The Fate of Animals During the Pandemic: Reflection and Metaphor in Contemporary Vietnamese Literature

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Abstract

This article examines and analyzes the fate of animals in a selection of contemporary Vietnamese literary works. While most literary studies on epidemics tend to emphasize human experiences— including loss, loneliness, and psychological crises—this research shifts the focus to a less-examined subject: animals and their destinies within the context of pandemics. From this perspective, the study elucidates the dual role of animals, both as biological entities affected by catastrophic events and as symbolic representations that reflect human life and society amid environmental crises. This study is structured around three main components. First, we investigate the prejudice that views animals as the origin and cause of disease outbreaks. Second, we focus on analyzing human attitudes and actions toward animals during pandemics. Third, we place animal representations in dialogue with contemporary theoretical frameworks, including ecocriticism, speciesism, and pandemic literature, to propose the idea that animals possess immunological potential and can contribute to improving human health. The research methodology encompasses textual analysis of representative literary works written between 2000 and the present, as well as synchronic and diachronic comparisons of Eastern and Western narrative texts across various historical periods. It also employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates literature, medicine, ecocriticism, sociology, and cultural studies. The objective of this article is to clarify the role of animals within contemporary literary discourse and to suggest the possibility of redefining the human–nature relationship in the post-pandemic context. This study represents a new contribution to the interdisciplinary dialogue between literature and the environmental humanities in Vietnam, while also promoting a deeper awareness of human ethical responsibility toward other species in an increasingly vulnerable shared world.

Keywords: animals; contemporary Vietnamese Literature; ecocriticism; non-human; pandemic

Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, global attention was primarily focused on the fate of human beings. The plight of animals, by contrast, was often overlooked or scarcely mentioned, despite the fact that they, too, were severely affected. In his book *The Future After Covid: Futurist Expectations for Changes, Challenges, and Opportunities After the Covid-19 Pandemic*, Jason Schenker discusses the transformations, challenges, and opportunities that emerged in the aftermath of the pandemic — ranging from unemployment, education, energy, finance, monetary policy, real estate, and national security to tourism and entertainment. However, this work makes no reference to the vulnerabilities faced by the animal world, addressing animals only as commodities within the human food supply chain (Schenker, 2021, 122). Similarly, in its report *Imagining the Future of Pandemics and Epidemics: A 2022 Perspective*, the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted extensive research to retrospectively examine past pandemics, assess previous epidemic threats, and improve strategies for disease preparedness and management, emphasizing the need for coordination and cooperation at all levels to safeguard humanity's future. In this context, the WHO's final message emphasizes the importance of strengthening the "One Health" approach, which acknowledges the inherent interconnection between human health, animal health, and the shared environment in which they coexist.

Over the past two centuries, research in the natural and social sciences has laid a crucial foundation for understanding the complex interconnections among animals, disease, evolution, and culture. As early as the 19th century, Charles Darwin, in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), established the scientific basis for explaining variation, adaptation, and interspecies interaction as part of a continuous evolutionary process. He wrote:

> We have seen that through the process of selection, humans can achieve remarkable results and compel organisms to adapt to their own needs by accumulating small but useful variations that nature has bestowed upon them. Yet Natural Selection is a force that operates ceaselessly and far surpasses the limited capacity of human effort, for the works of Nature are works of Art. (Darwin, 2014, 100)

Building upon this evolutionary foundation, modern scientific thought has expanded its observation of the living world beyond a static and isolated system. It is a complex network of interactions among species, in which every organism serves as a vital link in the dynamic flow of nature's transformations. This perspective necessitates a reconceptualization of the human-biosphere relationship—not as one of domination or mere exploitation, but as a process of coevolution. In other words, human life is deeply intertwined with and profoundly influenced by the lives of other forms of life.

In the twentieth century, Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1997) further expanded this perspective by demonstrating that microbes and epidemics are not merely biological phenomena but also agents that shape human history, influencing social structures, power relations, and the development of civilizations. Similarly, Baratay (2012), in *Le Point de Vue Animal*, asserted that representing animal suffering and death in literature constitutes a narrative strategy that enables humanity to critically reassess its own central position. He wrote:

> The influence of animals in their relationship with humans and their true role as active agents must be acknowledged, especially since their gestures, behaviors, social interactions, and even their 'cultures' (as recent ethologists have noted) are sensed, perceived, and evaluated by humans in the field, who in turn react, act, and think accordingly. The living animal can no longer be considered a black hole in history[1]. (Baratay, 2012, 30)

More recently, in his work *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*, David Quammen further elucidates the process of viral "spillover" from animals to humans, emphasizing the profound ecological interconnectedness underlying all pandemics. "Ecological instability drives the emergence of infectious diseases. When you shake a tree, something will fall" (Quammen, 2021, 25). These findings, when situated within a literary context, reveal that representations of animals during pandemics become focal points for intersecting biological, historical, ethical, and aesthetic discourses.

The convergence of animal health, human health, and ecosystem health is a defining reality of the twenty-first century. Human activities that accelerate climate change simultaneously contribute to the increasing risk of pandemics. Understanding the past and future of zoonotic diseases, therefore, requires new paradigms for studying the intricate relationships among humans, animals, and the environment. Over the past two decades, literature has re-examined the animal world, offering a more objective assessment of the role of animals in human life, particularly in the context of epidemic outbreaks.

However, in the Vietnamese context, the relationship among animals, pandemics, and literature remains a significant gap in scholarly research. Most existing studies have focused on human experiences during pandemics or on the discourse of disease as a social metaphor (Ho Trinh Quynh Thu, et al., 2022; Nguyen Thuy Trang, 2024).

[1] Quote verbatim: "l'influence des animaux dans la relation avec les hommes, sur leur véritable rôle d'acteur, d'autant que leurs gestes, leurs comportements, leurs sociabilités leurs "cultures" (comme l'évoquent des éthologues récents) sont devinés, perçus, estimés par les hommes sur le terrain et qu'ils réagissent, agissent, pensent en conséquence. L'animal vivant ne peut plus être un trou noir de l'histoire.

Meanwhile, the fate of animals—despite their clear presence in many literary works—has not yet been systematically examined, either in terms of socio-historical representation or symbolic meaning. This research gap highlights the urgent need to revisit contemporary Vietnamese literary texts through the lenses of animal studies and ecocriticism.

This article aims to analyze the fate of animals during pandemic times as a distinctive literary and cultural phenomenon, thereby illuminating how they are portrayed both as victims of biological history and as complex metaphors for vulnerability, dependency, and interspecies entanglement in the modern world. The study not only contributes new materials and perspectives to Vietnamese literary criticism but also affirms literature's crucial role as a discursive space for rethinking bioethical issues in the post-pandemic era.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, *The Fate of Animals During Pandemics: Representation and Metaphor in Contemporary Vietnamese Literature*, the author employs an interdisciplinary research framework that integrates theoretical and practical approaches, bridging literary studies and socio-cultural realities. Specifically, the methods applied include synthesis and classification, synchronic and diachronic comparison, interdisciplinary analysis, content analysis, and empirical investigation.

Results and Discussion

1. Animals and the Prejudice of Being the Origin and Trigger of Epidemics

Since ancient times, animals have often appeared as integral elements in humanity's narratives of disease, simultaneously regarded as the source of contagion and as companions to human beings. For instance, in ancient Akkadian literature, dogs were considered the cause of rabies (Wu Yuhong, 2001). In the *Book of Exodus* in the Bible, disease and animals are consistently intertwined as metaphors within the *Ten Plagues* that God unleashed upon Egypt to compel the Pharaoh to free the Israelites from slavery. Similarly, the opening of Homer's *Iliad* recounts how Apollo sent a plague upon the Greek army, originating from mules and dogs before spreading to humans as punishment for Agamemnon.

Historically, influenced by anthropocentric thought, literature — along with other fields — paid little attention to the emotions or suffering of non-human animals. In the seventeenth century, French philosopher René Descartes, from a dualistic perspective, sought to separate humans from animals, elevating humanity to the status of nature's owner and asserting that "animals are nothing more than and nothing other than highly complex mechanical devices" (Fontenay, 2013, 31). Animals were thus relegated to a peripheral position, defined as the "other" and excluded from the center of consideration.

In the nineteenth century, Italian scientist Agostino Bassi, in his treatise *Del Contagio in Generale* (1844), emphasized that microscopic organisms could be the cause of human diseases. These theories further consolidated the emergence of the "germ theory of disease" in the late nineteenth century. Such a perspective not only shaped research in medicine and biology but also permeated broader areas of cultural and social life, embedding within human consciousness the assumption that animals were the culprits behind epidemic outbreaks. Later, sociologist J. J. Rousseau opposed this view:

> Everything that comes from the hand of Nature is good; everything degenerates in the hands of humankind. Humans force one type of soil to nourish the products of another, compel one tree to bear the fruit of another; they mix and confuse climates, elements, and seasons. They mutilate the bodies of their dogs, their slaves; they disrupt everything and disfigure everything... nothing is allowed to remain as Nature created it. (Rousseau, 2010, 31)

This serves as one of the foundations upon which we may question long-held, anthropocentric biases toward animals. In contemporary Vietnamese literature, prejudiced views that associate animals with the origin of disease continue to persist, profoundly reflecting how humans perceive, label, and even "blame" other species in the context of ecological crisis. Images of animals as agents of disease transmission are widespread: from wild creatures, livestock, and poultry to parasites and even household pets — all are depicted as potential carriers of pathogens. Such representations expose complex layers of power, ethics, and responsibility within human–animal relationships.

One of the most illustrative examples of this is Do Phan's novel *Flies are Flies*. The narrative is set in a rural village on the outskirts of Hanoi, gripped by anxiety as a sudden cholera outbreak spreads beyond the boundaries of a single commune to engulf the entire province. Many children die of diarrhea due to the lack of timely medical intervention.

> The entire province was placed under a state of medical emergency. Several teams of central health experts were dispatched… Ambulances blared their sirens along the dikes, rushing patients to emergency care. Quarantine checkpoints sprang up along the arterial roads connecting the province to neighboring regions. (Do Phan, 2014, 73)

Following the investigation, the conclusion was reached: "The cause was identified as flies. It has always been so. Everyone agrees. Except the flies" (Do Phan, 2014, 73). In their self-perception as innocent victims, humans attribute all blame to flies. In Vietnamese folk culture, the fly has long been associated with negative connotations. Proverbs and idioms such as "Where there's decay, flies gather," "Sweet honey kills the fly," "Filthy as a fly," "Gratitude as small as a fly," or "Even without illness, longing brings sorrow — like a fly on one's lips," function as metaphors for opportunism, corruption,

and impurity.

Of course, in the world of flies, they are unaware of being seen as vile. From an empathetic, multispecies perspective, Do Phan turns his ear to listen to the voice of the fly. He observes: “There is no war in the society of flies. Their weapon is mutual tolerance for coexistence” (Do Phan, 2014, 207). “In fact, flies never bother humans once they have enough food and space for reproduction. This is their domain. Humans are merely a tiny part of it, capable of coexisting” (Do Phan, 2014, 207). Through a comparative lens that juxtaposes human parasitic behavior toward nature and other species, Do Phan underscores the ecological position of flies in the context of disease. Advances in biology have further revealed the evolutionary significance of flies, as they serve as vital agents for the reproduction and pollination of certain plants and possess biochemical compounds essential for fermentation in the food and processing industries. Within an ecological framework, every species possesses its own *intrinsic value*. Yet, the author provocatively suggests that human behavior is often no more admirable than that of the flies they so readily condemn.

Although Do Phan acknowledges that flies do carry *Escherichia coli* — a pathogenic bacterium associated with cholera outbreaks — he also emphasizes that the *E. coli* present in flies is almost entirely harmless. “It is true that shrimp paste contains a significant amount of E. coli bacteria, but they are harmless. After all, not every *E. coli* strain causes cholera” (Do Phan, 2014, 77). In essence, humans are the true invaders of the flies’ habitat. Moreover, human activities — including the release of polluted water, chemical waste from industrial development, and uncontrolled discharges from traditional craft villages — have severely contaminated the environment. These anthropogenic factors lead to ecological degradation, species degeneration, and cause flies to become deformed, diseased, or die without apparent reason.

> A swarm of flies lived for about a month around the wastewater pit of a household producing vermicelli in the village. Several generations of young flies were born there — frail and sickly. They suffered from a strange disease, paralyzing all six legs. They could only fly and remain motionless, unable to crawl or maneuver. Their foraging became sluggish. They grew emaciated and weak… Some monstrous flies even hatched — with their paired wings fused into one, resembling a tennis racket without a handle. (Do Phan, 2014, 72)

Throughout human development, humanity has relentlessly destroyed ecosystems — essentially dismantling the shared home of all living organisms. Humans have appropriated the territories of flies and countless other species. But what will happen if, one day, animals have nowhere left to live? Will they rise up and eliminate humankind through disease, in the very same way humans once sought to eradicate them? By allowing these “marginal” creatures to speak, Do Phan illustrates that flies are no longer merely the “culprits” blamed for spreading disease and death. The way society treats them — from baseless accusations to acts of total extermination — exposes a collective

human psychology: the readiness to sacrifice other species in order to preserve one's own safety.

This prejudice against flies and the consequences of their eradication are further explored in Nguyen Vinh Nguyen's short story *The Fly Incident*. According to the author, children are taught this bias from an early age: "Our children have been equipped with standard textbook knowledge: they know to feel disgust toward flies (because flies are insects that carry disease!)" (Nguyen Vinh Nguyen, 2008, 87). The author even proposes a provocative hypothesis: if humanity continues to stigmatize flies excessively and kill them brutally, the day may come when "flies will strike back against our world. And a fly storm will become reality" (Nguyen Vinh Nguyen, 2008, 95).

Similarly, Do Phan's novel *Flowing Through the Darkness* portrays the outbreak of avian influenza among animals, occurring in parallel with a cholera epidemic among humans. The prevailing public opinion holds that poultry is the primary source of infection. Chickens and ducks in rural areas become the focal point of fear and avoidance. However, through a calm and objective narrative voice, the author reveals that the true causes lie elsewhere — in the practices of hunting wild birds, keeping ornamental birds, unhygienic animal slaughter, and the consumption of raw poultry blood (*tiết canh*)[2].

The character Lao Quang in the novel makes a living by trapping wild birds and selling them to collectors of exotic species in the city. Using his keen hearing, he captures healthy, melodious birds while releasing the injured or sick ones back into the wild. Humans have confined animals, transforming them into objects of amusement. As Randy Malamud notes in *Zoo and Human Power*, the domestication of wild animals is fundamentally intended to "grant humans a sense of pride in their indirect participation in the hegemonic power of culture" (Malamud, 2015, 190). Consequently, human trapping and domestication practices inadvertently weaken birds' immune systems, cause genetic degeneration, and make them more susceptible to disease — conditions that may, in turn, render birds potential "hosts" for pathogens.

This argument is scientifically grounded. In *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*, David Quammen traces the scientific investigation into the origins of SARS-CoV-2, citing experts who widely agree that the virus most likely originated in a wild animal — possibly a horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus* spp.) from southern or central China — before spilling over into humans via an intermediate host.

> But which animals, and how did they transmit the pathogen to humans? Those questions can only be answered by venturing into the forests, streets, markets, and restaurants of southern China to gather evidence. (Quammen, 2021, 225)

[2] *tiết canh:* a Vietnamese dish made from the fresh blood of animals.

Like a detective investigation, Quammen's narrative captivates readers as he presents evidence of both legal and clandestine cross-border trade routes that funnel wild animals from Southeast Asian countries into China to satisfy the demands of the nation's yewei (wild taste) culture. This cultural appetite encompasses extravagant culinary preferences, the use of natural remedies, and a fascination with exotic aphrodisiacs. The research team notes that "markets also provide a favorable environment for pathogens to switch hosts and spill over into humans" (Quammen, 2021, 228).

Thus, Do Phan's novel *Flowing Through the Darkness* exposes a profound paradox: humans — through their destruction of habitats, wars, and patterns of migration — are in fact the underlying cause of disease outbreaks, yet they attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility by placing the blame on animals.

Sharing the view that the origins of human epidemics lie in humanity's exploitation of nature to satisfy its tastes and appetites, Nguyen Quang Thieu's work *On the Trucks Carrying "Corpses"* recounts an incident in a rural village, told with a sense of magical realism that blurs the line between fact and fable. The story goes that villagers discovered rare white turtles in a lotus pond — an exceptional and precious species. They decided to "capture them all to make turtle soup." Armed with hoes, shovels, sticks, ropes, and bamboo baskets, the men of the village surrounded and captured every white turtle. The turtles stared back at the humans with eyes full of surprise and strangeness. In the frenzy of slaughter, the white turtles disappeared as if they had never existed.

Soon after, the land suffered repeated crop failures, and a chickenpox epidemic spread uncontrollably. Some villagers went blind; many were left with lifelong disabilities as a result of the disease. Interpreting this seemingly superstitious tale, Nguyen Quang Thieu argues that "the villagers had broken the structure of the universe — a structure that, within our limited and desire-driven perception, we are incapable of understanding" (Nguyen Quang Thieu, 2012, 141).

In the final chapter of *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*, Quammen addresses the underlying reasons behind the emergence of zoonotic diseases — pathogens that spread from other species to humans. This phenomenon is not new, yet it is occurring with increasing frequency. He argues that humanity's enormous population, the vast number of domesticated livestock, the destruction of natural habitats, and the breakdown of ecosystems — all these factors could easily be framed as nature's retaliation against humankind. Quammen carefully emphasizes that humans are, in fact, part of nature — and that is precisely the problem. As in the Bible, the ultimate issue stems from humanity's failure to obey divine law. Animals have contributed nothing to this wrongdoing, yet they must share the consequences with humans in innocent solidarity.

From a different perspective, Thuong Ha's novel *Nalis Drifted to the Shore of*

Destiny envisions a virus that attacks humans and paralyzes daily life. Similar to Covid-19, this virus — called "Nalis" — becomes the central agent of crisis. Tracing the origins of Nalis, Thuong Ha demonstrates that microorganisms existed long before the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. Over time, humans have evolved, utilizing their hands and intellect to reshape the natural world.

> When humans recklessly clear forests, cut down trees, and hunt wildlife, ecosystems also gradually change. Some species are driven to extinction — not by natural selection, but by the selection imposed by humankind. (Thuong Ha, 2021, 151)

The emergence of Nalis in the novel serves as both a warning and a message to humanity. Time and again, Nalis and its viral "siblings" — along with their many variants — have appeared within human society as signals, urging people to live in harmony with nature. Yet humanity has persistently ignored these warnings, responding instead with arrogance and contempt toward the natural world. The wrath of Mother Nature, manifested through pandemics, is a devastating and karmic punishment that humans must ultimately face.

> Humanity's economic activity was brought to a standstill by the pandemic. Yet the volume of emissions released into nature dropped to one-third of previous levels. What we are doing is not merely holding humans accountable for their actions, but also restoring a natural world that should rightfully exist. (Thuong Ha, 2021, 155)

Through this narrative voice, *Nalis Drifted to the Shore of Destiny* reads like nature's desperate cry for help — the deep, echoing call of the forests, and the sorrowful voice of microorganisms invisible to the human eye. They are all around us, suspended in the invisible air, enduring alongside humanity the anguish of climate change, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and droughts.

In reality, the Covid-19 pandemic plunged humanity into darkness: hundreds of millions were infected, millions died, families were torn apart, and countless children were left orphaned. Humanity was consumed by a series of urgent questions: Where did this virus come from? Can we control the pandemic? How much longer will we suffer under its grip? Thuong Ha addresses and unravels these anxieties through the symbolic figure of *Nalis*. Nalis — like Covid-19 — is ultimately just a name for the virus that causes disease in humans. In the face of pandemics, we are quick to blame animals, as if the causes were entirely unrelated to human behavior. Voiceless in the human world, animals are made to bear the weight of catastrophe — subjected to suffering, injustice, humiliation, and resentment.

To challenge this misconception and to affirm that "all species, including humans, are equal," contemporary writers adopt a humanistic ecological perspective to defend vulnerable forms of life. Moreover, their narratives are often constructed around a

mirrored structure: the way humans treat animals is ultimately the way humans themselves will be treated.

At a deeper ideological level, attributing the origins of disease to animals functions as a metaphor for humanity's denial of its own responsibility toward nature. By engaging with such imagery, contemporary Vietnamese literature contributes to the deconstruction of anthropocentrism, exposing human culpability in ecological transformations that lead to the emergence of pandemics.

2. Human Actions and Attitudes Toward Animals During Pandemics

Rooted in long-standing human prejudices against animals, our perspectives often fail to recognize that the natural world itself is a victim. However, with the rise of the animal rights movement, scholars have increasingly acknowledged that animals, too, possess emotions and can experience trauma and suffering during outbreaks. Moreover, the tendency to regard animals as mere "collateral damage" reveals a deeper truth: culturally, there is no fundamental difference between how we conceptualize human health and animal health.

In fact, prior to the advent of the "germ theory of disease" and the chemicalization of medicine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the boundary between human and veterinary medicine was far less distinct. Rejecting the germ theory, Rudolf Virchow famously emphasized: "Between animal and human medicine there is no dividing line — nor should there be. The objects may differ, but the experience obtained constitutes the basis of all medicine" (Saunders, 2000, 203).

Later, Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari observed:

> History has shown that the massive increase in human power has not necessarily enhanced the happiness of individual Sapiens and has often caused immense suffering to other animals. Over the past few decades, we have made significant progress in improving human living conditions, reducing poverty, disease, and war. Yet the situation of other animals is deteriorating faster than ever before, and the advances achieved by much of humanity are too new and too fragile to guarantee anything. (Harari, 2022, 615)

Confronted with the threat of species extinction, the question of how humanity acts and responds to the animal world has become a central focus of interdisciplinary research. Beyond the realms of medicine and epidemiology, pandemics expose — with striking clarity — the fate of animals as the silent victims of environmental crises.

In this spirit, contemporary Vietnamese literature has begun to reflect on how humans interact with animals during times of epidemic. Through actions and attitudes, one can discern deeper layers of cultural, psychological, and ethical dimensions within human society. Literature, with its reflective function, not only reconstructs these modes

of behavior but also exposes the limitations of anthropocentric thinking when confronted with the nonhuman world.

One of the most significant epidemics of the twenty-first century was the H5N1 avian influenza outbreak, which lasted from 2004 to 2009 and caused severe losses to both humans and livestock worldwide. Of particular concern was the virus's high mutability and its rapid transmissibility — both from animals to humans and between humans — with complications often proving fatal. A close reading of literary works reveals varying responses of both government authorities and ordinary citizens to poultry, the animals identified as the presumed source of the pandemic.

A striking image of human extremity toward animals during the H5N1 outbreak is found in Nguyen Ngoc Tu's short story *The Endless Field*. When the avian flu spread across the Mekong Delta provinces, Ut Vu and his children were forced to evade veterinary officers. They roamed endlessly across vast, desolate fields, leading a nomadic existence in constant flight. Their fear was that if they entered any village, their flock of ducks would be confiscated, exterminated, and buried alive: "We couldn't cross the Bim Bip river through the Kien Ha region either, since veterinary quarantine there was very strict. And, as we heard, the avian flu was still spreading" (Nguyen Ngoc Tu, 2012, 171). For farmers, such a loss meant "no capital for the next season" — the complete devastation of their livelihoods.

By presenting a multidimensional perspective and diverse human responses to a global health crisis, Thien Son's novel *The Dead River* offers readers profound insights into a period marked by anxiety and uncertainty as the avian influenza pandemic spread across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. High-level alerts about the H5N1 virus — with its capacity for genetic mutation and potential for human-to-human transmission — placed the world under a state of heightened concern and red-level warning. For Vietnam, a country whose economy remains largely dependent on agriculture, the outbreak inflicted enormous material and psychological losses. The sight of "hundreds of thousands of poultry being destroyed from the South to the North," as workers in full-body protective suits and masks buried hundreds of sacks of chickens and ducks mixed with lime and disinfectant chemicals, became a deeply wrenching image for farmers.

> One farmer, who had spent his entire life tied to the fields, chose to end his life to follow his chickens to the other side. He left behind a suicide note expressing his boundless love for his poultry and his dream of opening farms and caring for them in the afterlife. (Thien Son, 2017, 285)

Thien Son's novel functions as a series of vignettes depicting the relentless impact of the epidemic on human life. While the author does not delve into specific individual cases, his panoramic view reveals two opposing human attitudes in the face of a pandemic: on one hand, the implementation of brutal epidemiological measures against animals — mass culling, burial alive, and chemical decomposition of poultry; on the

other, the profound grief and empathy of farmers toward the animal world. More than anyone else, these farmers shared an intimate bond with their livestock. Rather than employing clinical medical terminology, Thien Son renders the epidemic through the lens of social psychology: when pushed to the brink of existential threat, humans are willing to annihilate the very beings they once lived alongside, as if erasing the perceived source of danger. This behavior reflects a recurring historical pattern in pandemic responses — the "purification" of nature to safeguard human survival, even at the cost of other forms of life.

Do Phan's novel *Flowing Through the Darkness* portrays the profound sense of helplessness surrounding the state's brutal handling of livestock suspected of carrying disease. Communities that had relied on animal husbandry for generations suddenly turned their backs on poultry — once both their primary livelihood and their familiar "companions." Individual animals were dragged out, suffocated in sacks, and incinerated in rituals that were simultaneously "purificatory" and violent, as if their destruction were the only means of redeeming the community.

> Avian influenza broke out abruptly. People had already died. The entire country was terrified. A nationwide order was issued to cull all poultry. Authorities strictly controlled every route into the city to prevent even a single bird — living or dead — from reaching the market. (Do Phan, 2011b, 202)

What is particularly noteworthy in Do Phan's narrative is that the epidemic is not merely framed as a biomedical threat; it also becomes a lens through which deeper social anxieties are revealed. The outbreak exposes primal human fear and a profound lack of empathy toward weaker forms of life. The haunting image of poultry being reduced to ashes is not only a tragedy for the animal world but also serves as a powerful metaphor for the isolation, scapegoating, and violence that human societies are willing to unleash in moments of collective panic.

Do Phan's novel *Flies are Flies* pushes the exploration of human behavior even further by depicting human responses not only toward domesticated animals but also toward wildlife. When information spreads that flies are the source of a deadly viral strain, the people in the novel launch large-scale "hunts," burning down fly habitats and exterminating them en masse.

> Now it is the flies' turn to be elevated to Enemy Number One — and the only enemy that remains. Gone are the days of politely urging households to clean their toilets and animal pens. Health workers, fully equipped in protective suits with gasoline-powered sprayers strapped to their backs, spray every corner within reach. (Do Phan, 2014, 74).

What begins as fear of infection quickly escalates into an ecological massacre, as humans, in the name of "safety," legitimize the destruction of nature. Do Phan even allows the flies themselves to deliver a crucial indictment of human hypocrisy:

> The swarm of flies resented humanity's inconsistency. They had once dumped garbage and manure as if inviting the flies to come and thrive. Then, all of a sudden, they declared a mass extermination, spraying chemicals as toxic as Agent Orange once was — DDVP — which would persist in the sprayed areas for dozens of fly generations. (Do Phan, 2014, 75).

This statement encapsulates a dual tragedy: in their fear of disease, humans sever themselves from nature and destroy the ecological links essential for balance — a disruption that will ultimately come back to threaten their own survival.

Alongside depictions of violence and extermination, some contemporary Vietnamese literary works adopt more complex and multidimensional approaches in portraying human responses to animals during pandemics. Vo Dang Khoa's short story *Flying Camels* explores the deep psychological contradictions within the human community: on one hand, people slaughter herds of camels, believing them to be the source of disease transmission, ecological imbalance, food scarcity, and even natural disasters; on the other, such actions instill in them profound guilt and anxiety. As one adolescent character exclaims:

> Camels — they are as gentle as sand. But when too much sand is swept up by the wind, it fills the sky. Who dares to claim that a sandstorm is not dangerous? So camels are guilty! Camels must… die! It's the only solution, however difficult — at least it's easier than facing the looming sandstorm. (Vo Dang Khoa, 2023, 45)

Camels are, in fact, not native to Vietnam. Originating from the deserts of Africa and Asia, they are highly adapted to harsh, arid environments. They were introduced to Vietnam for tourism purposes — used in leisure activities, transportation, and commercial attractions. In *Flying Camels*, these animals are exploited and mistreated: forced to carry goods and tourists along the sandy coastal regions of central Vietnam, and even turned into targets for human amusement through hunting games. "The souvenirs passengers took home were the humps of the camels they had just killed — used to make soup or inhalation remedies for flu, highly valued for their 'utility'" (Vo Dang Khoa, 2023, 50).

Tragically, camels — gentle and trusting by nature — do not anticipate danger nor comprehend the pain of witnessing their companions slaughtered. "Camel slaughterhouses were established, including mobile butchering units that processed camel meat on-site to make pet food" (Vo Dang Khoa, 2023, 51). Even worse, human cruelty escalates to unimaginable levels: camels are loaded onto airplanes and dropped from great heights, "a brutal method of landing humanity had never tried before," yet animals are forced to endure such horrific deaths. The massacre and extermination of camels in the story transcends mere survival instincts — it symbolizes humanity's deliberate severance from nature itself, the very foundation upon which human life

depends.

Notably, in many literary works, human behavior toward animals during pandemics goes beyond mere reactions of fear or violence — it becomes a metaphor for how societies deal with "the Other" in a broader sense. When threatened, communities tend to isolate, expel, or even annihilate what they perceive as different — ranging from disease-carrying animals to human beings suspected of infection. In *The Dead River* by Thien Son, alongside scenes of poultry being brutally buried alive, infected individuals are also quarantined, forced to confront death and the stigma imposed by their communities:

> Another person caught the flu and died just hours after being admitted to the hospital. The body was immediately taken away for cremation. The deceased's home was surrounded and disinfected. Even family members dared not approach. Neighbors avoided the place; some even moved away. (Thien Son, 2017, 285)

Here, literature expands the meaning of pandemics beyond the realm of medicine, turning them into mirrors that reflect power dynamics, mechanisms of exclusion, and the vulnerabilities embedded within human social structures. This thematic concern recalls the South Korean novel *28* by Jeong You-Jeong, which portrays an outbreak of "red eye" disease in the city of Hwa Yang. Authorities initially speculated — without any scientific evidence — that dogs were the source of the contagion. Nevertheless, a brutal campaign to exterminate dogs ensued. Armed personnel stormed dog farms and killed the animals with bayonets, without justification or the owners' consent. Many families, terrified, abandoned their once-beloved pets. Stray dogs were captured and buried in mass graves.

> The dogs began falling into the pit. At first, just a few, then a heap quickly formed. They bounced upward as they fell, trampling the bodies beneath them, clawing over one another in a desperate attempt to escape. Soldiers encircling the pit stabbed them with bayonets and pushed them back down. Others slashed at the remaining dogs, pressed against the wire cage, and dragged them out. Big dogs, small dogs, black dogs, white dogs… some had their eyes gouged out, others were pierced through the belly, some stabbed in the back — blood spurted as they fell into the pit. (Jeong You-Jeong, 2019, 245)

Such treatment of animals is mirrored in the way those infected with the "red-eye" disease — as well as those trapped within the city of Hwa Yang — are quarantined, confined, and ultimately left to "live or die on their own." Amid the bleak, blood-soaked, and tragic pages of *28*, Jeong You-Jeong illuminates the resilience of humanity as people struggle to rise above loss, anger, pain, emptiness, and isolation, striving instead to sow compassion and forgiveness. "We are all products that nature has created by chance. We are beings who live by owing and repaying one another" (Jeong You-Jeong,

2019, 485).

Novel *28*, alongside contemporary Vietnamese literary works, not only portrays pandemics and their devastating consequences but also serves as a reminder of the deep interconnectedness between humans and other species. These narratives raise profound ethical questions about human responsibility and essence in the face of catastrophe.

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that human responses to animals during pandemics are not merely a series of physical actions — such as killing, exterminating, controlling, or protecting — but also reveal profound limits to morality, cognition, and humanity itself. Contemporary Vietnamese literature, in representing these actions, transcends mere reflection of reality to become a critical discourse, compelling us to confront a fundamental question: in the fight against disease, are we truly protecting life, or are we impoverishing the very foundations of life itself? As literature suggests, human reactions to animals amid epidemics are deeply paradoxical. They embody both survival instinct and self-destructive behavior; they aim to safeguard life while simultaneously denying humanity's essential bond with nature. Through pandemic narratives, literature probes deeply into the human condition in relation to the nonhuman world, granting animals an equal voice in articulating pain and suffering. As ecological thinkers have poignantly reminded us, "we believe that animals have no language simply because we do not understand their cries" (Fontenay, 2013: 39).

3. Animals as Symbols of Immunity and Harmonious Lifestyles in the Natural Environment

When pandemics occur, alongside the stigmatization and avoidance of animals, human thinking often turns to the development of vaccines as a means to control disease outbreaks. The creation and distribution of vaccines marked a major breakthrough in biomedical science during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the most significant contributors to this field was the French microbiologist Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), who developed vaccines against anthrax and rabies. He also proposed using the term "vaccine" as a general designation for all preparations used to induce immunity, extending beyond its original use by Edward Jenner in 1796, who first applied the term specifically to smallpox prevention.

In the twenty-first century, humanity has continued to build on these achievements of modern medicine, successfully developing various vaccines to combat emerging infectious diseases caused by environmental instability. However, the reality remains that, even long after the introduction of vaccines to curb the spread of Covid-19, society has yet to return to a state of complete safety. The Covid-19 pandemic, along with other

infectious diseases, still poses risks of resurgence, disrupting social life and producing unpredictable consequences.

Therefore, medicine alone is not a sufficient solution to prevent epidemics. Moreover, vaccines themselves have long been the subject of intense debate among various social groups. There are many reasons behind vaccine resistance, but most concerns center on the vaccination process itself. In essence, vaccination involves introducing a component of a pathogen into the body, prompting an immune "reaction" that trains the system to defend against future exposure to the pathogen — whether virus, bacterium, or toxin — without causing the actual disease. Occasionally, however, vaccination can lead to risks or adverse reactions. Such risks depend on the type of vaccine, the recipient's health condition, and individual immune responses. Additionally, recent reports of counterfeit vaccines and improper manufacturing practices have raised further concerns, posing a threat to both public health and human lives. As a result, humanity continues to search for the most effective strategies to prevent infectious diseases.

Literature dealing with the theme of disease not only recounts humanity's tragedies but also suggests ways to prevent illness and strengthen both physical and mental resilience. No matter how advanced modern science becomes — discovering superior treatments, inventing sophisticated medical devices, or building state-of-the-art hospitals — one indispensable remedy remains: the *"vaccine"* of compassion toward all living beings and peaceful coexistence with the Earth. This metaphorical vaccine, beyond profit and material concerns, represents the most fundamental and enduring form of healing.

Thuong Ha's *Nalis Drifted to the Shore of Destiny* powerfully illustrates this reality. Pharmaceutical corporations exploit disease for profit, producing counterfeit vaccines and thereby accelerating humanity's descent into death, both more swiftly and more painfully.

> More than a year has passed, and despite the rising death toll, despite the social upheaval, despite the economic paralysis, there are still those who act out of selfish motives. Alongside the scientists and compassionate individuals who dedicate themselves selflessly out of love for humanity, there remain people unable to relinquish their greed and desire. Even now, as the pandemic remains uncontrolled, these same people — powerful capitalist conglomerates — exploit the crisis to manipulate vaccine prices or even sell counterfeit doses. Witnessing such a society makes the virus realize that the devastation caused by this pandemic has still not been enough to awaken humankind. (Thuong Ha, 2021, 281)

In the pursuit of a vaccine to combat the epidemic, and when confronted with the Nalis bacterium alongside the profound disappointment over humanity's cruelty in producing counterfeit vaccines to harm others, the writer Thuong Ha discerned that the

most effective "vaccine" is, in fact, peaceful coexistence with nature.

> If humans do not change their habits and fail to respect the laws of nature, and remain noisy in their consciousness, then the Earth will not stop warming, natural disasters and floods will persist, and even existing viruses will vanish only in peace with humanity. (Thuong Ha, 2021, 378).

To make the world a better place, humans must transform their behaviors and attitudes toward the natural world. In particular, eliminating the notion of *human centrality* along with ambitions of dominance and authoritarian control is an effort that many writers seek to promote. Indeed, as Thuong Ha asserts:

> What is truly terrifying in this world is not Nalis, nor disease, nor natural disasters. The most frightening force is human greed. It is this greed that acts as a bitter potion, which, once ingested by humanity, leads to its destruction. It manifests as the insatiable desire for global domination. Heaven or hell, hungry ghosts or beasts, all lie hidden within the decay of the human soul. An unbounded demonic mentality reigns over a blue planet that cries out more with each passing day. Spare us. If one day this world disappears and humans perish en masse, it will not be due to disease, nor to Nalis. It will be entirely the result of human selfishness. (Thuong Ha, 2021, 174)

Thus, in the endeavor to rescue humanity from the brink of "extinction," it becomes evident that the most effective vaccine is not developed or manufactured in modern laboratories or industrial plants. Rather, it is the vaccine of compassion, cultivated within the human heart. Thuong Ha further reflects retrospectively on microorganisms that existed long before *Homo sapiens*, noting that over time, humans have developed, using their hands and intellect, to reshape and intervene in the natural world.

> When humans engage in rampant deforestation, tree felling, and indiscriminate hunting of wildlife, ecological landscapes undergo a gradual transformation. Some species consequently face extinction—not due to natural selection, but as a result of human-imposed selection. (Thuong Ha, 2021, 151).

In the novel, the emergence of Nalis serves as a warning and admonition to humanity. Repeatedly, the relatives and variants of the Nalis virus appear within human society, delivering cautions and urging humans to live in harmony, yet humanity persistently ignores these warnings, arrogantly dismissing the natural world. The wrath of Mother Nature, expressed through pandemics, constitutes a severe and consequential form of retribution that humans inevitably endure.

Epidemics can be understood as a form of natural selection, a storm that sweeps away organisms deemed genetically weak and incapable of adaptation. Simultaneously,

disease resembles the “offspring” within each individual, persisting indefinitely and constantly propelling humans into a precarious oscillation between life and death. Combating it requires a cooperative interplay between humanity and nature. As Camus observed: “The plague bacillus never dies and never entirely disappears. It can remain dormant for decades in objects, clothing; it patiently waits in rooms, in cellars, in coffins, in shawls, and in heaps of paper… and one day, to bring calamity to humans and teach them a lesson, the plague may awaken its rats and drive them to die in a city living in happiness and prosperity” (Camus, 2002, 319). Thuong Ha asserts similarly: “This pandemic will not end if humans remain blinded by their own greedy and selfish desires” (Thuong Ha, 2021, 281). The prioritization of personal gain and materialism has led to pragmatic yet environmentally destructive actions, fostering conditions that are conducive to the emergence and proliferation of pathogens.

Accordingly, in literary narratives, the symbiotic relationships among nature, microorganisms, animals, and human immunity are often presented as an effective therapeutic model. For example, Do Phan’s novel *Flies are Flies* recognizes animals as an essential component of the immune ecosystem, serving as “biological partners” that accompany humans in adapting to disease and cultivating a lifestyle in harmony with nature. Flies, often regarded as trivial creatures, acquire significant meaning in scientific contexts; their larvae—maggots—harbor beneficial bacteria used in the production of probiotics and enzymatic compounds.

> The demand for maggots from the United States and even neighboring Asian countries is substantial. They are used for a wide range of purposes, from raising poultry, livestock, turtles, eels, and frogs to keeping ornamental birds and recreational fishing. Andrew noted that maggots can also serve medicinal purposes. Larval therapy has existed since the sixteenth century. Physicians Baron Larrey and Joseph Jones, serving under Emperor Napoléon Bonaparte, employed live maggots to treat necrotic wounds in soldiers. They discovered that the maggots consumed only the necrotic tissue, leaving healthy cells unharmed. Today, even in neighboring Thailand, doctors use larval therapy to treat colitis, with patients ingesting two doses of five hundred maggots each. Documented successes have been reported. (Do Phan, 2014, 243)

Within this progressive framework of thought, the work extends the concept of “disease prevention” beyond the confines of conventional medicine. Rather than relying solely on pharmaceuticals and vaccines, the author proposes an ecological approach to prevention: restoring habitats, protecting biodiversity, minimizing disruptive interventions in natural cycles, and learning to coexist with other species as companions rather than adversaries. This represents a form of “peace vaccine”—a vaccine of understanding, care, and reconciliation that cannot be synthesized in a laboratory.

> Today, with the latest research in biodiversity, we are compelled to reconsider our perceptions of this small, bothersome, and often disliked

> creature. It is an integral part of life on our blue planet. The risks it poses do not necessarily outweigh the benefits it provides. This message calls for awareness in fostering a balanced Earth. All plants and living beings on this planet must be respected. (Do Phan, 2014, 306)

One of the humanistic aims of ecological criticism is to create a "negotiation between humans and the nonhuman world" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, xix). At a deeper textual level, Do Phan's *Flies are Flies* establishes a frank, democratic, and mutually supportive dialogue between humans and animals. Accordingly, the immunological message conveyed by the author emphasizes empathy and the shared responsibility of maintaining ecological balance with the nonhuman world.

The animal world also plays a crucial role in stabilizing ecosystems, mitigating environmental harm, and thereby generating clean air conducive to human health. The essay *There Was Someone Who Left the City* by Nguyen Quang Thieu examined the pathologies of modern humans. He recognized that animals and plants play a crucial role in controlling pathogens and sustaining the life cycles of many organisms.

> If that nature, if that clean and harmonious environment, did not exist, disease would afflict them. Among these, there is an illness that is not fatal to the body but can destroy the human spirit: the disease of depression and apathy. According to psychophysiological researchers, children raised in a pure and balanced natural environment commit crimes at rates several dozen times lower than those living in a world where nature is degraded or disconnected from them. Many medical centers worldwide have employed nature to treat depression, autism, and apathy in both children and adults. (Nguyen Quang Thieu, 2012, 106)

Through this, Nguyen Quang Thieu implicitly asserts that immunity is not merely the body's ability to resist viruses but also the strength of a diverse, stable ecosystem in which humans do not stand outside or above nature but are an integral part of it.

It is undeniable that if humans fail to live in harmony with nature and instead adopt an attitude of domination, confrontation, and destruction, they inevitably bear the consequences for their health and survival. In the novel *Forest of Humans*, Do Phan depicts an environment disrupted by bestial desires, placing both nature and humanity in peril. This is particularly evident in the fate of animals believed to have medicinal properties, such as bears. Rumors circulated that bear bile "cures all diseases," prompting humans to invade forests and hunt bears for their bile. Even when supply fell short of demand, people sought every means to satisfy their insatiable ambitions. On the outskirts of cities, bear bile production facilities proliferated. Bears were confined in cages, enduring miserable deaths. Such acts reflected a blatant disregard for animal life, underpinned by a utilitarian and apathetic mentality: "even if it does not cure any disease, at least it is not harmful." Consequently, the fate of bears approached extinction, disrupting ecological balance. Moreover, keeping bears in residential areas

posed risks of zoonotic diseases, potentially spreading to human communities. In pursuit of profit, humans might poison one another without remorse, adulterate substances, mix chemicals, and add preservatives to maximize revenue, disregarding that one day they themselves might suffer the consequences. Within the cycle of consumerism, humans are simultaneously the cause, the victim, and the patient of the crises arising from the hunting and killing of endangered animals.

Every species possesses a life of its own and deserves respect for that life. Humans bear the duty and responsibility to protect all living beings and to respect the non-human world as an integral member of the natural ecological system. The lives of flies in *Flies are Flies* and bears in *Forest of Humans* serve as evidence of a natural world endowed with voice, cognition, illness, and emotion akin to humans. Ecocritics have argued that "the perception of nature as mute and voiceless primarily reflects our own refusal to listen rather than the communicative capacity of nature itself" (Kate, 2002, 151–178).

Drawing on his experience as a journalist-turned-novelist, Truong Van Dan presents a reflective and profound examination of human responses to treating illness amid environmental degradation. In the novel *Little Hands in the Rain*, the author not only condemns acts of environmental and resource destruction but also poses a philosophical and humanitarian question: do modern humans still have the opportunity to reconcile with nature? This inquiry serves as a key to achieving a peaceful and healthy life in the future. Through logical arguments and a synthesis of Eastern and Western knowledge spanning classical to contemporary thought, Uncle Thuan's guidance in the novel *Little Hands in the Rain* not only enlightens cancer patients like Gam but also encourages readers to develop a profound awareness of humanity's actions toward the natural world.

> The rivers are not dying by chance; they are being killed by humans. Dams are constructed, disrupting ecosystems. Headwater forests are being clear-cut, while toxic industrial waste continues to flow into rivers and onto the land. Sharing the same fate are the seas, the air, and the very habitats of humans themselves. "You see, for many years we have no longer had the flood season, only destructive floods. The floods ravage the plains, destroy crops, and sweep away homes. The aftermath of floods brings the threat of drought. You also know that floods appear because natural forests no longer exist. (Truong Van Dan, 2011, 198–199)

Uncle Thuan's observation carries significant prognostic implications, suggesting that environmental destruction is not a random phenomenon but an inevitable consequence of consumerism and unchecked human expansion. The author skillfully employs enumeration and vivid imagery to emphasize the predicament: the environment is being devastated, natural disasters are intensifying, humans are afflicted with more illnesses, yet they are advised to live in a "clean and beautiful" environment—a bitterly ironic counsel.

In the essay collection *When the 21st-Century Covid-19 Pandemic Passed*, Tran Dac Phu emphasizes the causal relationship between environmental change, human lifestyle, and viral diseases, noting:

> There are organisms that exist only in forests, in their specific habitats. When we destroy forests or penetrate deep into them for exploitation, humans come into contact with these organisms, or the organisms are forced to migrate because their habitats are lost. Inevitably, this leads to interaction between humans and these organisms, transmitting viruses and bacteria to humans, thereby spreading diseases and disrupting civilized society. For example, chimpanzees in African forests transmitted HIV/AIDS, and civets transmitted SARS to humans… If they remained in their wild habitats, they would not transmit viruses to humans. (Suong Nguyet Minh, 2021, 205–206)

When nature is displaced and encroached upon, the lives of all species, including humans, are affected. Viral strains that originally did not belong to the human world now attach to human hosts, parasitize them, and generate novel diseases, challenging the fields of medicine and science. In the contemporary era of consumerism and industrialization, the discourse on animal rights continues to resonate as a warning, an appeal, and a caution against an ecologically impoverished and stripped world, as well as against the emergence of pandemics unleashed by Mother Nature. Establishing ecological ethics thus requires humans to change their attitudes toward nature, protecting, caring for, and respecting all living beings.

Affirming that human destruction of nature has contributed to the global Covid-19 pandemic, Suong Nguyet Minh's memoir provides a compelling argument:

> Humans are arrogant: they move mountains, fill seas, pile stones to patch the sky, force water to flow backward, and control the rain. These phrases all reflect a desire to subjugate nature rather than live in harmony with it. I still believe that each individual exists independently, and on this suffering Earth, we must coexist in peace. Brutal attacks on nature provoke nature's uprising against humanity. Viruses are also a way that nature resists humans. (Suong Nguyet Minh, 2021, 204)

Thus, nature is both a crucial factor in the emergence and proliferation of disease and a means of healing and restoration for humans. Numerous studies confirm that immersing oneself in nature can help humans balance life pressures, relieve stress, rejuvenate the spirit, and enhance both physical and mental well-being.

From an ecocritical perspective, contemporary Vietnamese literature is gradually shifting its focus from "conquering disease" to "living in harmony with life." Animals are portrayed not merely as victims or vectors of disease but also as "teachers" guiding humans to slow down, recognize limits, and reestablish their relationship with the

planet. The most enduring form of immunity does not arise from injections but from the restoration of a symbiotic connection between humans and nature, as emphasized in numerous literary works.

Conclusion

Today, the world has established animal welfare organizations and societies dedicated to preventing cruelty to animals, which continuously advocate for equality with non-human species. Contemporary Vietnamese literature, in its reflections on pandemics, has enriched the concept of "immunity" by offering a more comprehensive perspective: humans cannot overcome disease solely through confrontation or elimination, but through humility, sharing, and the restoration of harmonious relationships with nature. Through an interdisciplinary and comparative approach, this paper demonstrates that representations of animals in pandemic narratives exhibit diverse perspectives: animals are depicted as sources and vectors of disease; sometimes as innocent beings subjected to brutal treatment; and at other times as playing a positive role in human immunity and health improvement. Thus, animals—transitioning from scapegoats to symbols of ecological balance—serve as a reminder that "health" is not merely a state of the human body but a reflection of the harmony of the entire shared ecosystem in which we coexist. Literary works on the theme of disease consistently reflect a convergent effort to trace origins and causative factors. Numerous elements are implicated in the emergence and transmission of illnesses, among which researchers pay particular attention to the interactions between animals and humans during pandemics, highlighting the close interconnection of these factors. Through pandemic narratives, many authors implicitly assert that immunity is not solely the body's capacity to resist viruses but also the strength of a diverse and stable ecosystem in which humans are neither external to nor above, but integrally part of. Moreover, only literary texts that represent pandemics can truly engage with the suffering and losses endured by humans and animals on Earth. Consequently, the study of literature related to pandemics has become both essential and requires an ecologically informed humanistic understanding.

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