Pandemics Fear and Anxiety: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death", Amir Tag Elsir's *Ebola 76* and COVID-19

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes.v25i1.586

Najah A. Alzoubi, Haitham M. Talafha, Motasim O. Almwajeh and Abdullah F. Al-Badarneh
The Hashemite University, Jordan

Received: 2.11.23 Accepted: 22.5.2024 Published Online: 27.5.2024

Abstract: This study examines the archetypal stages of human responses to fear and anxiety during pandemics and epidemics in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," Amir Tag Elsir's *Ebola 76*, and COVID-19. Pandemics and epidemics elicit a range of psychosocial response mechanisms in individuals due to innate and unmanageable feelings of fear and uncertainty. In the face of chaotic circumstances, the human collective psyche exhibits contagious horrors that are both random and overwhelming. However, these reactions follow historically patterned prototypical stages that significantly disrupt human ontological existence's apparent peace, harmony, and rhythm. The manifestation of this division became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during periods of confinement, when the fear of the virus gradually infiltrated even the smallest aspects of social life. Notably, the selected narratives accurately depict the various stages of human responses to pandemics. The stages are represented in Poe's story as disapprobation, surprise, horror, and disgust, and in Elsir's novel as shock, denial, acceptance, and hope. These phases unveil a comprehensive and emotional engagement with the human experience of pandemics and epidemics, offering a descriptive and anticipatory portrayal of the imminent social, psychological, and cultural calamities when the COVID-19 pandemic began to unpredictably ravage the world.

Keywords: Amir Tag Elsir, anxiety, COVID-19, Ebola, Edgar Allan Poe, horror

1. Introduction: Fictional and real(istic) pandemics

Throughout recorded history, there has been a plethora of lethal pandemics that have left an indelible mark on humanity due to their unforgettable and widespread outbreaks. The pestilence commonly referred to as the Black Death, along with cholera, tuberculosis, typhus, influenza, and Covid-19, are among the various catastrophic diseases that have afflicted humanity throughout history. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a pressing global concern in contemporary times, following its initial emergence in November 2019 in Wuhan, China. The phenomenon initiated its dissemination worldwide and persisted in exerting social, political, and economic effects on individuals until it was officially recognized as a global public health crisis. The significant and far-reaching effects of COVID-19 on individuals' well-being bear resemblance to those of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). The Ebola virus was initially observed in 1976 near the Ebola River and the Nzara border, which are presently located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, respectively. Whilst the majority of Ebola cases and

outbreaks were concentrated in Africa, this lethal disease escalated into a worldwide epidemic, which was perceived as a pervasive threat.

It is worth noting that in addition to the scientific and geographical intricacies that distinguish transmissible diseases, the contagious quality of pandemics has caused significant disturbances to the pre-existing patterns of individuals' lives on social, economic, and psychological fronts. This disruption has garnered the attention of scholars from diverse academic fields. Notwithstanding, although such disasters usually involve medical and economic concerns, as demonstrated by graphical representations, literary analysis tends to fall behind in its assessment of human experience. This is due to its emphasis on a comprehensive approach that considers the often-overlooked emotional aspect.

The present study emphasizes the literary and emotional involvement with the comprehensive human encounter with pandemics. This research aims to examine the stages of disgust and fear that are innate to human beings in the context of pandemics and epidemics. The present study focuses on the literary works of Edgar Allan Poe's The Masque of the Red Death and Amir Tag Elsir's *Ebola 76*, which are sourced from geographically distant regions. The objective of this study is to examine the psychological and social grievances that are commonly associated with pandemics. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a notable increase in scholarly attention towards literary works that explore the theme of pandemics. Several literary works, such as Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), Camus's *The Plague* (1947), and Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), are prominent for their thematic exploration of the distressing ordeal of epidemics, both factual and imaginary. The researchers opt to utilize the narratives of Poe and Elsir with a twofold objective. Poe and Elsir demonstrate remarkable precision in documenting the psychological distress and strain experienced by individuals during pandemics. These pandemics typically follow a mimetic pattern of successive phases that are influenced and processed through various emotional states. According to Poe, the phases can be characterized as a vocalization that conveys "disapprobation and surprise – then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust" (p. 196). Similarly, Elsir describes them as "shock, denial, acceptance, and hope" (pp. 7-8). When comparing Poe's portrayal of these phases with those depicted in Elsir's novel, it becomes apparent that both writers underscore not only the comparable fundamental stages but also how the successive progression of these phases is distinguished by an archetypal uniformity [1]that surpasses spatial and temporal limits. The first two stages have a parallel structure in Poe and Elsir: the stage of disapprobation resembles denial. The surprise is similar to the shock induced by terror, and finally, horror and disgust are progressive levels of panic. However, the stages of "acceptance" and "hope" in Elsir's work are noticed in Poe's short story when Prince Prospero decides impetuously to face reality instead of escaping from it by confronting the mummer of the Red Death in the hope of killing it.

This study highlights the correlation between Poe's and Elsir's depiction of pandemic horror and the emergence of COVID-19 in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, it elucidates the prevalent negative aspects of relationships during pandemics, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Literature review

To date, extant critical analyses of fictional pandemics have not comprehensively examined the various stages of the pandemic experience, nor have they explored the pertinence of these fictional pandemic themes to the current COVID-19 crisis. The studies under consideration can be broadly classified into two categories based on their epistemological and scopal perspectives. The initial approach pertains to a comprehensive philosophical framework, which encounters difficulties in addressing COVID-19 due to its expansive philosophical scope, leading to a deficiency in specificity. Examples include a recent study on Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" by Wright, who contends that "Poe's 1842 short story has been the 'go-to' candidate for many journalists and commentators seeking to imbue the global COVID-19 pandemic with a literary reference" (2021:47). While Wright's study contrasts Poe's fictional pandemic with COVID-19, he focuses primarily on the perspective of the "privileged elite" and their "abject failure" in defending themselves (ibid.). In a different study on the same story, Yuliastuti and Pasopati (2021:51explore the similarities between COVID-19 and Poe's fictional pandemic, asserting that "[t]he main similarity is the plague which has depopulated the countries, and even the world". Dewi (2021) also explores similar themes in Poe's story but expands the scope to include "Cask of Amontillado" and 'The Sphinx." Dewi's interest is in finding parallel lines between COVID-19 and Poe's fiction, with emphasis on anxiety caused by fear, social restrictions and isolation, and medical protocols such as mask-wearing.

Corman's 1964 film *The Masque of the Red Death* is based on Poe's short stories "The Masque of the Red Death" and "Hop-Frog". The film emphasizes the terror of a deadly pandemic in a medieval Italian countryside tyrannized by the Satanist Prince Prospero. He commands his men to set fire to the community suffering from the Red Death. The movie delves into Prince Prospero's character, his elite status among the nobles in his secluded and vibrant castle, and the dwarf Hop-toad and his beloved Esmeralda. The movie highlights several themes like power, riches, and corruption instead of focusing solely on the theme of a pandemic. At the conclusion of the film, the Red Death is accompanied by six other figures, each representing a different disease (Bubonic Plague, Yellow Fever, influenza, tuberculosis, Cholera, and Scurvy). Each of them states the number of victims they claimed that night.

The Second category of research adopts a targeted methodology that prioritizes specific themes related to COVID-19 and fictional pandemics, with a particular emphasis on medical issues. In a scholarly analysis, Vora and Ramanan (2002:1522) draw a comparison between the symptoms exhibited by individuals afflicted with Ebola and those described in Poe's narrative of the Red Death. Their assertion posits that there are notable similarities between the two, claiming that "in honor of the creative genius that imagined Ebola fever long before the infection was recognized, the particular strain that causes red death might be named Ebola-Poe".

Furthermore, in her scrutiny of Preston's *The Hot Zone* (1994) and Elsir's *Ebola 76*, Ramadan (2022) employs a transdisciplinary comparative methodology to examine the literary portrayal of Ebola, to explore the underlying factors that influenced the emergence and control of the epidemic.

In a review of Elsir's *Ebola 76* in *The Guardian*, Housham illustrates three important points about Elsir's novel. First, Elsir exemplifies his ability to resort to humor to alleviate the difficult aspects of his job as a medical doctor. Second, the events and characters of Elsir's novel are reminiscent of Jonas Jonasson's *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*, especially the protagonist Allan Karlsson, the centenarian who jumps out of the window with an unexpected litheness and disappears. Third, Elsir depicts Ebola as a medieval danse macabre that leads a parade of people to death. However, Elsir does not sympathize with his characters to evade the horror of the pandemic and to keep the readers indifferent to the fate of the characters.

The literature review presented is not exhaustive, as it solely comprises a subset of secondary sources that spotlight fictional pandemics and their relevance to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The aforementioned studies largely neglect the epistemological (the source of our knowledge, perspective, reception, and recognition of the pandemic) and ontological (the nature of pandemic and its effect on human survival, well-being, and existence) aspects of both realistic and fictional pandemics, especially when analyzed from the perspective of individuals who experienced the apocalyptic anxieties brought about by COVID-19. The distributional and cultural forms of realism find their most notable exemplars in the works of Poe and Elsir. The aforementioned forms encompass the contagious pandemic, the masqueraders situated within the castellated abbey, and the expat compound located in Nzara.

3.1.1 Pandemic panic in Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death"

Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" depicts a world decimated by the Red Death. The story's introductory paragraph emphasizes the nature of the plague: an "Avatar" of "redness and horror of blood" (Poe 1994:192). It is marked by "sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution [and] scarlet stains upon the body" (ibid.). The panic is highlighted in the nature of the Red Death that "had long devastated the country. No pestilence had been ever so fatal, or so hideous. […] And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease were the incidents of half an hour" (ibid). The deadly nature of the Red Death, the speed of its spread, and its eradication of the victim are factors that increase individual and collective panic and fear. Prince Prospero reinforces his "castellated abbey" by erecting iron gates and a sturdy wall in order to impede the spread of contagion. Moreover, he extends invitations to a multitude of his "lighthearted friends" (ibid.) from the aristocracy and provides them with all manner of entertainment and provisions. During a masquerade, and after five to six months of seclusion, the entire abbey succumbs to the contagion, one by one. At the presence of the Mummer, the narrator accelerates the amount of horror that is escalated from its appearance: "There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless

which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests" (p. 196). The deep emotions of fear that are evoked by the Mummer cannot be ignored even by those who seemingly do not care about life and death.

There is a possibility that Poe's title "The Red Death" is a reference to the tuberculosis that caused the death of his wife in the year 1836. It is thought that Poe provided medical care to his wife during her illness by attending to her cough and cleaning away the blood that the cough produced (Vora and Ramanan 2002: 1521). Given the historical context of tuberculosis's devastating impact on Western populations, it is plausible that this infectious disease may have influenced the background of Poe's tale. It is also plausible that the Red Death alludes to the epidemic outbreak known as the Black Death, given the presence of the latter in the "black velvet" chamber with windows that are "scarlet – a deep blood color" (193). According to Cook "Such a hypothetical disease is seemingly more rapid and potent than such historic killers as bubonic plague, malaria, smallpox, yellow fever, typhus, cholera, or tuberculosis" (2019: 490). It is possible to draw the conclusion that Poe's experience with a pandemic that occurred during his lifetime, particularly the illness of his wife, may have served as a catalyst for the creation of *The Red Death*. In the words of Tresch, "Edgar Allan Poe lived through the harrowing cholera pandemic of the 1830s. He published his story "The Masque of the Red Death" in 1842, just after his wife's first attack from tuberculosis; he would struggle to pay for her care" (para. 1). The main emphasis of this paper is to underscore the tragedy associated with a fatal infectious pandemic, regardless of the particular characteristics of the pandemic that is fictionalized as the Red Death.

The moniker of the lethal plague, the Red Death, heightens the level of fear and anxiety among Prince Prospero and the upper class attendee. The association between the color "Red" and the word "Death" suggests that death is a gory affair. Rapid heart palpitations, a controlling feeling of sudden nausea and dizziness, and an acute fear of death, which is the ultimate horror that leads to an intense feeling of deadly shock are all symptoms that contribute to the pandemic's escalation of panic.

In Poe's "The Masque", the pandemic panic is symbolized by the inevitability of death. Prince Prospero isolates himself in a fortified castle to escape the plague that leads to certain death, although he overlooks the fact that death is inescapable. When the revelers come across the Mummy of the Red Death, they breathe out in unspeakable terror as they take off the mask and discover that the being is insubstantial. During pandemics, certain individuals may suffer from thanatophobia, characterized by acute panic, anxiety, and intense fear of death, leading to isolation, fear, and potentially fatal consequences. Prince Prospero and his revelers isolate themselves in the castellated abbey to escape the fear of death caused by the disease. Vora and Ramanan believe that "these images of the red death were evidently hallucinations" (2002:1522). This is a legitimate point, since the terrified people don't die from the Red Death but from their own panic.[2]

3.1.2 Disapprobation, surprise, horror and disgust

Poe is considered a prominent figure in Gothic fiction. He is best known for his gothic style that evokes mystery, terror, horror, and suspense through the bizarre settings, strange characters, and mysterious plot. Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death*"* is regarded as a powerful Gothic work that uses the pestilence as an efficacious literary device. The opening line in the story stimulates a feeling of horror and indicates the fatality of the plague: "The 'Red Death' had long devastated the country. No pestilence had been ever so fatal, or so hideous" (p. 192). Although the "castellated abbey" is fortified and well-improvised, it gives a sense of dreadful, ghastly, eerie, and dreary atmosphere that increases the amount of horror rather than mitigates it.

Through the responses of the masqueraders, Prince Prospero, and his courtiers, Poe accurately dramatizes the petrifying experience of pandemics, including that of COVID-19. Poe's story portrays a sense of horror akin to that induced by COVID-19 by illustrating the reaction of the revelers at the masquerade gala upon recognizing the peculiar appearance of the Red Death. Upon the entrance of the mummer, the "whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed" (p. 196). Their response to the horror of pandemic is collective as "the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood — and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror" (ibid).

Rumors of a bizarre and unsettling masquerader in Poe's pandemic generate buzzing and whispering, disapproval, and wonder, as well as dread, horror, and revulsion. Consequently, "there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. The rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around" (ibid). During pandemics, rumors and murmurs tend to propagate rapidly and have lasting consequences. With the spread of coronavirus, rumors "can trigger negative attitudes and impacts of the disease, and the fear of COVID-19 emerges. Fear reflects a situation judged as dangerous, and fear of the virus is detrimental to thinking carefully about rumors and leads to irrational decisions based on incomplete or incorrect information" (Luo, Wang, Guo and Luoa 2021). The Masqueraders in disguise are startled by the presence of the Red Death, which is why the murmurs elicit fear and distress. They have a frightening sense of discomfort and unrest, as evidenced by their whirring and mumbling. Additionally, they express the revelers' astonishment, censure, and repudiation of the strange masquerade's presence. Then, their discontent is replaced by fear and disgust as "arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive at first of disapprobation and surprise — then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust" (Poe 1994: 196). Each of these stages is followed by the celebrants. The gathering of psychotic people must bear the rigid corpse's mask-covered visage for a while.[3] The narrator informs us that "a throng of the revelers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer" (p. 197). They surpass the stage of terror, horror, and disgust to the stage of accepting

reality. They "gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave-cerements and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form" (p. 198). Their hope is lost the moment they realize that the grotesque figure is imperceptible.

Prince Prospero is "convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage" (p. 196). The prince's courtiers turn pale and dare not halt the "mummer" as it freely travels through the seven chambers. Meanwhile, the Prince is enraged by his cowardice and rushes toward the mummer, with none of the courtiers daring to follow him due to their inability to escape "a deadly terror" (p. 197). The prince "bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly round and confronted his pursuer" (ibid.). The prince lets out a piercing scream before passing away in the chamber lined with black velvet; the company members thus concede the existence of the Red Death. Prince Prospero experiences all stages of responding to pandemic fear. He is shocked by the appearance of the spectral image. Then he denies the existence of the bizarre figure by uttering "who dares thus to make mockery of our woes? Uncase the varlet that we may know whom we have to hang to-morrow at sunrise from the battlements" (pp. 196-197). Finally, he finds acceptance and hope in confronting the pursuer. It seems that Prince Prospero and his elite are hopeful of finding a colorful and luxurious haven far away from the outside world and the fatal contagion. However, by the end of the story, the presence of the Red Death "was acknowledged […]. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel and died each in the despairing posture of his fall" (p. 198). The Red Death controls all the party, "the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired" (ibid). The "last gay" designates the last hope and pulse that expired at the "despairing posture" of death.

While the outer world is being destroyed, Prince Prospero isolates himself and 1,000 other aristocratic people in his walled abbey to avoid death. The prince and his privileged companions, however, are not immune to the lethal infection. To show how similar events might happen everywhere and at any time, the story takes place in an unknown place during an indeterminate period. The prince's actions in the face of the inevitable epidemic are reasonable and understandable given the unconscious psychological drive to fight for survival and self-preservation. According to Wright (2021:51), this psychological drive transforms the prince's activity into a "retreat" that may be seen "as a technical device to invoke the claustrophobic atmosphere of horror". This oppressive mood suggests the chilling atmosphere of the tomb and death and is reminiscent of "Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all" (2021:198).

Several studies interpret the hues of the seven chambers as a representation of the stages of life from birth to death omitting the universality of them (Zimmerman 2009; Akhmedovna and Shakhnoza 2022). It could be argued that Prince Prospero's Abbey serves as a symbol for Earth, while the enclosed, circular chambers in various colors represent the seven continents. The pandemic's

beginning and the continent from which it spread are represented by the chamber of black velvet with its blood-colored windows. Likewise, the revelers constitute the inhabitants of the earth due to the diversity of their costumes. As stated by Poe, "there is much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust" (p. 195). Besides, they bear resemblance to the privileged and securely sheltered inhabitants of the expat compound in Elsir's *Ebola 76*. The ebony clock serves as a symbol of temporal progression, and its oscillating pendulums serve as a reminder to the occupants of their inevitable mortality.

The abbey in Poe's literary work is reminiscent of a castle, characterized by its fortified and enclosed nature, and serves as a symbolic representation of the lockdown measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Dewi (2021) posits that the act of wearing masks is a component of the medical protocol in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas in "The Red Death," masks are worn for "evasion and cosmetic reasons" (2021:588). It could be deduced that the masqueraders lock themselves down into the abbey enforcing themselves into a physical quarantine to avoid the contagious Red Death. Moreover, wearing masks can be regarded as a precautionary emotional procedure to avoid the fear stimulated by the Red Death. To mitigate and curb the transmission of the coronavirus, several countries implemented lockdown measures on their citizenry. The implementation of sanitization practices and the utilization of facemasks are preventative measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The masqueraders symbolize the individuals who wear facial coverings during social events as a precautionary measure against contagion.

3.2.1 Ebola, corona, and the 'prototypical' human reaction in *Ebola 76*

The verisimilitude of Elsir's *Ebola 76* can be attributed in part to the writer's professional background as a physician, which lends credibility to his depictions of epidemic illnesses in his fictionalized settings. When queried about the potential influence of his medical vocation on his literary pursuits, the author's response was unsurprising: "Of course, medicine helped me a lot because the medical profession is the most closely related profession to the human being [. . .]. I was inspired by personalities, names, and situations, and built on them" (Abu Al-Saud 2020).[4] Elsir was among those who witnessed the 1976 outbreak of Ebola, comparable to how he is currently experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being published seven years prior, *Ebola 76* foreshadows the subsequent psychosocial vicissitudes of COVID-19 in the same manner that it describes the cultural vicissitudes of Ebola through flashbacks. Elsir's reflections on his experience with COVID-19 eight years later underscore the anticipatory nature of *Ebola 76*: "My vision itself is repeated in COVID-19, and if I write a novel in this regard, I will only add the changes of environments, technology and the incredible cultural progress that undermines the throne of the virus" (Issa 2020).[5]

Elsir's literary pursuits are closely intertwined with his medical profession, which accounts for the authentic portrayal of the human encounter with epidemics in his literary works. However, despite its significance, the autobiographical

element is solely referenced as a foundational element for the reconstruction of textual evidence presented in *Ebola 76*. This work positions Elsir's fictional portrayal of Ebola as a prototype for both the historical 1976 Ebola outbreak and the contemporary COVID-19 pandemic. Lewis Nawa was employed as a manual worker at a textile manufacturing facility located in Nzara, a region within South Sudan, during the Ebola outbreak of 1976. Upon learning of his mistress Elaine's passing due to Ebola in the Congo, Lewis embarks on a journey to Kinshasa, where he encounters a diverse array of individuals, including Kanini, who harbors the Ebola virus within her bloodstream. Following a two-day interaction, Lewis contracts the disease and subsequently returns to Nzara. Regrettably, he unknowingly transmits the ailment to his Kenyan counterpart, Anami Okiyano, and the remainder of the populace. As the ailment disseminates within the confines of the Nzara medical facility and the neighboring populace, the expression "epidemic" acquires contagious properties. The insufficiency of medical staff and resources in healthcare facilities has resulted in the utilization of "Ebola Square" as a makeshift medical center.

Elsir's viewpoint regarding the Ebola-Corona outbreak exemplifies the multifaceted human reaction to pandemics, encompassing emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions. The corollary in question is most aptly demonstrated through the account provided by the narrator regarding Darina's reaction to the proliferation of Ebola was characterized by a combination of emotions:

> Darina, convinced the virus had got her, had started to come to terms with her imminent demise, demonstrating all the traditional stages of grief as outlined in medical textbooks, even though she had no knowledge of them: *shock, denial, acceptance, and hope*" (2015:132, emphasis added).

Elsir, the medical doctor, reflects upon the model of the five stages of grief that are introduced by the Swiss American psychiatrist Kübler-Ross. According to the Kübler-Ross model, the stages include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. As featured in *Ebola 76*, the stages of grief can be construed as reactions to fear and trepidation in times of adversity. Irrespective of the spatiotemporal variables or dynamics, a consistent human behavioral response is elicited in the face of horror, whether it is triggered by Ebola or COVID-19. In the context of COVID-19, it can be observed that individuals tend to experience similar stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) in response to the distressing nature of the illness. As featured in *Ebola 76*, the stages of grief can be construed as reactions to fear and trepidation in times of adversity. This study aims to analyze the various stages of the COVID-19 pandemic by drawing parallels with Elsir's *Ebola 76*. Specifically, the focus will be on the initial two phases characterized by widespread external and internal panic, and the impact of such panic on individuals as they grapple with the reality of their mortality. The present study will examine a range of responses, encompassing the viewpoints of Lewis Nawa and Anami Okiyano, the conjurer Jamadi Ahmad, the inhabitants of the Congolese border, James Riyyak, non-native residents of the Nzara exile settlement, and Ruwadi Monti and Darina.

3.2.2 "Shock, denial, acceptance, and despair" [6]

During pandemics, individuals experience a sense of loss and encounter a variety of obstacles (i.e. deaths, financial difficulties, insecurities, confusion, and isolation). Cultural nuances can significantly affect the responses of subordinates, as these responses are influenced by factors such as geographical location, environment, religion, and social traditions. Elsir's *Ebola 76* underscores the reactions observed in two significant areas, namely the borders of Congo and Nzara in South Sudan. Initially, shock refers to the physiological or psychological response to an unforeseen or jarring occurrence, often accompanied by internal sensations of discomfort. The symptomatic phase of *Ebola 76* is evidenced by Nawa's profound mourning of his beloved mistress, Elaina (p. 3). Lewis is unaware of the fact that his paramour has succumbed to a contagious disease and that he himself would meet a similar fate in the burial ground. Lewis, along with other mourners, shares the belief that the deaths are caused by a malevolent and vengeful sorcerer (p. 4). Similarly,

> Like in many African countries, there was no shortage of wicked sorcerers in Congo, all specialists in spilling blood, sabotaging childbirth and, in general, doing death's dirty work. Firmly convinced the outbreak was the work of a fellow sorcerer, they simply dreamed of possessing his superior skills (p. 68).

In some African cultures, people attribute diseases to supernatural forces, malicious powers, witchcraft, wicked spirits, and traditional beliefs. People in different African cultures believe in the dissatisfied ancestral spirits or evil spirits that cause diseases and affect people's health. For instance, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* highlights this theme, especially for Igbo culture in Nigeria. Some diseases are perceived as a result of witchcraft as highlighted in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*.

Lewis and Anami experience a comparable internal shock and begin to fear their impending demise. During his transportation to the hospital, Lewis reflects on his romantic involvement with Elaina and anticipates that he will imminently encounter a similar fate. The narrator tells us that "[t]hese were Lewis's disoriented and fearful thoughts as he lay in his colleagues' arms, borne onwards to Nzara's rundown hospital" (p. 40). Lewis is overwhelmed with astonishment to the extent that he is unable to refute the veracity of his infection. Instead of rejecting or fighting his thoughts, he moves through the phases of acquiescence or relinquishment. In Anami's case, it appears that his evaluation of the course of his life during the brief shock seems more courageous than Lewis's. He realizes that "[e]verything had become terribly clear [. . .]. Lewis was going to die and had dragged him down with him. He told himself over and over again not to be afraid. He must fight, and fight he did, vainly attempting to keep terror at bay" (p. 58). Despite experiencing a sense of horror, Lewis does not reveal outright refusal or surrender. Rather, he engages in a process of contemplation to overcome his anxiety.

The loud repetition of the term "pandemic" in the hospital exemplifies the shock and disorder caused by the pandemic. The ensuing apprehension disseminates akin to the ailment itself, as its disquieting ramifications impact the entire milieu of the narrative: "Contagion. Unstoppable, deadly contagion. Everything in the town pointed to this fact. Everything screamed it, loud and clear" (p. 66). The word "contagion" per se creates a state of emotional and physical turmoil in times of pandemics such as Ebola and COVID-19. The nature of this dreadfulness is best explicated in the words of Peters, who invokes Songtag's (1978) remarks in this regard:

> The threat of contagion creates two opposite negative emotions – the care-free extreme individualist attitude of people who think the lockdown can be disregarded and that it provides all kinds of opportunities by breaking isolation; and the other extreme, based on deep fear about an imminent and painful death that stigmatizes, silences and shames those who suffer from the sickness (2021:758).

The deteriorating hospital has only two physicians and is short on medical supplies, and the outbreak has surpassed the hospital's capacity. Thus, one of the squares in Nzara is used as a field hospital with mattresses: "In Ebola Square, the air quivered with anxiety and echoed with groans of pain, while the ground was covered in bodies, most of them more dead than alive" (p. 103). In Nzara, ambulances are uncommon, and Doctor Luther reports that there is "no more medication to treat the victims' restricted blood flow, no painkillers for their headaches and fevers, and no gauze left for their wounds" (p. 121). These tragic scenes of *Ebola 76* parallel those of COVID-19, when the collapse of the global public healthcare system, particularly in impoverished and remote regions, loomed on the horizon. In June 2020, the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported cases of both Ebola and COVID-19. John N. Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, asserts that "for both Ebola and COVID-19, the existence of efficacious vaccines will go a long way in reducing spread and fatality" (Adepoju 2021:461).

When a pandemic causes hysteria, there are multiple manifestations of denial. Psychologically speaking, denial is one of the self-defense mechanisms whereby individuals employ unconsciously to reject the existence of a problem as a means of reducing their anxiety. Typically, individuals who deny Ebola find justification for their denial in rumors, superstitions, and hypotheses concerning the uncontrollable pandemic. This circumstance is articulated precisely in Elsir's work:

> Blithely unaware of this, the people of Congo continued to scoff at the warnings issued by the health authorities […] The people were convinced that the endless parade of death marching through the villages was the work of a vengeful, wicked sorcerer (2015: 3-4).

In Nzara, people's skepticism of the virus's existence varies. For instance, Arab merchants do not believe in a severe and intractable pandemic, and they disregard the lockdown as they have "monopolized trade for decades" (p. 60). They do not intend to close their stores (ibid.). The prostitutes refuse to listen to "whispers" about Ebola because they are unwilling to comply with the standards of cleanliness,

morality, and purity, which would result in the loss of their income (pp. 60-61). The factory employees believe that Ebola only affects primates (p. 61), echoing the widespread belief that COVID-19 is linked to bats. The other extreme that "stigmatizes, silences and shames those who suffer from the sickness" (Peters 2021:758) is represented in the barber Manko Nokosho who adamantly refuses to be treated and "fiercely resist[s] any attempts to load him on a donkey and parade him through the streets" (p. 59). Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the World Health Organization has investigated the virus' transmission from animals to humans. The transmission of the COVID-19 virus from bats to humans is most likely mediated by another species, according to the WHO in March 2021. In addition, James Riyyak, the factory proprietor, transforms his internal terror into realistic thoughts due to his extreme caution. At the onset of the epidemic, Riyyak is despondent: "For the first time since opening the factory, he had begun to entertain the possibility of failure" (p. 61). However, Riyyak attempts to capitalize on the state of public panic by scrutinizing the physical well-being, nutrition, and whereabouts of the fit employees. Although he becomes despondent at the loss of employees like Anami, he has a history of social isolation to prevent infection. He shouts "at the workers, too, ordering them away from one another's backsides and urging them to exercise greater caution in protecting themselves from harm" (p. 62).

Riyyak's prioritization of the well-being of his employees is materialistic rather than altruistic, as he is only concerned with the longevity of his factory and business. Riyyak's behavior is considered normal from the point of view of capitalism which gives the right to the capitalists to act as they wish in order to achieve their interests. Nonetheless, from a Marxist perspective, the level of material production shapes the structure of the social class, and as such, the proletariat needs to be seen as an effective class socially and economically. This has prompted bourgeois capitalism to make concessions in favor of the proletariat over the decades to ensure the growth, progress, and development of their interests. Consequently, Riyyak deals with the workers in a way that serves his unlimited interests to achieve the highest benefit from the spread of the epidemic by manufacturing more masks.

This materialistic impulse compels him to invest in masks: He daubs talisman[7] on the masks to persuade those with indigenous spiritual faiths (who pray to the gods of fire, timber, and trees) to purchase them (p. 73). Badra (2021: 44) confirms that "with the overrunning fear caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, the pressing need for the spiritual and the metaphysical is raised by many". Badra illustrates an example from WHO that encourages religious men to advise people to spiritual practices to reduce their stress and anxiety. Riyyak decides not to rely solely on fate when he visits Ebola Square and instead wears a facemask made of plastic and cotton. After Lewis recovers from Ebola, Riyyak puts him to work on the old machine and confines him inside the factory. In addition, Riyyak never loses faith because he is "confident the epidemic would die down and life would improve" (p. 120). As a result, his response is characterized by "acceptance" of reality, "hope" for the future, and confronting terror.

As individuals seek refuge at the borders of South Sudan to evade the contraction of the lethal Ebola virus, the apprehension experienced by refugees situated at the Congolese frontier is progressively intensifying. According to the directives provided to them, border patrol agents demonstrate a lack of receptiveness or empathy toward refugees at the borders, and they display a sense of fearlessness toward the Ebola virus (p. 88). To their knowledge and understanding, the concepts of "mercy" have not been instructed by their seniors. The horror of the spread of Ebola "was also rife along the border, where fugitives from Congo had gathered. Among them was the great magician Jamadi Ahmed, begging for mercy from the border patrol" (ibid). The participation of military personnel in the combat against COVID-19 is not notably dissimilar from the function of border security forces in the context of the Ebola epidemic. Multiple countries have enlisted military personnel to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic through the establishment of shelters for the homeless, dispensation of essential supplies such as food and medication to vulnerable populations, and provision of aid to governments in enforcing quarantine measures. The refugees have experienced a state of emotional conflict, oscillating between feelings of extreme fear and cautious optimism.

The culmination of an individual's response to a traumatic incident is characterized by acceptance and hope. The narrator asserts, "[n]o matter how strong or how real their terror, they had provisions and they had hope — they simply had to wait it out" (p. 91). They have food, beverages, and wine to alleviate their "sense of impending doom" (pp. 90-91). Despite the impending unknown, there exists a palpable sense of hope and love at the frontiers, where numerous romances develop. Many single females have found "the borders to be the ideal setting for a little love affair, free from the obligations of letter writing and the hopes and fears of marriage proposals" (p. 123).

Horror also controls major characters such as the magician Jamadi, who attempts, in vain, to "fight fear with art" using his magical tricks, despite knowing that they cannot withstand the Ebola epidemic:

> It was this very terror that presented a golden opportunity for the artists of the region to attract a large audience desperately in need of distraction, and a movement began to form that would soon earn the title 'Fight Fear with Art' (p. 107).

The magician, Jamadi Ahmad, thinks that people dreadfully need to distract their feelings of fear from the contagious pandemic. He exploits the situation to promote his art and magic. However, Jamadi Ahmad hides his deep fear and finds that he is the one who needs distraction. He realizes that "[t]he fear was not being fought with art, but with an additional dose of fear. […] In the end, even Jamadi decided to give in to his fear, as everyone else had done. He packed up his equipment, desperately wishing his whole routine would die a swift death so he could finally be free, a Magician no more" (p. 112).

Ruwadi Monti, the guitarist, is not in a better situation than Jamadi Ahmad. His dread induces an emotional panic that affects him physically. His "thyroid gland went into overdrive. His eyes popped hysterically, his heart pounded, and his

fingers trembled so uncontrollably" (p. 69). When one of his Francophone organizers informs him that the Ebola virus also affects Nzara and Congo, Ruwadi "remained silent, afraid of what he might hear if he asked about the worker. His thoughts wandered frantically over the possible outcomes of his predicament" (p. 72). Like Jamadi, Ruwadi tries to combat fear with art by asking Darina and the organizers to play music on the streets of Nzara. However, his musical campaign is ineffective because "the dead had no use for a famous and talented musician, the half dead [are] more concerned with finding a doctor or vaccine, and the healthy [are] overcome with terror that art had no chance against it" (p. 115). In the end, he "had given up on his fits of anxiety and had stopped wasting his time hanging around the streets." (p. 112). According to the narrator, "[a]rt and beauty had no sway in the time of Ebola" (p. 116).

Darina is another character who is terrified of the infectious contagion. In a dramatic scenario, she maintains a safe distance from her companion, Ruwadi, to avoid contracting the virus. According to Elsir's account, Darina is deeply disturbed by the gruesome display of the "bloody scenes" in Ebola Square, which consists of "corpses, syringes, [and] decay" (p. 71). Intimidation causes her heart to beat rapidly, and she begins to lament the end of her brief existence. She hears on the radio that the infection's symptoms are sneezing and joint pains, followed by bleeding, even a simple sneeze, insect attacks, and scabs would drive her insane. Darina's susceptibility to infections is attributed to the psychological distress that she endures. Her anxieties take the form of hallucinations as she recalls the images of a tennis player and imagines writing him a letter that begins, *"My love ... Wait for me in the same restaurant. . .This disaster will soon be over and I will return"* (p. 115). Accordingly, Darina experiences some stages of grief as illustrated by Elsir "shock, denial, acceptance, and hope" (p. 132). Returning to/Calling Kubler-Ross's 5-stage model of grief which includes denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, Darina undergoes a few stages rather than five. David Kessler and Kubler-Ross (2005) clarify that "The stages […] have been very misunderstood over the past three decades. They were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grief is as individual as our lives" (p. 7). As explained, not everyone goes through these stages successively because they are non-linear, and everyone has his/her own experience of life.

The suffering in the "expat compound" is comparable to that of the refugees and citizens of Nzara. However, the latter is demonstrated on educational, social, and scientific levels because "[a]mong the wealthy classes, there was a more profound, philosophical type of rumination" (p. 87). Elsir demonstrates that regardless of a person's social standing, fear in times of crisis is inherent to the human condition. The narrator declares, "All hope is lost" near the end of the novel to emphasize the fears of those who have stuck between hope and emotional or physical death. The novelist embodies not only the thoughts of refugees but also the horror of those affected by the contagion. In this way, the parallel structure is observed. When individuals lose hope, existence and nonexistence become

equivalent. For instance, Lewis is 'The Man of the Year' for bringing Ebola to Nzara, where he recovers while Anami, the factory employees, Tina, Tina's mother, and Uncle Majouk perish. Lewis recovers but continues to resemble a corpse while imprisoned in Riyyak's factory, and for him, death is preferable to a joyless existence in mandatory confinement.

Although the general atmosphere of *Ebola 76* teems with hopelessness, some characters emanate the glimmer of hope. For instance, Riyyak maintains optimism and believes that life is progressing. The "unmarried girls [has] found the borders to be the ideal setting for a little love affair", and they are also charged with hope (p. 123). The refugees at the Congo-Sudan border and the citizens of Nzara are hopeful that helicopters will rescue them (p. 128).

Overall, the descriptive formula of pandemic terror in *Ebola 76* appears to foreshadow, so to speak, the horror that has befallen the world since the outbreak of COVID-19:

> In the market, all commerce had ground to a halt. […] In the industrial quarter, an air of stagnation lay over the factories. […] Endless scenes of tragedy now filled the streets: […] Schools and government offices had been abandoned, and all those with the means and the will were preparing to flee before the borders closed and the town was cut off from the outside world (p. 66).

Historiographically, the COVID-19 experience replicates the same interminable tragedy of economic and industrial stagnation, the closure of schools and universities, the abandonment of government offices, the closure of borders and airports, and an increase in the demand for facemasks. Similarities include hysterical behavior (pp. 87- 88), producing facemasks in high quantities (p. 122), a lack of medicines (p. 121), medical personnel (pp. 93 - 94, p. 115), and basic medical equipment (p. 121); the absence of medical tests and appropriate vaccines (p. 88, p. 115); and the inability to deal with the large number of infected patients in hospitals (p. 67), particularly in poor countries and remote villages. and remote villages. As a pandemic spreads, concerns and anxieties intensify, as do health, psychological, economic, and social crises on every level.

4. Conclusion

Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" and Elsir's *Ebola 76* reveal the progressive nature of human response during pandemics and epidemics through a fictionalized pattern. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic bears a striking resemblance to the occurrences portrayed in the aforementioned literary pieces. The human reaction to a pandemic, whether in a fictional or historical context, is linked to psychosocial stability, resulting in the inevitability of the horrors of contagion. The element of fear is a significant factor in the various stages of human response to pandemics and epidemics, and it has been observed to have a subtle yet problematic impact on human behavior. The stages can be illustrated as disapprobation or denial; surprise or shock and terror; horror or disgust; and acceptance and hope. It seems that the final stage, hope, is concealed behind the horror of the pandemic. Although Poe's story ends with the death of all the party, and Elsir declares that all hope is lost by

the end of the novel, they confirm the idea that hope lingers as long as man's pulse continues. Despite the recognition of these concerns, any attempt to oppose them is deemed ineffective. The characters in *Ebola 76* and "The Masque of the Red Death" resort to art, leisure, and confinement as ineffective means of coping with their anxieties. The aforementioned scenario is indicative of the situation portrayed in *Ebola 76*, where the refugees residing in the frontier resort to self-provisioning of sustenance and libations, while the magician Jamadi endeavors to alleviate their anxieties through his sleight-of-hand performances. Poe's literary work portrays a similar sense of panic and consequences, as the privileged and secluded Prince Prospero and his entourage are unable to evade their anxieties within the confines of their fortified abbey. However, Elsir's *Ebola 76* is more comprehensive than Poe's The Masque. Poe's treatment of the disease is restricted to the elite and the privileged class, while Elsir's representation of Ebola includes different classes: foreigners, diplomats in the expat compound, capitalists, artists, peddlers, hospitals, markets, factories, and border closure. This makes Elsir's novel more effective in simulating reality and tracking the universal experience of COVID-19.

Despite the provision of various forms of entertainment, such as musicians, ballet dancers, and wine, individuals are unable to escape their fears. The loud ticking of the colossal clock in Poe's short story serves as a reminder to the individuals of their apprehensions regarding the spread of the contagion beyond the confines of the abbey. Notwithstanding the auditory output of the clock being melodious, the musicians abruptly discontinue their performance due to a state of extreme agitation. Poe and Elsir may have aimed to communicate the notion that pandemics inevitably give rise to horror, irrespective of the measures taken by individuals to fortify themselves or indulge in pleasures. This is because emotions and feelings are integral aspects of human nature. The COVID-19 pandemic validates the visionary power of Poe and Elsir. Amidst lockdowns and quarantine periods, considerable measures were taken to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to circumvent the effects of this viral intimidation, individuals have equipped themselves with various forms of entertainment, nourishment, and technological advancements. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition of the elements of art, pleasure, and restriction seems incongruous and presents a formidable task to harmonize.

Najah A. Alzoubi (PhD) Assistant Professor – Corresponding Author
Department of English Language and Literature,
The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan
ORCID Number: 0000-0003-3770-1938
Email: najaha@hu.edu.jo

Haitham M. Talafha (PhD) Assistant Professor
Department of English Language and Literature,
The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan
ORCID Number: 0000-0002-0249-7554
Email: talafha@hu.edu.jo

Motasim O. Almwajeh (PhD) Assistant Professor
Department of English Language and Literature,
The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan
ORCID Number: 0000-0002-0353-3553
Email: motasimrawashdeh@hu.edu.jo

Abdullah F. Al-Badarneh (PhD) Assistant Professor
Department of English Language and Literature,
The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan
ORCID Number: 0000-0002-2129-2255
Email: abadarneh@hu.edu.jo

Endnote

[1] Carl Jung's archetypes are universal, recurring images, or innate ideas that represent a typical human experience, and they exist in the collective unconscious of the psyche of human beings. Consequently, human response to pandemic fear can be considered as an archetypal uniformity that exists in the collective unconscious. It can be named collective archetypes in responding to fears.

[2] Elsir's *Ebola 76* shows a "deathbed awakening" between alertness and oblivion. Lewis "had woken from his coma in a small, blood-stained hospital room littered with syringes and thick with the smell of disinfectant," displaying dying hallucination (p. 63).

[3] During the Ebola pandemic, "in times of distress, when all other entertainment fails, whispers often become the most valuable commodity" (Elsir 60). Rumors and whispers spread quicker than pandemics.

[4] The translation is provided by the authors.

[5] The translation is provided by the authors.

[6] Elsir 2015: 132

[7] Talismans and amulets are utilized in several African societies to protect against evil spirits, healing ailments, and delivering luck. Talismans and amulets vary in size, form, color, and content depending on their purpose and location. For instance, in Ghana, leather talismans are made for identification, protection, and medical purposes (John Osei Bobie Boahin and Oteng Abena Akyeabea 2013:362).

References

Adepoju, Paul. (2021). 'Ebola and COVID-19 in DR Congo and Guinea'. *Lancet Infectious Disease*, 21(4): 461. DOI: 10.1016/S1473-3099(21)00155-9.

Akhmedovna, Bakhronova M. and Bakhshullayeva Shakhnoza. (2022). 'The image of disease in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*'. *PINDUS Journal of Culture, Literature, and ELT*, 2 (1): 19-22. https://literature.academicjournal.io/index/php/literature/artilce/view/207 (Retrieved on 10 November 2023).

Abu Al-Saud, Ashraf. (2020). Sudanese writer Amir Tag Elsir: I do not write a documented history, but I imagine a history and write it. *Al-Ahram Newspaper*, https://gate.ahram.org.eg/daily/News/203398/83/764651/ (Retrieved on 15 October 2023).

Badra, Mahasen (2021). 'Towards an aesthetics of belief in Covid19 pandemic time: performatism in Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*'. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* (*IJAES*), 2(21): 29-48. https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.21.2.2 (Retrieved on 5 April 2024)

Boahin, John Osei Bobie and Oteng Abena Akyeabea. (2013). 'Amulets, a cultural presumption in Ghana'**.** *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 2(1): 358-368**.**

Cook, Jonathan. (2019). 'Poe and the apocalyptic sublime *The Masque of the Red Death*'. *Religion and the Arts*, 23: 489–515. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685292-02305002

Dewi, Novita. (2021). 'Contemplating Covid-19 through disease and death in three short stories by Edgar Allan Poe'. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(2): 848- 863. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele. v8i2.19240

Elsir, Amir Tag. (2015). *Ebola 76*. Trans. Charis Bredin and Emily Danby. London: Draft Publisher.

Housham, Jane. (2015). Ebola '76 by Amir Tag Elsir review – a black-comic danse macabre. *The Guardian*, Review: (19 Jun 2015). https://www.theguardian.com/profile/jane-housham/2015/nov/13/all (Retrieved on 15 Jan. 2024)

Issa, Zeinab (2020). Amir Tag Elsir: If I wrote about Corona, I would only add the change of environments and the amazing civilization progress. *Misr Elmahrosa.* http://www.misrelmahrosa.gov.eg/NewsD.aspx?id=63798 (Retrieved on 10 October 2023).

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. (1969). *On Death and Dying: What the Dying have to teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and their own Families* London: Routledge.

Luo, Peng, Chenxiao Wang, Feng Guo and Li Luoa. (2021). 'Factors affecting individual online rumor sharing behavior in the COVID-19 pandemic'. *Computers in Human Behavior* 125: 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106968

Peters, Michael A. (2021). 'Love and social distancing in the time of COVID-19: The philosophy and literature of pandemics'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53 (8): 755-759. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1750091

Poe, Edgar Allan. (1994). *Selected Tales: Edgar Allan Poe*. London: Penguin Books.

Ramadan, Faten A. (2022). 'Outbreak narratives and Medical humanities: A transdisciplinary comparative approach to the literary representation of Ebola in Preston's *The Hot Zone* (1994) and Tag Elsir's *Ebola 76*'. *Faculty of Arts Journal*, Fayoum University, 14(2): 658-706. https://doi.org/10.21608/jfafu.2022.139703.1761

Songtag, Susan. (1978). *Illness as Metaphor*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Tresch, John. (2021)**.** Edgar Allan Poe, science reporter: His wild, sometimes forgotten science writing has a lesson for our COVID moment. *Slate*. https://slate.com/technology/2021/08/edgar-allan-poe-science-writing-disease-covid.html (Retrieved on 20 February, 2024)

Vora, Setu. K. and Sundaram V. Ramanan. (2002). 'Ebola-Poe: A modern-day parallel of the red death?' *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 8(12): 1521-23. https://doi.org/10.3201/eid0812.020176

Wright, Laurence. (2021). 'Plague and cultural panic: Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*'. *English Studies in Africa*, 64 (1-2): 47-58. https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2021.1969096

Yuliastuti, Anicleta and Rommel Utungga Pasopati. (2021). 'The epiphany of faces of COVID-19 pandemic as reflected in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*'. *UC Journal: ELT, Linguistics and Literature Journal*, 2 (1): 43-57. https://doi.org/10.24071/uc.v2i1.3431

Zimmerman, Brett. (2009). 'The Puzzle of the color symbolism in *The Masque of the Red Death*: Solved at last?' *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, 10 (3): 60–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/41506370