says that he is not a socialist, from a political point of view, but the capitalist system inevitably leads to the death of the working classes and employees around the world.

Yousef says that the East, the source of the virus, has no savior in front of the ability and will of the Lord of this universe (Allah) while the West is miserable and full of death because of this invading virus, as described by the Saudi poet Jassim Assahih.

Moreover, both Assaheeh and Yousef declare that the houses of God (mosques) are closed and become empty of worshippers as a precaution to save people's lives and to achieve the social isolation approved by the Saudi government. Yousef says:

*The house is the house of God  
But its doors were closed*

### Economic Impacts of Covid-19

All poets move to explore some economic effects on the world. Yousef, in "The Plagues", says that the deterioration of the economy is due to the quarantine and the curfew that imposed by the governments on their people as a precautionary procedure to stop the spread of the pandemic, the global killer. However, the poet reviews with very precise turns, indicating that the corrupted people who loot public wealth were also affected by this pandemic.

*It (pandemic) said, the world economy*

*Is my arena*

*Those who eat of the forbidden are corroded.*

Ghoshal presents the image of curfew that makes cities empty of people and it stops transportation and market as if cities become deserts.

*Public curfew, lockdowns,*

*feel like cities turning into deserts, (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.16)*

Yousef also criticizes the capitalism that goes further during Covid-19 crisis depriving the working class people of their rights and imposing injustice in resources distribution as well. Such a case increases the hazardous influences on poor communities.

*I'm not a socialist in faith*

*But your capitalism... in the recorded*

*Is a delayed death.*

Europe is the continent that is seriously affected by the epidemic, which kills a lot of people and destroyed the economies of many countries. The situation of the working class people including the destructive effects of the epidemic is drawn by Joseph E. Ahiman in his poem 'Corona – an Eye Opener'. He say:

*No guaranteed job to balance my life*

*Trembling in the economic typhoon,*

*Storms out my drops of money soon.*

*No work, no salary but no food*

*Is not accepted by this human wood. (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.38)*

In the same way, Abdulmohsen represents the frightening influences of Covid-19 on global economy in his poem '2020 Turns Us Old'. The story begins by the poet addressing the year 2020 saying because of your many horrors, we become old. In the first four months, the virus spreads dramatically and quickly, harms people, destroys the economies of countries, and results in huge destructive economic consequences which might take 10 years to happen.

*We have grown old, oh 2020*

*The first third of you for ten years*



*And the market collapsed, starting from raw.*

Millions of people lost their jobs and some companies went bankrupt and laid off their employees. Because of the lack of movement and transportations as a result of the quarantine, the economies of many countries collapsed and the oil trade was affected globally. This impact can be described as a devastating economic recession.

Assaheeh, however, traces the economic impacts in different way. He puts the image of economy as influencing passions and emotions. At the same time, he draws a stream of hope for both economic and emotions.

*Fabric will remain in our factory*

*For enough life from the cradled*

*The economy of love will neither fall*

*Nor the feeling's market be without soul.*

The number of victims increases and the death smell spreads everywhere though factories will come back working and economic civilization will arise again. Despite the economic crisis and the market recession effects of the pandemic, love will be still uprising in our souls and the emotional market will blossom again.

### **Emotional and Psychological Impacts of Covid-19**

Poets from all over the world go deep in portraying the psychological and emotional consequences of Covid-19 in various ways. They, microscopically, explores the effects of isolation, quarantine, death, fear, sadness, depression, stress, disappointment, loneliness, and many other situations. In the same way, Yousef presents some ancient legends comparing the global situations, attitudes, and even symptoms. He brings to the fore the Sisyphus, Alexander, and Ishtar legends portraying the deep psychological influences of the crisis.

Assaheeh, in his poem 'Corona and the Earth is Reborn Once Again', draws the borders of serious conflict between humanity and the epidemic.

*The earth is fighting a fierce battle*

*Being run by the unseen over the seen.*

This conflict is unique as it is between the seen and the unseen fighters. Many leaders and medical members that it is a serious and deadly conflict. This battle is mysterious "A murderous mystery; a hided hand behind the horizon" because the hand that kills people hides beyond the horizon so it pushes us to oceans of fear.

*Therefore, we walk through it, with a hostage-step,*

*With fear, trembling and waving quadriceps.*

Therefore, we walk on this earth as being captive to fear as a result of pain and sudden deaths. The poet draws an image of crying for the death of our



loved ones. It is a sign of sadness and tragedy that afflicted us deeply. It is a death without farewell in our quarantines. The image is a clear description of psychological harm that humanity faces.

People do not exchange gifts, conversations, encounters, and their happiness as usual, but this silence gives birth to fear that you could see in the faces of the people who the poet use to see happy, dr Alghaithi presents in his poem 'Eid Silence'. There is no happiness and the pleasure is replaced by fear.

*Moreover, fear is thrown up to  
The happy faces.  
We get far away.  
There is no perfume left away,  
For the poem to walk on its spray.*

Even the girls stopped using the toiletries and instead of kohl (Eyeliner), fear is shown in their eyes.

While Yousef Abdulmohsen, in "2020 Turns Us Old", fantasizes the imposed separation giving an example that set by the evasion of people from one another and the distance between them, as if they had leprosy.

*Our greetings is, because of fear, what the eye says,  
As the fear causes us leprosy.*

In implementation of the principle of social separation, greeting has become between people through signs and eye gestures, due to the fear that afflicts us because of the rapid transmission and spread of the disease. In the same way, Shamaila Ijaz, acovid positive, describes her situation in her poem 'Emotional Quarantine' as:

*No hugs, no kisses, and I cried.  
I encaged myself as if I was with leprosy, (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.44)*

So this pandemic is the enemy of happiness which fills the world with misery, sadness, disappointment, fear, and terror. These are the destructive effects of the virus on man's daily life and happiness.

Assaheeh again describes the love rituals as a process of assassination. "*The love weather is an assassination venture*". It is an illustration of the dreadful fear, awareness, and shattering of emotions that the infected person may assassinate his lovers around him by the transmission of the unseen killer.

The man of today is fully aware of covid-19 results but this awareness arises from deadly fear. Then such awareness falls on Abdullatif Yousef, in 'The Plague', like a long dark night or like sea waves.

*Like a wave, like a long night  
Like Sisyphus rock  
Oh anxiety of existence  
It is trying.*





The poet infers this legend in many ways. It is related to his awareness that never ends exactly like Sisyphus who goes on pushing the stone till the peak of the mountain and it again goes down to the bottom. In such a worldly situation in which the human existence becomes in danger, the poet is filled with anxiety.

When a man is infected and feels fever, he becomes disappointed by this modernity that couldn't invent a vaccine to protect humanity,

*All the pessimism reasons about modernity*

*I can't say be optimistic!*

Another myth is used here. He portrays Ishtar, the goddess of love and the queen of the universe, as bereaved, crying the dead and the death that befalls humanity.

*"Ishtar" of seduction*

*Look at the story'*

*It is bereaved.*

The poet reviews the extent of the sadness that occurred in Europe, which has become apparent everywhere there.

The poet also says there is nothing left except that grief and sadness inhabited people's homes due to the large number of deaths, even entire families die, due to infection with this malicious virus so homes are filled by grief, loss, and absence.

Again Dr Alghaithi expresses how the emptiness dominates people's lives due to collective isolation.

*Cities strip naked because of stupefactions.*

*Waiting the vacuums*

*Fills their dams.*

In all the clamor of the world, you see many cities, that are affected by the epidemic and laws imposed on people, are stripped from the usual aspects of life, civilization, and people's daily activities. And here in our solitude, silence dominates our times and the long evening falls on us. The poet depicts that this scene exceeds our capabilities and our endurance, and the climax of our patience is to release these restrictions that impose isolation, silence, and emptiness on us.

Alghaithi, in the poem 'An Isolation Night Sigh', draws the confines of the solitude and isolation. He depicts his isolation and solitude in the time of Corona pandemic saying that he spends his night in loneliness and asks himself instead of asking and talking to people around him. "*I pass my solitude, answer myself*", he has the certainty that makes him cry. His tears shed and he feels deserted. So the Nile and the Euphrates waters will not help him to irrigate the thirst of absence and isolation that harm him deeply as a result of this epidemic.



*And I pour two tears on my certainty,  
neither my Nile gives nor the Euphrates River graces.*

His silence on these long nights is similar to the silence of Jacob, peace be upon him, and that the wind does not come to him except with the burden of pain. In an interesting metaphor, the mirror asks him how to see himself,

*"Mirrors talk to us: what do we look like?"*

*We answer: Like a gasp in canticles."*

And he replies that he is like a sigh in sad songs that bear the meanings of deprivation, absence, and isolation.

### Preventive Measures

The social and moral responsibility of social figures including poets and effective writers to spread guidance and enlighten people to strictly achieve the precaution measures set by governments to stop the rapid spread of the pandemic. Al-hadabi and others, (Amran University –Yemen) urge that "*Prevention of COVID-19's pandemic, therefore, is a great responsibility (i.e. social, theological, economical, ethical and ecological responsibility) for the human-being society over the world..*" (Al-hadabi et al. 2020). Hence, the selected poets of this study also do spread and show obedience to those measures imposed by Saudi government to save lives.

Assaheeh presents medical instructions, "*We will remain in our trenches*", to enlighten the common man of the best way to defeat the stubborn coward by staying at homes and keeping quarantines. He raise the flag of awareness to its utmost saying "*Therefore, we beware it as we beware of Alosoud*". So these desertion and social distance are parts of our battle to save each other. While Malek Alouch also shows the instructions that should be practiced over the world. He says, "*Be home! Wash your hands!*" (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.5)

Yousef, as well, declares that the houses of God (mosques) are closed as a precaution to save people's lives and to achieve the social isolation approved by the Saudi government.

*The house is the house of God*

*But its doors were closed*

While Abdulmohsen addresses the year of 2020 as "*You kept me in home like prisoner*". Among the precautions recommended by the World Health Organization and followed by all countries is home quarantine. The poet depicts people staying in their homes like prisoners to preserve human lives and prevent the spread of disease.

### Universal Messages

Poets from around the world and various social and cultural backgrounds focus on how to spread hope in such a dark and critical scenario in the world

history. They depict the global destructive consequences of the pandemic in all spheres of life. Saudi poets stress universality of those effects in all dimensions as presenting universal attributes of the virus, universal preventive measures, and universal message of hope.

Assaheeh starts the poem 'Corona and the Earth is Reborn Once Again' by describing the health care workers in frontlines as angels who spread hope that the earth is reborn once again by defeating the unseen enemy. *"Angels from afar indicate that the earth is reborn"*. That symbolizes his deep assurance that there is still hope and ambition. Thmbre Pandit, in his poem 'The Corona Wave', emphasizes the linguistic concept of rebirth also. He declares: *"To be born once again...!"* the concept, as well, is presented by Savita Boral, an Indian poet, conveying the universal message of hope. She says, *"But now every soul is taking rebirth"*. (Silvest, et al. 2020. P.28 & 30)

Despite of the darkness we live in because even the sun loses its light and rays, Assaheeh says, *"The sun rises getting dark"*, we still have a lantern made of hope and ambition to defeat this ghost and dissipated this darkness.

*We will remain in our trenches*

*Singing that the earth is reborn*

After many fearful images of the unseen enemy drawn by the poet, he uses a kind of relief through messages of hope. He says:

*From borders to borders*

.....

*From a phase, we travel towards another phase*

*As if, the earth is reborn.*

It reflects the universal effect of the pandemic as it throws the whole world into a swamp of depression crossing all borders of all countries. In a message of relief and hope, he describes the fight against this invader as a battle of eternity that goes through stages of vaccine invention and possible medications that will make universality of, "hope", the rebirth of the earth. Another global message of the poem says that there were so many pandemics that killed many human beings and pushed us down but the faith in Allah, the Almighty, is still in our hearts pulls us up repeatedly and release our anxiety.

*Since (the descent of Adam), we still*

*Have been traveling to more (descent)*

*But as the fist of faith is more powerful,*

*We still believe in the (ascent).*

The poet spreads his message of hope universally for his readers *"Then a man begins his new era freely"*. The poem concludes by a call of freedom as

human beings start their new era "post-coronavirus era", hence it is the call of "*the earth is reborn once again*".

Yousef, in 'The Plagues', uses international symbols and myths. One of them is "*Like Sisyphus rock*" and his intention is to teach us some lessons. Sisyphus is pushing the great stone with smile every time it rolled down. He is unstoppable and refuses to surrender. Sisyphus is still remembered for his torture towards his purpose. So we learn to embrace our purpose in life and never give in to circumstantial disappointment or escape from the failure and never back down till we fulfill our potential. The universal message that the poet wants to convey is that we shall not surrender and never back down till we defeat this unseen killer – covid-19 (Zelazko, 2020; Cartwright, 2016; Kumar, 2017).

Ishtar, another legend presented by Yousef refers to the Mesopotamian goddess, symbolizes the role of fertility figure. "*Ishtar of seduction*". She evolved into a more complex character. She is the goddess of contradictory forces, fire and fire-quenching, rejoicing and tears, fair play and enmity. Here, Ishtar is bereaved because of all what is happening to humanity (Augustyn, 2019; Pryke, 2019). The poet therefore wants to reveal that the whole universe becomes debris and many countries are affected seriously and become old looking for their end.

Yousef, in another universal symbolism, reveals to one of the most famous legend. It is the legend of Alexander of Macedon.

*Like the avatar of mad Alexander  
But Egypt and Persia are two curses  
And Babylon*

Alexander the great was an ancient Macedonian ruler and one of the greatest military leaders of history. He developed a fever, which worsened until he was unable to speak. Then he died (History, 2020; Walbank, 2019).

He also critically explains that capitalist systems have been affected a lot and the reference to capitalism here has more than one meaning. Either capitalism has been affected and died because of this epidemic, or it is as deadly as this epidemic.

*But your capitalism... in the recorded  
Is a delayed death.*

This is a global message denouncing capitalist systems that they do not view humanity even with the least amount of respect and they relate the human being to what he possesses and not to his humanity, his knowledge or his morals.

The poet then alludes to an ancient myth of Prometheus who is the thief of the sacred fire. Prometheus was depicted the bringer of fire and civilization to mortals

*Oh fire thief**The novel is a cinder; does not respond*

In our case, the knowledge we gain couldn't save us and protect us against this unseen creature. The poet concludes the poem with a global message, which is the message of hope, saying that the current situation is similar to the sea and we are in the middle of the sea and we know that there is a coast and we will reach it and eventually survive.

Dr Alghaithi wrote two poems entitled '*Eid Silence*' and '*An Isolation Night's Sigh*'. Both refer to personal and social matters including sever emotional harms of man in corona time. He depicts a lot of images and gives universal messages of hopes to encourage and motivate people to face the plague as medical care workers do. In '*Eid Silence*', he concludes the poem with a global message, which is hope. The message conveys that no matter how silent the Eid becomes within us, one day, we will defeat this epidemic and we will back to the Eid's customs, joy, and family gatherings. While Abdulmohsen, in '*2020 Turns Us Old*', goes for explaining human weaknesses.

*The sciences of the planners and sultans are lost**While facing Corona, they all become dwarves.*

The poet describes the weakness of the human being in the face of God's ability, and that one virus can't be seen with the naked eye causes all this destruction and devastation in the human soul, economy, science, and cultures, leaving humans in their confusion and astonishment, and causes the largest mass prison in the history of the world.

**Results of Study**

The selected poets depict all the related personal, psychological, emotional, social, and economic impacts of the disease. In all this chaos, they send universal messages ensuring the human ability to survive. They explore the global precautions measures to be followed by all humans. So they play a vital role encouraging their readers and spreading guidelines to stop the virus outbreak. Therefore, the Saudi citizen is shown as abiding the precaution instructions imposed by the government to protect its citizens.

Jassim Assahih describes this pandemic with many descriptions as the hidden hand, the ghost, the tyrant, the obstinate, the monster with killing jaws, the epidemic, the universal killer, and the invader of this earth. Apparently, these descriptions in general explore the exhausted psychological status of the poet which is haunted by fear and worry. Yet, with every description, he inspired hope and optimism in society. In a skillful way, he controls the readers' mind using the strategy of comic relief repeatedly to reduce the stress and distress of people as a result of the living



scenes they witnessed and the frightening news about the virus. He details the facts of the universal, existing and unlimited battle against this hidden killer. It is a new kind of battle between the seen and the unseen fighters. He depicts us as being captive to fear of its strength and destructive nature. He gives figurative images depicting the virus as carried by the witches on the shoulders of the devils and jinn which drops people's happiness as a star falls from sky.

Describing the emotional and sociological consequences. The poet describes the love rituals as a process of assassination. It is an illustration of the dreadful fear and awareness by which emotions are shattered and frozen. There is an economic crisis and market recession but love will be still uprising in our souls. The global message of hope that the faith in Allah pulls us up again and reduce our anxiety. The poem concludes by the call of *"the earth is reborn once again"*.

Abdullatif Yousef is filled with anxiety. A man becomes disappointed by the modernity that couldn't protect humanity. He portrays that economic activities demolished and daily life practices stopped. He uses many descriptions of the epidemic, drawing some old myths that enrich the poem's meaning and the cultural depiction to high extent. The first is that the pandemic outbreak is a punishment similar to that of Sisyphus. He portrays the disease as Sisyphus and the fever, the symptom, as Sisyphus rock. The second is Ishtar as bereaved because of mass human death. Then the legend of Alexander of Macedon, the legend of power that is defeated by fever. He then alludes to an ancient myth of Prometheus who is the thief of the sacred fire but unfortunately we didn't get benefit of it to protect ourselves and use knowledge. Furthermore, coronavirus as one of those plagues the beautiful lady brings to us as punishment.

His global message is denouncing capitalist systems. The East has no savior while the West is miserable and full of death which has nothing but to argue and send accusations. And the houses of God (mosques) are closed and the pigeons of Makkah and Madinah cry; nothing is left except grief, sadness, loss, and absence inhabited people's homes.

Dr Alghaithi portrays the personal, social matters including sever emotional harms of man in corona time, and gives universal messages of hopes to encourage and motivate people. During Eid celebration, the pandemic leads to stop all forms of pleasure and joy while people closed their doors, lovers are separated, and even the air we breathe has become foreign to us. Silence dominates our times, gives birth to fear even the girls stopped using the toiletries, and instead of eyeliner, fear is shown in their eyes. The answers of questions about isolation are dead wishes; cities are

stripped from the usual aspects of life and civilization. His global message is hope. This message states that we will defeat this epidemic and we will back to the Eid's customs, joy and family gatherings.

Dr Alghaithi in another poem also spends his night in loneliness and finds only planets and stars. Man's soul is stripped as if it is dead. He depicts the isolation as long, especially at night and even wind brings him the burden of pain. He replies to the question of the mirror that he is like a sigh in sad songs that bear the meanings of deprivation, absence, and isolation.

Yousef Abdulmohsen depicts the first four months of 2020 as worthy of 10 years because the virus spreads dramatically and quickly, harms people, destroys the economies of countries. Its huge destructive consequences might take 10 years to happen. People stay in their homes like prisoners. Lovers' meeting becomes a dream of dreams even greeting has become between people through signs and eye gestures as if they had leprosy. Change in the lives and relationships of people becomes dominating and the laws have changed, economies have demolished showing the weakness of the human being.

## Conclusion

The news of coronavirus outbreak erupt the words of many poets and literary writers; eloquent poetry comes along with vernacular poetry and prose to give advice and enlighten the man how to fight the pandemic. Therefore, the selected poets' fears are universal and they skillfully and microscopically depict the social, economic, psychological and emotional impacts of coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. They also carry on ethical and social responsibility to enlighten the common man, through all possible ways and devices, about the preventive measures to stop the rapid transmission of the epidemic to save themselves and their loved ones. They presents universal messages of hope to reduce the worldly tension and emotional and psychological shattering. Although the question is, "did some Saudis have cabin fever?" Some of the cabin fever symptoms are found and analyzed clearly in the world specially Italy. Hence, it is a suggested topic for further study through Saudi literary productions.

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