

**Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul
Kalanithi's When Breath Becomes Air as a Model
Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef**

**Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic.
Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Model**

الأدب كعلاج نفسي أثناء جائحة كوفيد-19. عندما تتحول الأنفاس إلى هواء للكاتب بول كالانيثي نموذجاً

Latifa Ziane Bouziane¹ *

Dr. Faiza Boukhelef²

1 TICELET laboratory (information and communication technologies in the teaching of foreign languages and translation), Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, Algeria, zianebouzianelatifa@gmail.com

2 TICELET laboratory (information and communication technologies in the teaching of foreign languages and translation), Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, Algeria, f.boukhelef@univ-chlef.dz

Received 30/11/2022 Accepted 28/12/2022 Published. 20/03/2023

Abstract:

In light of humanity's desire to find ways to overcome the pandemic and manage its aftermath, literature did not take the back seat in the process. With the quarantine many tried to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic either by reading or writing. Therefore, this article attempts to articulate the relevance of literature in facing the reality of pandemic. The present paper aims to find out how literature works as a source to overcome the crisis and how it works as a psychological therapy to absorb trauma. The significance of this research lays in its attempt to highlight the effects of literature on the human mind and how it reflects his behaviour to absorb the trauma. Adopting descriptive analytical qualitative method, the current study will investigate how literature works as a source to eliminate the stress. In doing so, the study proposes an analysis of Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath becomes Air* in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The whole analysis revolves around the central themes of facing the pandemic namely quarantine and isolation, suffering and death, trauma and resilience.

Keywords: literature, pandemic, trauma, psychological, therapy

ملخص:

في ظل رغبة البشرية الملحة في إيجاد سبل لمقاومة الوباء وإدارة تداعياته، لم يتخلف الأدب عن أداء دوره في هذه المهمة. فقد حاول الكثيرون أثناء الحجر الصحي التغلب على جائحة Covid-19 إما عن طريق القراءة أو الكتابة. وعليه فإن الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو إبراز أهمية الأدب في مواجهة واقع الجائحة. فهي تصبو إلى معرفة كيفية عمل الأدب بوصفه مصدراً لتجاوز الأزمة وعلاجاً نفسياً يساعد على امتصاص الصدمات. تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في محاولتها إبراز تأثير الأدب على العقل البشري وكيف تعكس سلوكه لإمتصاص الصدمات. اعتماداً على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، ستبين الدراسة كيف يصبح الأدب ملاذاً آمناً أثناء الجائحة. في سبيل تحقيق ذلك تعتمد الدراسة على تحليل كتاب "عندما يصبح

* Corresponding Author

التنفس هواء" لبول كالانيثي. يركز التحليل حول الموضوعات الجوهرية لمواجهة الوباء على غرار الحجر الصحي والعزل و المعاناة والموت والصدمة والقدرة على الصمود والمقاومة.
الكلمات المتاحية: الأدب، الجائحة، الصدمة، العلاج النفسي

1. Introduction:

The functions of literature differ depending on the context, whether in pleasant or melancholy times, from the efferent or aesthetic phase; words fail to manifest the glory of literature's reflections and functions on human existence. Literature has always been a source of solace and pleasure in times of difficulty. The impact of literature on human life can be seen throughout history. Every genre of literature anticipates human interaction and reflection on the human psyche. With their literary lenses, authors through history manifest their portrayals of different societies and cultures struggling in critical situations. Either with subjectivity or objectivity, the main goal of their productions was and is to educate, entertain, and provide a clearer image of society.

As the world struggled with the pandemic, literature shared those difficult moments with humanity as a faithful companion. Through literature, humans have learned how to live and how to live meaningfully. In times of despair, it functions as a source of solace, and people turn to reading for light and delight. When the situation is dire, as it was with the COVID-19 pandemic, literature is the best source for the resilience of the human mind. As a matter of fact, it is considered a refuge for humanity in all sorts of situations.

Regardless of the fact that we are living in a time of invention, technology, and internet, nevertheless, people still find pleasure, meaning, and refuge in literature. Indeed, the human mind seeks the miraculous creation of ink on paper; the power of words has revealed the path to recovery on both sides, physically and spiritually. Literature plays the same role as the physical treatment during the pandemic; throughout literature, the human's mind travels from exile to meet the world, therefore, overcoming the traumatic situation he encountered.

1. Literature as a Healing Tool in Time of Crisis:

During the catastrophic stages and from the early human existence; literature plays a vital role in rebuilding the shattered faith and loss of basic values in life. It has been always the best companion of human being from the ancient epoch reaching the contemporary arena. Literature shared and still sharing the splitting image of the immemorial times until today. As it portrays the world; it functions beyond its main purpose, thus, literature stimulates the aesthetic stance of the human mind and arises its attention to interact with the author's realization psychologically and emotionally.

In the case of a pandemic, however, the situation is drastically different. People witness each other suffering from the same disease, and on such a global level. Newspapers drenched in gory images, news channels constantly bombarding viewers with images of hospitals crowded with COVID-19 patients, and social media spouting fake and viral stories all over the world All of this has a significant impact on one's physical and psychological well-being.

Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Model

Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef

Renowned writer and motivational speaker Robin Sharma in his book *Who Will Cry When You Die* teaches humanity to live meaningfully and to be happy in whatever conditions, he said that the harshness one can face brings out the best in him and it enables us to learn from the difficulties

You would not have the wisdom and knowledge you now possess were it not for the setbacks you have faced. ... our character is shaped not through life's easiest experiences, but during life's toughest ones. It is during life's most trying times that we discover who we really are and the fullness of the strength that lies within us. (2008, pp. 47-48)

Humanity requires a ray of hope in such a dreary scenario, which literature excels at providing. "Rereading books, drawing, and painting allow people to express themselves, explore their creativity, and enjoy an uncomplicated pleasure that is uncommon in today's world," says Dr. Natasha Kate, a consultant psychiatrist at Mumbai's Masina Hospital (as quoted in Matta, 2020). Simpler activities help us feel more at ease and grounded. Dr. Kate suggests that such activities assist humans in directing their mental energies into a more positive space and in connecting with others in a more simple and uncomplicated manner. (qtd. in Matta, 2020)

People engaged in their favorite activities during the lockdown. They begin to explore all avenues to engage in some creative and meaningful activities, from reading to writing, cooking, painting, singing, and crafts. On YouTube and social media sites, there were numerous videos of people pursuing long-lost hobbies, learning new things, or sharing their experiences to ensure distraction from the contagious virus.

Mark Danner, a professor of English and journalism at the University of California, in a live lecture on UC Berkeley on "Literature and arts in the times of crises," declared: "You find you can live life artistically, you can create a different way to live, you can create yourself. Your life is not path-dependent, the way you thought it was." Without doubt, literature helps in coping with crises, whether natural or caused by humans. Many authors' writings share the struggle for survival; such writings provide empathy for readers to understand their fatalities; being in similar situations can provide both didactic and aesthetic notions.

Literary pieces inspire the reader; novels, plays, poetry, fictions, or non-fictions have the power to transform the reader's beliefs and attitudes; they can be a source of encouragement and hope in times of crisis; literature can broaden our perspectives and strengthen our mental ability. Readers may be able to bring concepts to life by providing insightful illustrations of difficult situations and crises they have faced.

Literature maintains the audience's interest by providing context, relevance, engagement, comprehension, and meaning. In fact, literature works as healing tool for human being in facing different stages in life.

The depicted experiences exemplified in literary works provide readers with insight into the recovery from traumatic situations; sympathy for the struggles of the characters in fiction stimulates a protective and defensive spirit within the reader; literature can be the key assumption in facing similar critical situations; hence, it also functions as a healing process for human psychology.

One can learn a lot from the reactions of literary characters to life's problems and crises. In such a COVID-19 crisis, there are many inspirational poems to restore our mental grit and courage. Many authors become famous because of their ability to inspire others. Such artistic manifestations provide people with the internal strength they require to overcome a problem or achieve a goal, rather than surrendering to discontentment or sadness. Literature becomes a source of inspiration to perform better in critical situations.

In a world where many are suffering, we can consider literature as a treatment. In this context, Koehler mentioned in his article "*Explanation, imagination, and confidence*"(1991) that a Harvard University study has shown that thinking about an emotion engages the same neurological networks as talking about and feeling one's actual emotions. The pandemic has undoubtedly imposed new emotional strains; thus, mentally stimulating activities, such as reading or writing about these emotions in literature, could be a form of coping that leads to improved emotional regulation. Like viruses, emotions are contagious; they can be transmitted from books to our brains just as quickly as diseases spread from one person to another.

It is quite amazing how the brain can find solace in literature. Charlotte Gilman wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*; a quite influential autobiographical fiction that tackle the main idea of this paper, literature as therapy to heal from psychological breakdown. Gilman explained why she wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, saying that, "Being naturally moved to rejoicing by this narrow escape, I wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, with its embellishments and additions, to carry out the ideal (I never had hallucinations or objections to my mural decorations)." (2011, p.265)

Gilman's story has a great positive impact on many readers, but for her, she claims that the best result is this: "Many years later, I was told that the great specialist had admitted to friends of his that he had altered his treatment of neurasthenia since reading *The Yellow Wallpaper*." (Ibid, p.256) She adds, "It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked." (Ibid, p.256)

The protagonist soothes her slight hysterical tendency, she finds peace in writing fictions, for Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a celebration of the power of literature towards the human mind and the psyche, it shows how words can heal the wounds.

Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Model

Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef

2. Facing the Pandemic by Turning to Literature

Facing certain death, this sentence has been associated in the past three years with one term: "COVID-19." The deadly virus that terrified the entire world, the pandemic, closed the doors of the whole world, and people trying to survive in exile while facing the unknown was not an easy task. People begin to suffer not only from the pandemic but also from its consequences, such as living in a crisis and exile, which can cause a variety of emotions such as fear, loss, uncertainty, hysteria, paranoia, powerlessness, and sorrow.

The COVID-19 pandemic does not affect the human body only physically; it also causes mental illness. In literature, the term "pandemic" refers not only to a disease but also to a metaphorical or symbolic meaning of struggle, crisis, and trauma.

Avijit Ghosh demonstrates in "How Literature Has Helped Us Make Sense of Pandemics," an article that was published in The Times of India, that literature might not be able to fight the pandemic as effectively as modern science does. Nevertheless, it provides individuals with compassion as it becomes a source of consolation in facing the pandemic; it is a way of sharing humanistic concerns (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic created a horror around the globe. People found themselves in lockdown, deprived of the most desirable thing they seek: freedom. *Facing the unknown*, the deadly virus brought many undesirable feelings and emotions; the human psyche turned to trauma, surrounded by gloomy insights.

In times of quarantine, there were many programs and shows on TV and the internet that promoted what to do in lockdown to face the pandemic; their main target was how to overcome stress and depression in such a crisis. Reading, as it is investigated by Stenna Joy in her article "In the Midst of COVID, Many Return to a Reading Habit," is among the solutions that people turn to in times of quarantine. Stenna mentioned the results of an Amazon China report, which was based on feedback from over 18,000 interviewees in China. More than 70% of readers polled said they read more books than before because of their isolation at home. (2021)

Similarly, Elena Nicolaou published an article in Oprah Daily magazine, "The Best Books to Read While Social Distancing, According to Book Lovers," arguing that people are turning to reading books in order to cope with coronavirus anxiety. In her article, she suggested some titles after asking bestselling authors and book lovers for recommendations on what books to read during these trying times. (2020)

It has been found that many people turned to literature as a source of resilience, a stress buster, entertainment, and a guide for humanity through the fluctuations of life. Reading literature in a state of trauma works as a tool for recovering; the reader finds refuge in literature, and it helps in enhancing the human mind when it comes to teaching about the effects and impacts of such crises.

Ravindra Kumar in his article; "Literature, Pandemic and Globalization"; asserts:

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 indifferent 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. (2018, p.3)

Such a declaration emphasizes the evaluative role of literature during the pandemic as well as its importance in the post-pandemic period. Many lessons can be taught from the echoes of literature. Kumar supports the important idea of this paper on how literature works as a functional tool to teach lessons about a current situation such as a pandemic and how it enhances the human mind to overcome the crisis.

According to Immanuel Kant, "*beauty exists in the mind, not in the object.*" That is to say, the human mind mechanism is responsible for the state we are in; if we think of something as beautiful, then it is, despite its ugliness or what other people might see. The idea that our mind creates is responsible for our behavior and feelings. Moreover, Kant talks about our reactions to art; he argues that the artistic realizations must stimulate our senses, emotions, and intellect so we can consider them beautiful or not.

For Kant, literature is an art that stimulates our feelings and emotions; that is to say, if we target the beauty and pleasure in a piece of literature, we are in some way or another creating a defense mechanism against our trauma. Since the reader is seeking pleasure, he or she will stimulate it through their way of thinking.

On the same account, Anne Lamott stresses on the function of literature in her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, claiming that:

Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation. They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life: they feed the soul. When writers make us shake our heads with the exactness of their prose and their truths, and even make us laugh about ourselves or life, our buoyancy is restored. We are given a shot at dancing with, or at least clapping along with, the absurdity of life, instead of being squashed by it over and over again. It's like singing on a boat during a terrible storm at sea. You can't stop the raging storm, but singing can change the hearts and spirits of the people who are together on that ship. (1995)

Lamott emphasizes the importance of the writing process and the power of expressing ideas through literature. In other words, turning depression into art necessitates faith and a positive mindset in order to transform the cruel into a source of inspiration for both the author and the reader. It is accurate to say that literature is our faithful friend and guide through crises such as pandemics; literature goes the extra mile to provide the assistance we require.

Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Model

Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef

3. Literature and Psychology:

At first sight, literature and psychology seem to be two different disciplines; nevertheless, they both share a common framework in various ways. Psychology and literature can be studied from different angles, including the psychology of writing and the creative process, the writer's psychology, the impact of a work on a reader's mind, and the psychology of the characters in a piece of writing. Literature and psychology are two fields that are inextricably connected. Literary criticism has always included psychological studies of both writers and their creations.

Literature works beyond its limits; it allows the human mind to broaden its perspectives; it is a means that enables us to transcend our sensations; it triggers the mind with limitless insights; literature is a free ticket to discover the undiscovered; it provides a voyage for the soul into the extraordinary, leaving the mundane.

From a genre to another, and from one writer to another, literature is a production of a certain concept, culture, and reflection of humanity. It is commonly associated with writing styles and literary criticism. On the other hand, psychology can be defined as a scientific study of behavior and is associated with the study of the human mind and psyche.

René Wellek 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. (1949, p.75)

Wellek and Warren explain that there are several definitions of literary psychology based on the subject of research, and this study supports their claim about the psychology of literature in which they said that it studies the influence of literary works on the reader. It means that this study 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. (1949, p.81)

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)

Typically, authors depict life events as a starting point to express their feelings in a novel. Since literature mirrors life, psychology has a strong connection to it. Psychology, on the other hand, can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the message, characterization,

and other elements transmitted through literature. Psychology can assist in elucidating the reasons for character behavior. It reveals the underlying causes of human behavior and motivation.

In studying the relationship between psychology and literature and the effects of literature upon its readers, one might look to literature as a reflection of society. The focus is on how literature functions to affect the human mind's attitude and change its mood. Literature, particularly novels, has a relationship with human life in the same way that psychology does; novels are works of art that have real-world value.

4. Why Do we Read?

It is argued that literature instills hope in the human mind and is an important source for sustaining human faith in facing traumas. With the widespread destruction in the recent pandemic, the human being requires an optimistic source, such as literature, to remind him that everything in the world must have an end.

The pandemic's chaos has become ingrained in our daily lives. Our chaotic surroundings influence our psychological state of mind, and literature has this great job to lift humanity from aches and reflect our attitude. Literature depicts our reactions throughout history by instructing us on what to do in similar situations. When we engage with literary works, we sink into a beauty that creates mental calmness, and one can escape his surroundings to imagery delight.

Reading literary works improves brain connectivity, increases brain function, and exercises the imagination. At Emory University they conducted research titled "Short and Long-Term Effects of a Novel on Connectivity in the Brain." Its attempt to understand how stories enter the brain and what they do to it, Prof. Berns claims that the neural changes discovered in physical sensation and movement systems suggest that reading a novel can transport you into the protagonist's body. The research states that reading fiction improves the connectivity of the brain and its function. The study concluded that when the reader interacts with a piece of writing, it stimulates their imagination. Moreover, it creates an interconnection point between the reader and the text, and this connection affects the reader's attitude according to their personality and surroundings. (Berns, et al. 2013, pp. 595-599)

Consequently, literature can be considered a way to reduce stress. It accomplishes this by altering people's behavioral patterns and influencing their imagination, senses, and interpersonal qualities. In times of difficulties, literature has been a wonderful aid; it occupies the mind creatively and helps control the trauma by escaping reality.

5. Literature as a way of Escapism

Escapism is defined by the desire for distraction and relief from unpleasant realities. This is especially evident when seeking entertainment and distraction from reality. Regardless of

Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Model

Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef

how a person approaches the reading process, it becomes a means of escape when it becomes a source of solace and transports the reader to another world, escaping from his reality.

When we read, we mentally rehearse the range of emotions depicted in books. Feelings such as fear, confusion, desperation, and isolation are common themes throughout, oddly similar to those that are currently prevalent. The imagination involved in dealing with these emotions through literature may help us process our intense feelings and develop the capabilities to better overcome these turbulent times. There are many reasons in life that would lead one to read; some read for personal enrichment and knowledge; reading enables one to experience new places, events, and insights; it can stimulate the mind; and it is considered as a relaxation process. A reader can live vicariously through characters and learn from their experiences.

In 2009, a study was conducted at Sussex University about the outcomes of reading; the study revealed that reading can reduce stress by up to 68 percent. Cognitive neuropsychologist David Lewis said, "losing yourself in a book is the ultimate relaxation." Reading, unlike other forms of escapism such as addiction, is beneficial for your mental health. Psychologists explained that this resulted from the human mind's concentration on reading, which stimulated distraction to ease the tension in muscles and the heart.

On this matter, Dr. Lewis claims: "it really doesn't matter what book you read, by losing yourself in a thoroughly engrossing book, you can escape from the worries and stress of the everyday world and spend a while exploring the domain of the author's imagination." (2009)

Reading can bring the whole world in front of you while at the same time ignoring all that is happening around you. It is indeed a process that can be used as a tool to experience the unknown and discover the undiscovered.

6. *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Psychological Therapy:

6.1 Overview:

Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer at the age of 36, on the verge of finishing a decade of training as a neurosurgeon. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient fighting for his own life. And then the future he and his wife had imagined vanished. *When Breath Becomes Air* follows Kalanithi's journey from a naive medical student "possessed," as stated by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life, to a Stanford neurosurgeon working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally to a patient and new father confronting his own mortality.

6.2 What Makes Life Worth Living in the Face of Death:

Paul Kalanithi died in March 2015 while working on this book, yet his words live on as a guide and a gift to humanity. Kalanithi began his literary adventures when he was ten years old. Despite wanting to be a surgeon, he earned a bachelor's and master's degree in literature. He first wrote a short essay about coping with cancer after learning he had it. The book was published after his death and quickly became a best-seller. He said: *"I began to realize that coming face to face with my own mortality, in a sense, had changed nothing and everything"* (p. 131).

In a time of weakness, despair, and facing certain death, Kalanithi turned to literature as a tool of comfort and to escape his pain; he also wanted to tell the world about the power of literature, and as a result, he brought the world an inspiring literary piece.

And so it was literature that brought me back to life during this time. The monolithic uncertainty of my future was deadening; everywhere I turned, the shadow of death obscured the meaning of any action. I remember the moment when my overwhelming unease yielded, when that seemingly impassable sea of uncertainty parted. I woke up in pain, facing another day—no project beyond breakfast seemed tenable. I can't go on, I thought, and immediately, its antiphon responded, completing Samuel Beckett's seven words, which I had learned long ago as an undergraduate: I'll go on. I got out of bed and took a step forward, repeating the phrase over and over: "I can't go on." I'll go on." (p.149)

He claimed that while science failed to answer and justify the world, literature succeeded in doing so; for him, many authors had more reason and awareness than scientists. In his quest to seek meaning for life, Kalanithi states:

I was driven less by achievement than by trying to understand, in earnest: what makes human life meaningful? I still felt literature provided the best account of the life of the mind, while neuroscience laid down the most elegant rules of the brain. Meaning, while a slippery concept, seemed inextricable from human relationships and morals values. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* resonated profoundly, relating meaninglessness and isolation, and the desperate quest for human connection. I found Eliot's metaphor leaking into my language. (p.31)

For Kalanithi, literature was a source of inspiration, delight, and a comforting process. He took the path of writing his memoir to inspire the world with literature, he wrote: *"Literature not only illuminated another's experience, it provided, I believed, the richest material for moral reflection. My brief forays into the formal ethics of analytic philosophy felt dry as a bone, missing the messiness and weight of real human life."* (p.31)

Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air* as a Model

Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef

He claimed that literature is a means to share experiences, but more than that, it is, according to him, the richest domain that can reflect humanity with moral lessons. His book bears the stamp of his strong faith in humanity and cultivates resilience during difficult times. Interaction with such literature provides a calming experience, he claims:

Before my cancer was diagnosed, I knew that someday I would die, but I didn't know when. After the diagnosis, I knew that someday I would die, but I didn't know when. But now I knew it acutely. The problem wasn't really a scientific one. The fact of death is unsettling. Yet there is no other way to live." (p.131-132)

Kalanithi tells us to build resilience and be calm in a situation that is not under our control. Reading his spiritual lines transports the reader to a peaceful atmosphere. The author faced the adversity of life with tranquility and calmness.

He emphasized the idea of not knowing when we will leave this world. Even after the diagnosis, he didn't know exactly when he would die, but he was embracing the idea of the inevitable death and trying to enjoy the moments left for him. He said, *"even if I'm dying, until I actually die, I am still living."* (p. 150) Because of his emphasis on the importance of faith and hope in times of crisis, such as pandemics, his book becomes increasingly relevant.

Kalanithi introduced the world to the concept of finding meaning in life regardless of circumstances, or, to put it another way, finding purpose in suffering rather than avoiding the struggle, writing, "Life wasn't about avoiding suffering." (p.143) believing that suffering is all-pervasive in our existence. Interaction with such literature gives a soothing experience for the readers, especially those who are facing danger, crisis, and difficulties such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

After his death, Kalanithi's wife Lucy wrote an epilogue that was included in his book in which she shared with the readers the final stage of her husband's life and how he was attached to literature in his final days during his most suffering moments, finding solace in literature. She wrote: "On those afternoons, our living room felt like a small, safe village. Later in that same room, Paul would hold Cady in his writing chair, reading aloud works by Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and Wittgenstein, as I snapped photos." (p.218)

Lucy tells the readers that this book is a celebration of her husband's passion for literature; in this context, she says:

Paul was proud of this book, which was a culmination of his love for literature—he once said that he found poetry more comforting than Scripture—and his ability to forge from his life a cogent, powerful tale of living with death. (p.220)

The book provides clear aspects of human crisis experiences; it reminds us of our defeat moments and enlightens us on how we can rise again; it broadens our knowledge of what we might face in life and teaches us something valuable to survive in the face of our traumas.

When breath becomes air functions as a psychological therapy to heal in the worst times that a person could face, such as a pandemic. Kalanithi shared his experience of facing death and how he embraced his destiny with faith and courage thanks to literature. His connection with literature during the last days of his life wasn't only through writing his book; as mentioned above, he also found solace and peace in reading fiction. While he was trying to find an answer for his question, "*What makes life worth leaving in the face of death?*" he came out with one answer: "Literature." Kalanithi finds meaning for life in it, and through it, I strongly believe that exactly what makes a work of literature function successfully is that it is not only about the depiction of life, but moreover, it is about literature working beyond its limits when it inspires the mind to find meaning in life.

7. Conclusion:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, literature acts as a vaccine; it is therapy that heals the human soul from psychological wounds. Books can reduce anxiety in times of crisis, and literature succeeds in taking the front seats by providing humanity with great lessons about survival and struggle. Literature is a valuable resource that maintains the continuity of humanity. It broadens our imaginations while also cultivating our ethical, social, and cultural responsiveness. In time of advanced technology and science, literature plays a vivid role when our society faced the pandemic, it tops up the society with human values and helps us to adhere to the eternal shine within to make best out of life. Literature works as a psychological therapy during a pandemic; it nurtures us and stitches truths about humanity into the fabric of its unfamiliar world. When the reader imagines himself in stories and novels, this provides good food for thought and the possibility to internalize applicable moral lessons, as well as inspiring the human mind to overcome the critical situation he might face.

List of references:

1. 'Immanuel Kant: Aesthetics', Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. From <https://iep.utm.edu/kantaest/>
2. Berns, G. S., Blaine, K., Prietula, M. J., & Pye, B. E. (2013). Short- and long-term effects of a novel on connectivity in the brain. *Brain connectivity*, 3(6), 590–600. <https://doi.org/10.1089/brain.2013.0166>
3. D., & complete profile, V. M. (2017, April 3). *Psychology and Literature--Carl Gustav Jung*. Dr. Sreekumar's English Literature & Career Advancement: Psychology and Literature--Carl Gustav Jung. Retrieved November 04, 2022, from <http://sreekumarenglishliterature.blogspot.com/2017/04/psychology-and-literature-carl-gustav.html>

**Literature as a Psychological Therapy during Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul
Kalanithi's When Breath Becomes Air as a Model
Latifa Ziane Bouziane & Faiza Boukhelef**

4. Ghosh, Avijit, "How Literature has Helped us Make Sense of Pandemics." *Times of India* 27 March 2020. Retrieved November 01, 2022, from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/how-literature-has-helped-us-make-sense-of-pandemics/articleshow/74841225.cms>
5. Gilman, C. P. (2011). Why I wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*?. *Advances in psychiatric treatment*, 17(4), 265-265.
6. Kalanithi, P. (2017). *When Breath Becomes Air*. London: Vintage Classics.
7. Koehler D. J. (1991). Explanation, imagination, and confidence in judgment. *Psychological bulletin*, 110(3), 499–519. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.110.3.499>
8. Lamott, A. (1995). *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. Anchor.
9. Lewis, D. (2009), *Galaxy Stress Research*. Mindlab International, Sussex University, UK.
10. Matta, A. (2020, May 16). Why Lockdown has us Doing Things we Loved as Children. *The Swaddle*. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://theswaddle.com/why-lockdown-has-us-doing-things-we-loved-as-children/>
11. Nicolaou, E. The Best Books to Read While Social Distancing, According to Book Lovers. (2020, May 6). *Oprah Daily*. Retrieved November 19, 2022, from <https://www.oprahdaily.com/entertainment/a31981533/best-books-social-distancing-quarantine/>
12. Ravindra, K. "Literature, Pandemic and Globalization". Dept. of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. (Formerly, Meerut University)
13. Sharma, R. (2008). *Who Will Cry When You Die*. Mumbai, Maharashtra, India: Jaico Publishing House.
14. Steena, J. In The Midst of COVID, Many Return to a Reading Habit. (2021, May 6). <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/covid-many-return-to-a-reading-habit-102537507.html>
15. UC Berkeley. Literature and the arts in times of the crisis. 29 April 2020. <https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/04/29/literature-and-the-arts-in-times-of-crisis/>
16. Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1949). *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.