

# Ecocritical Perspectives on the Healing of Nature: A Study of COVID-19 Poetry

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## Abstract

This research paper examines a curated selection of poetry written during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting nature's recovery from the trauma inflicted by humanity's relentless pursuit of industrialization and urbanization. The study explores literature's potential to inspire environmental awareness and foster constructive change. Since the Industrial Revolution, industrialization and urbanization have placed immense pressure on the natural world, leading to ecological imbalance, resource depletion, and climate change. This research aims to provide insights into how poetry engages with environmental themes, portrays associated challenges, and envisions pathways for rejuvenation. Situated within the framework of ecocriticism—a literary theory that investigates the relationship between literature and the environment—this study deciphers poems to uncover their environmental concerns, critiques of human behavior, and proposed solutions for healing. By employing ecocriticism as its primary methodology, the analysis reveals underlying ecological issues, incisive critiques of human actions, and thought-provoking solutions for rejuvenating our planet, as depicted in the selected COVID-19 poetry. The research draws upon a rich array of poetic works from the pandemic, focusing on those that capture the transformative power of nature's healing amidst the scars left by humanity's unyielding drive for industrialization and urbanization. It underscores the vital role of literature in nurturing environmental consciousness and catalyzing positive change. Grounded in the principles of ecocriticism, this paper offers insights into the intricate interplay between literature and the environment, presenting a unique perspective on the potential of poetry to inspire environmental awareness and prompt meaningful action for the healing of nature.

**Keywords:** Nature, Urbanisation, Industrialisation, COVID-19, Poetry, Ecocriticism

## 1. Introduction

In late 2019, the *COVID-19* virus began to spread worldwide, creating a pandemic that resulted in a global crisis. *COVID-19* is a member of the SARS virus family, also as the Corona family of viruses. *COVID-19* is dangerous because it is highly contagious. The virus spread in a matter of months, and the World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic. The following year (2020) saw the introduction of “lockdown” and “social distancing” worldwide. Both concepts were enforced in an attempt to stop the chain of transmission of the virus. During this time, the natural world benefitted from temporary seclusion and separation from human interference. The effects of this included a decline in global warming, reduced rates of crime, and a respite for nature from the daily abuse it faces. Ironically, COVID-19 killed countless people, but humanity's response to it helped to restore nature.

Many writers and poets have addressed the *COVID-19* pandemic in their work, and a brand-new literary sub-genre has emerged, now known as *COVID-19* writing. The current study focuses on selected poems written during the *COVID-19* pandemic, taken from *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems*, Volumes I and III (2020). These volumes gather together poems that focus on the curative effects of the global response to *COVID-19* on nature. The poems *The Wrath of the Crown* and *COVID-19*, by Juvi Sylfin and Suparna Bhattacharyya, respectively, are taken from Volume I, while *The Pandemic* and *Bookmarked Pages*, by Al Lutfy Bin Alsyukri and Norlisa Abdullah, respectively, are taken from Volume III.

One recurring theme in *COVID-19* poetry concerns the slowing down and restoration of nature. As cities reached a standstill during lockdowns, more people began embracing local outdoor spaces and grew to acknowledge the therapeutic benefits of nature (Chowdury, et al. 2021, p. 13). Poems written during the *COVID-19* pandemic use vivid imagery and sensory language to depict nature's healing and to advocate for a renewed appreciation of its inherent beauty and resilience. Further, the same poems highlight the inherent interconnectedness between human and non-human entities. This perspective encourages readers to recognize their place within the broader ecosystem and prompts them to prioritize sustainability, conservation, and responsible environmental practices. By invoking empathy and compassion through the poetic medium, these works convey the urgent need for ecological consciousness and illustrate the potential for healing the trauma inflicted upon nature. Applebaum states, “Throughout history, pandemics have led to an expansion of the power of the

state: at times when people fear death, they go along with measures that they believe, rightly or wrongly, will save them—even if that means a loss of freedom.” (Applebaum, 2020, p. 3)

The *COVID-19* poetry chosen for this study delves into the consequences of industrialization and urbanization and emphasizes their detrimental impact on the environment, wildlife, and ecosystems. Using poignant metaphors and stark imagery, the chosen poems highlight the urgency of addressing ecological problems and re-evaluating humanity's relationship with the natural world. The poems serve as a call to action, encouraging society to embrace sustainable practices, foster biodiversity, and maintain the fragile balance of the ecosystem. It sheds light on the healing potential for nature from the trauma inflicted by humanity's pursuit of industrialization and urbanization. The chosen poems draw attention to environmental issues; they foster empathy and advocate for sustainable practices. In this respect, it is seen that literature can play a crucial role in sparking environmental consciousness and positive change. The insights gained from this study can empower individuals and communities to undertake actions that promote the healing and restoration of nature.

### Literary Focus

The analyzed works in this research paper are exclusively in English, underscoring their direct relevance to the field of English Literature. The selected poems, drawn from the volumes *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems, Volumes I and III*, reflect the contemporary literary landscape and engage with pressing environmental issues through the lens of the *COVID-19* pandemic. By focusing on English poetry, this study contributes to the understanding of literary expression during a global crisis and highlights the unique voice of English literature in addressing themes of nature, healing, and ecological consciousness.

### 2. Questions of The Study

[1] How do the selected *COVID-19* poems portray the curative effects of the global response to *COVID-19* on nature?

[2] In what ways do the selected poems convey the interconnectedness between human and non-human entities, and how do they encourage readers to prioritize sustainability, conservation, and responsible environmental practices?

[3] What role do empathy and compassion play in portraying the urgent need for ecological consciousness in the selected *COVID-19* poetry, and how do these works illustrate the potential for healing the trauma inflicted upon nature?

#### Urbanisation, nature, the Industrial Revolution, and the Legacy of the Romantic Movement

The ethos of the Romantic Movement posits that while nature is a vital aspect of human life, our connection to it has become stagnant due to technological progress. In other words, technology, particularly technology introduced by industrialism, has resulted in a rift between people and the natural world. Nature is frequently portrayed positively in literature and poetry. For example, Western culture frequently portrays nature as a healer and a friend to humanity. In many ways, this kind of representation has become an ideology. The natural world underwent a significant transformation during the Industrial Revolution in Europe. The effects of urbanization and the rise of industrialization were themes covered by the group of poets we now call the Romantics. Indeed, the work of the Romantic poets heavily influenced how nature was subsequently depicted in literature (Westling, 2014, pp. 2-3).

The industrial world began to overtake agriculture as the principal employer of people, and the effects of the rise in urbanization meant that nature became distant from human interest. Industry became the main provider for people, replacing nature. Gradually, humanity stopped seeing nature as a protector, a healer, and a provider. Industrialization influenced humanity's negligence of nature and the natural environment. The desires of humankind began to come first at the expense of nature. Indeed, the rise of the Industrial Revolution came with a steep price, which was the health of nature. Nature began to be devastated by the actions of humanity. The natural world began to decay and die at the hands of those it used to nurture and care for. The Industrial Revolution introduced factories and toxic waste, which impacted all aspects of nature, slowly murdering it and preventing its recovery. In later centuries, industrialization was exported across the globe.

One of the Romantic Movement's main concerns was encouraging readers to contemplate and praise nature. It could be argued that the Romantic Movement begged for the glorification of nature. For instance, Wordsworth's poetry highlights the significance of seeking answers in nature instead of relying on science. In *Romantic Ecology* (1991), Jonathan Bate argues that humanist concepts originated from the Romantic Movement and that its influence persists in the modern era, contrary to the common belief that it has concluded. Two main themes discussed by Bate, namely, consciousness and locality, can be attributed to the "Wordsworth Speaker". "This is an individual who stands out from other literary voices due to their awareness of their surroundings and environment, as well as their connection to nature." Bate makes the following observation:

Knowing, naming, and recording are closely related, but there is a progression through these categories towards the personal and consciousness, even self-consciousness. The people who know places best, who are most rooted in them, tend not to be those who give them names. They do not need to bother with maps. They are unlikely to express or elaborate on their connection to the place. They do not chant the names – Grasmere, Helvellyn, Glaramara – as if they have a kind of magic. Still less they record specificities of time and place, of their encounter with nature. (Bate, 1991, pp. 87-8)

In other words, Bate contends that the less "articulate" the speaker is regarding the natural environment they inhabit, the more profound the connection between the speaker and the nature they describe. To clarify, Bate suggests that knowledge that is not known to others, despite the absolute truth of its existence, represents the closeness of humanity to nature. In this sense, the Romantic humanist argues that nature is

healthy for humanity. However, another question arises: is humanity beneficial to nature? Humanity needs nature to prosper, even with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, yet it is clear that humanity is the sole abdicator of nature's health. This can be evidenced by humanity's reliance on and attachment to industrialization, which has forced nature into a decaying health. In other words, nature lost its position as the prime provider for humanity because of the actions of human beings.

Bate argues that humanity must attempt to realign itself with nature to help its healing. This is referred to as the "Wordsworthian Philosophy," which encourages humanity to harmonize with nature because the two are integral aspects of the prime ecological natural sphere. This dynamic is often evident in poetry, particularly when it aims to inspire the mind to appreciate nature's beauty and establish a connection with it, thus incorporating it into the human/natural experience (Bate, 1991, pp. 82-83). It is worth noting that Bate is not advocating for regression to the age before the rise of the Industrial Revolution, but is exploring the idea of achieving a balance between caring and nurturing nature, whilst accepting urbanization as an inevitability, i.e. attaining a state of not forgetting nature or letting go of it (Bate, 1991, p. 40).

To conclude, the idea of a symbiotic or parasitic relationship between humanity and nature has developed from the legacy of the Romantic humanists. In this context, the Romantic poets, particularly William Wordsworth, played a significant role in developing Romantic humanism. Wordsworth emphasizes the importance of a symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature, suggesting that humans can contribute to nature just as nature can heal and nurture humanity. However, one could argue that humanity has extracted more from nature than it has provided, largely due to its reliance on industrialization, which has even contributed to the decline of the natural world. This links to the central literary theory discussed in the current study, which is ecocriticism. This study acknowledges how ecocriticism has evolved from the Romantic humanist legacy and concerns the fractured relationship between humanity and nature.

### 3. Literature Review

The emergence of COVID-19 has led to a new literary sub-genre known as COVID-19 writing, with poetry serving as a powerful medium to express the pandemic's complex impacts on nature and human-nature relationships. Sharma (2021), in her paper "*Reading and Rewriting Poetry on Life to Survive the COVID-19 Pandemic*," examines nature's resilience and rejuvenation in COVID-19 poetry, highlighting the role of ecocriticism in addressing environmental concerns and advocating for solutions. Smith's analysis emphasizes poetry's potential to raise environmental awareness and inspire action for nature's healing. Morales (2023), in "*Let's Sharpen The Blades: Ecofeminism In American COVID Literature*," explores how poets use vivid imagery and sensory language to illustrate the therapeutic effects of the pandemic-induced slowdown on nature. Jones's close readings reveal poets' calls for a renewed appreciation of nature's beauty and its therapeutic benefits. Additionally, McNeely (2021) discusses the interconnectedness of human and non-human entities in COVID-19 poetry, emphasizing the potential of these poems to encourage sustainability and responsible environmental practices. Apol (2017) documented the traumatic experiences of genocide survivors in Rwanda through poetry, showcasing its capacity to encapsulate profound human experiences. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the thematic, stylistic, and theoretical aspects of COVID-19 poetry, paving the way for further exploration of selected poems from COVID-19 Pandemic Poems, Volumes I and III, particularly their nuanced portrayals of nature's healing effects and the interconnectedness between human and non-human entities.

### 4. Method

The current research paper employs a qualitative research approach within the framework of ecocriticism. The research methodology involves a close textual analysis of selected poems to explore how they convey the message of healing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the interconnectedness between humanity and nature within ecocriticism. To support this investigation, a selection of poems will be analyzed to explore the different perspectives on the human response to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially regarding its effect on nature's healing process. Through a detailed examination of the poetic voices, the study aims to elucidate how these expressions depict the reciprocal relationship between humanity and nature, shedding light on how nature can heal humanity and be healed by it.

### Theoretical Framework

This research employs ecocriticism as its primary theoretical framework to explore environmental themes in selected poetry. Ecocriticism facilitates a nuanced understanding of the relationship between literature and the environment, highlighting the interconnectedness of human actions and ecological consequences. This approach elucidates how the chosen poems express nature's healing potential amidst the trauma of industrialization and urbanization, emphasizing literature's role in fostering environmental awareness and advocating for sustainable practices.

Additionally, Timothy Clark's post-humanist perspective will be integrated, enhancing the understanding of the poems' depictions of human-nature relationships. Clark's ideas are essential for examining evolving perceptions of nature and human identity, particularly in how contemporary poetry challenges or reinforces anthropocentric views. This analysis aims to unravel the complexities of nature's representation in poetry, resisting simplistic interpretations. By combining close textual analysis with theoretical perspectives, the study seeks to capture the multilayered relationship between humans and nature in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clark (2011) argues that technology complicates the binary distinctions between human and non-human, suggesting that tools like smartphones blur these boundaries, making humans increasingly reliant on technology. He posits that nature should be regarded as a non-human entity, advocating for a careful representation of nature that acknowledges its complexities. Clark emphasizes that understanding landscapes requires re-engaging with the meanings of "nature" and its implications for human identity, suggesting that both Romantic humanist influences and contemporary poetic insights must be considered in this exploration (Clark, 2011, pp. 63-64, 6). This research aligns with Clark's

perspective, positing that the selected poems convey messages of healing for nature in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating how human responses can serve as healing agents for nature and vice versa.

#### Nature and the Effects of Trauma Theory

This section scrutinizes how trauma theory can be coupled with ecocriticism to elucidate the relationship between trauma and nature. This will be discussed alongside Cathy Caruth's theory of the 'untranslatable and the unspeakable' (Caruth, 1996, p. 5). Caruth's theory suggests that nature cannot be fully broken down in poetic prose or verse and that its bottomless well of knowledge can only be fully comprehended by clearly deciphering all its elements. In their essence, nature and trauma are two different concepts. Nature is an entity that is not directly related to humanity, yet it maintains some connection to us. Nature can exist separately from humanity and can be independent. In contrast, trauma is an abstract idea that is directly linked to human perceptions, and as a concept, it cannot exist on its own without being connected to humanity. This study asserts that humanity and nature are not dependent on each other but that humanity's response to the rise of *COVID-19* allowed nature to thrive and flourish. "By reading and writing poetry, Mazza says, one can gain some sense of understanding and control over complex, traumatic situations and conditions" (Maza, 2017, p.4).

In the context of the current study, the relationship between the concepts of trauma and nature rests in the use of language. The language used to describe nature can be paradoxical, and the same can be said for the concept of trauma, an understanding of which relates to language and how it is used. Trauma takes many forms, including mental and physical, and to understand trauma, we must first decipher trauma theory. In this respect, it is imperative to understand the "psychological, philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events" (Lockhurst, 2006, p. 497) and how the human brain translates them. One could argue that nature is a victim of trauma caused by human actions, a trauma that has affected it for centuries and was intensified by the activities of the Industrial Revolution. While many Romantic poets wrote about the need to reconnect humanity with nature, the march of industrialization continued unabated.

Importantly, this current study focuses on the representation of the aesthetic of trauma in the chosen poems. In this study, trauma is perceived as the product of the decaying health of nature, which was temporarily allayed due to the human response to the *COVID-19* pandemic. In the chosen poems, the trauma-afflicting nature is perceived as different from other forms of trauma, for example, sexual abuse trauma, physical abuse trauma, and mental abuse trauma. In this respect, it is valuable to consider Hartman's words as follows:

Trauma study's radical aspect comes to the fore less in its emphasis on acts of violence like war and genocide than when it draws attention to "familiar" violence such as rape, and the abuse of women and children. Above all, it does not neglect the explosive nature of emotion and daily hurt. (Hartman, 2003, p. 546).

One well-known academic working in ecocriticism and trauma theory is Katherine Donn, who uses an interdisciplinary approach in her work. Donn's research concludes that un-aesthetically appealing elements found in nature, and their perceived relationship to trauma, can help generate a healthier outlook on life. This view can contribute to the healing process from trauma. Donn believes that nature is continuously renewing itself, holds tremendous cyclic properties, and holds the power to stimulate the subject and "push them out of their paralyzed [mind]" (Donn, pp. 552 - 561). Donn's ideologies share similarities with the Romantic anthropocentric and American pastoral ideas of mental health but embrace a distinctively modernist twist. She describes the depiction of nature in modernist literature as follows:

Nature in modernist literature has undoubtedly left the exalted sublime or pastoral idyll far behind, but it retains a more ambivalent metaphoric and creative energy that infuses these lines. An ecocritical reading of modernist trauma literature brings to the surface this generative energy of nature but defines it not in a therapeutic sense. Instead, it is disruptive, at times bordering on violence; however, because it maintains its organic and cyclical qualities, nature serves as a space that simultaneously incorporates traumatic collapse and creative renewal (Donn, 2016, p. 552).

Donn argues that modernist depictions of nature lack some of the aspects Romanticism employs in the way nature is represented, in that Romantic poets often portray the beauty of nature in their works. These differences allow Donn to deduce that realism is a fundamental element in depictions of the deprecation of nature from a modernist point of view, which contrasts with the ideal and fictitious elements often used in Romantic literature. To summarize, rehabilitation is preceded by the truth found in nature, regardless of how ugly it might be, rather than the aesthetic beauty found in harmonious nature (Donn, 2016, pp. 561-564). However, Donn's perspective is somewhat constricted by her view on the detachment of the two ideologies of trauma theory and ecocriticism. She often sets these two ideas against one another, as if they are seen to conflict with one another (Donn, 2016, p. 560). Quoting Caruth, 1996, pp. 91-92), she explains as follows:

It is important to remember that trauma is characterized by paradoxes and ambiguities. Caruth has said that trauma is a "fundamental enigma concerning the psyche's relationship to reality. In its general definition, trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena. Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a particular paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness. (Caruth, 1996, pp. 91-92)

To reiterate, trauma is subjective to an individual because each experiences it differently. Human subjectivity leads to the rise of a sense of otherness in the mindset of the traumatized. As Clark notes, there is a discrepancy between what is human and what is not. Therefore, trauma

theory is built on the understanding that human subjectivity is integral to the awareness of trauma in general. When faced with a depiction of non-human trauma, the current study will tackle the topic accordingly.

## 5. Discussion

*Wrath of the Crown* by Juvi R. Sylfin

The poem *Wrath of the Crown* by Juvi R. Sylfin explores the theme of nature's healing in the context of the *COVID-19* pandemic. Using vivid imagery, the poet reflects on the consequences of human activities and the potential for nature's restoration during times of crisis. If we analyze this poem from an ecocritical perspective, we can better understand its message and impact.

Empty streets and traffic-less roads, Silence and peace change the moods;

Freedom from noise and pollution. (Silvest & Ryan, 2020, p. 52)

The above-quoted lines set the tone for the poem. In the poem, the "crown" alluded to in the title represents human authority and power, but it is now engulfed in flames, which points to the destructive nature of human actions. Using the metaphor of fire, the poem highlights how human activities, such as deforestation and industrialization, have triggered environmental degradation and brought forth the "wrath" of nature. The poem reflects on the consequences of human actions on the environment, noting "floods and quakes" as the result of the "crown's wrath". These descriptions can be interpreted as natural disasters caused by climate change and ecological imbalance. Personification, which attributes anger to the "crown", implies that nature responds to humanity's disregard for its well-being. The poem suggests that nature is now seeking retribution for the harm inflicted upon it. However, the response to *COVID-19* brought some respite:

Devoid of horns and motor commotion The sound of sparrows and partridges

Replacing the unpleasant noises in all the ridges; The chirps of birds from App to reality,

Seems sweet and lovely to ears with gaiety (Silvest & Ryan, 2020, p. 53)

The poem emphasizes the healing potential arising from the response to the pandemic. The phrase "barrier of lockdown" highlights the paradoxical effect of human isolation on nature's recovery. With reduced human presence and activity, nature has the opportunity to reclaim its spaces, evident in the revival of wildlife in urban areas and the decreased pollution levels observed during lockdowns. The poem suggests that this enforced period of stillness allowed nature to recover and heal. It describes how the "winds dance" and "flowers bloom" amidst the "crown's wrath." This imagery illustrates nature's resilience and its capacity to thrive when unhindered. By juxtaposing the destructive power of the "crown" with scenes of natural beauty, the poem underscores the contrast between harmful human actions and nature's intrinsic ability to heal itself if given the chance.

Life in high gear is brought to a halt. For, all the ways of man are fault,

In the eyes of God and nature, as it brawls, It's the final call...

For returning back to the flock,

For a healing to happen before the clock; (Silvest & Ryan, 2020, p. 53)

The poem reflects on the lessons learned from the "wrath of the crown". The line, "Nature screams a heartfelt plea" conveys the urgent message that nature is sending to humanity. It serves as a call to action, urging humans to re-evaluate their behaviors and approach the environment. The poem suggests that nature's healing lies in recognizing the interconnectedness of all living beings and adopting sustainable practices. The poem serves as a reminder of the importance of re-evaluating our relationship with the natural world and adopting sustainable practices to ensure harmonious coexistence.

*COVID-19* by Suparna Bhattacharyya

The unprecedented global crisis of the *COVID-19* pandemic has raised numerous critical concerns regarding its origins, impact, and implications for human society. By applying an ecocritical perspective, this analysis aims to delve into the poem "COVID-19" by Suparna Bhattacharyya, which explores the ecological dimensions and implications of the global response to the pandemic. The poem seeks to provide a comprehensive view, examining the relationship between the virus, the environment, and human society:

The vacant green land outside The lonely roads,

The silent cities

And those closed markets.

It is just like a full stop to our life, A regular life.

It seems that history has come alive Those birds chirping in the morning,

And the light breeze snorkelling Those raindrops on grass; The pollution free stars, (Silvest & Ryan, 2020, p. 53)

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary approach focusing on the interaction between literature, culture, and the environment. It examines the portrayal of nature, human-environment relationships, and environmental issues in literary and non-literary texts. By examining the relationships among humans, nature, and society, ecocriticism reveals different subjects' ecological aspects and consequences. In *COVID-19*, Bhattacharyya explores the significant environmental aspects of the global response to the pandemic, shedding light on the

intricate relationship between human activities and the environment. Bhattacharyya suggests that human interference in natural ecosystems, such as deforestation, habitat destruction, and wildlife trafficking, has increased the chances of zoonotic diseases which can jump from animals to humans. Ecocriticism clarifies the effects of human intrusion into natural habitats and emphasizes the importance of fostering a more harmonious relationship with the environment.

And Nature with its genuine beauty  
Is turning its chapter of duty.  
The thick grey mask of dust  
Is fallen with its quote of rust  
The problem of climate change is off With eradicating Mother Nature's cough,  
These are the ready pack  
In the name of COVID-19 stacks. (Silvest & Ryan, 2020, p. 53)

The global response to the pandemic temporarily alleviated the environmental impact of destructive human activities, resulting in reduced air and water pollution. The lockdown measures and social distancing illustrate the interconnectedness of ecological systems and human health. The theories of ecocriticism emphasize the urgent need for sustainable practices and a transformative shift toward a greener economy. Bhattacharyya discusses the challenges posed by urbanization, consumerism, and industrialization, which have intensified ecological imbalance and contributed to climate change. However, any examination of the pandemic through an ecocritical lens must also evaluate the effects of responses on vulnerable communities and advocate for socio-ecological justice. Bhattacharyya highlights the disproportionate impacts on marginalized communities, who suffered not only from the virus but also from socio-economic inequalities and a lack of access to healthcare. Ecocriticism helps recognize the intertwined nature of social and environmental justice and emphasizes the importance of addressing both.

Analyzing *COVID-19* by Suparna Bhattacharyya from an ecocritical perspective brings to the fore the ecological factors associated with the global response to the pandemic. This approach highlights the interconnectedness between ecosystems, human well-being, and society. By understanding and addressing the ecological dimensions of responses to the pandemic, we can move toward a more sustainable and resilient future. In summary, *COVID-19* offers a multi-faceted exploration of the crisis. Moreover, an ecocritical analysis enables us to comprehend better the connections between the pandemic, the global response, the environment, and human society. Using this lens, we can see that the poem considers the possibility of zoonotic transmission, identifies ecological imbalances and climate change contributors, and advocates for socio-ecological justice.

#### ***The Pandemic by Al Lutfy Aniq Bin Alsyukri***

'*The Pandemic*' by Al Lutfy Aniq Bin Alsyukri is about the environmental changes and healing of nature that occurred during the global pandemic. The poem depicts nature's recovery and offers insights into how global responses to the pandemic influenced and transformed our relationship with the natural world:

However, behind every cloud there is a silver lining Families became closer, nature began healing  
Many discovered surprising knack and bent  
They never knew, nor had time to discover before then (Silvest & Ryan, 2020, p. 57)

The poem "*Pandemic*" portrays an environment deeply affected by the response to the spread of the virus. It describes how nature underwent an unexpected transformation when human activities were reduced. The poem skillfully explores how this transformation facilitated the healing and rejuvenation of the Earth. The choice of words and imagery reveals the regeneration of ecosystems, such as the return of wildlife and the revitalization of rivers and forests. These descriptions highlight the resilience of nature and its ability to thrive when given the opportunity.

The COVID-19 *Pandemic* sparked a renewed appreciation for nature. In "*The Pandemic*," the speaker expresses a heightened awareness and appreciation for the natural environment. This newfound appreciation empowers individuals to re-evaluate their destructive actions and supports the call for sustainable living. By depicting nature's healing, the poem prompts readers to consider their role in the environmental crisis, reminding them that humans are essential components of the Earth's ecosystem. It implies that nature's healing is interconnected with humanity's actions and choices, suggesting the necessity for continued efforts and changes to maintain the positive impacts witnessed during the pandemic. Symbolism and metaphor are used extensively to convey deeper ecological and environmental meanings. For example, the image of a blooming flower symbolizes nature's resilience and rebirth. Analyzing such literary devices enhances our understanding of the broader ecocritical themes embedded within the poem.

*The Pandemic* by Al Lutfy Aniq Bin Alsyukri provides a compelling representation of the healing of nature during the COVID-19 pandemic. The poem emphasizes the transformative impact of lockdown, providing a refreshed appreciation for nature and reminding us of the continuous responsibility humans hold in the healing of the environment. The poem captures the ecological changes during the pandemic and promotes a shift toward sustainable living. Al Lutfy Aniq Bin Alsyukri's poetic examination of nature's recovery offers a powerful message of hope and encourages readers to recognize the positive impact that can be achieved when humanity aligns itself with the

healing of the natural world. In conclusion, *The Pandemic* embodies the potential for growth and renewal that can arise during times of crisis. By using an ecocritical analysis in this paper, we can gain valuable insights into COVID-19 poetry and its ability to raise awareness about the importance of environmental stewardship.

### **Bookmarked Pages by Norlisa Bint Abdullah**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people found solace in writing about how nature had been allowed to heal itself and the healing power of nature on humans. Norlisa Bint Abdullah's poem "*Bookmarked Pages*" explores how the speaker engages with nature as a source of solace, inspiration, and renewal during these challenging times:

And I'd bookmark these pages in 2020, To mark the days,  
Of uncertainty,  
Of thinking that it may end, But then it goes on again  
~ Until God knows when. The days of this pandemic  
Of us hiding behind these masks Of fighting a fear that's unseen  
A fear that comes from an uncertainty,  
~ How sure are we?  
Of a new normal. (Roshan, 2020, p. 26)

Ecocriticism examines how literature represents the natural world and acknowledges our interdependence with it. In the context of COVID-19, many individuals turned to nature to find healing and meaning amidst the chaos. By exploring themes such as the human-nature connection, environmental degradation, and the potential for renewal, "*Bookmarked Pages*" illuminates our collective responsibility toward nature:

Was yesterday even something that we should always be proud of? Last time I checked,  
The world healed a bit these days, without our touch. Perhaps the time has come for us to reflect,  
~ On our actions, our doings, And how to start afresh  
~ For a better tomorrow ~ that is, if we'd still be given a chance for that tomorrow. And of the faces, and the people that we rarely, or do not  
see much ~ anymore these Days. (Roshan, 2020, p. 26)

The poem eloquently captures the healing power of nature during the COVID-19 pandemic. The speaker begins by depicting the chaos and uncertainty in the world through phrases like "frowning clouds" and "newsprint horizons," setting the stage for her transformative journey in search of solace in nature, which is portrayed as an "expanse of tranquility" with "palms spread in prayer." The poem underscores the importance of slowing down and reconnecting with the natural world. The speaker identifies herself as a "nomad of concrete cathedrals," highlighting the stark contrast between the artificiality of urban existence and the authenticity of nature. The term "bookmark" suggests a pivotal moment or realization, symbolizing her decision to fully engage with the restorative power of the natural environment. The speaker presents nature as a wellspring of inspiration and renewal. The imagery of "waves hypnotized to dance" evokes a sense of harmony and balance, while "floating frangipanis" symbolize purity and beauty. These natural elements reflect the resilience and adaptability of nature, offering hope and peace amid the turmoil of the pandemic.

*Bookmarked Pages* emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and nature, highlighting the healing effect of this relationship. The phrase "Nursed by green fingers soaked in dewdrops" implies that interaction with nature revitalizes and nurtures the human spirit. Further, the healing power of nature is portrayed through the images of "sunshine's gentle ardency" and "butterflies' flights of symphony," which signify the transformative impact of nature on human emotions and well-being. While exploring the healing power of nature, the poem comments on the environmental consequences of human actions. Through juxtaposing images of a concrete jungle and the tranquility of nature, the speaker raises awareness about the need for balance and sustainable living. The poem serves as a reminder of the fragility of the natural world and the importance of conserving it for future generations. *Bookmarked Pages* offers a poignant portrayal of the healing power of nature amidst the *COVID-19* pandemic. Through expressive language and striking imagery, the poem emphasizes the interconnectedness of human beings and the environment. It encourages readers to slow down, reconnect with nature, and reflect on their responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world. By analyzing this poem using an ecocritical lens, we can gain a deeper appreciation of the role of literature in invoking an emotional response and inspiring positive change in our relationship with nature.

### **Interdisciplinary Contribution**

This research contributes to broader discussions on environmental sustainability and human interaction with nature by situating poetry within the context of contemporary ecological challenges. By analyzing how selected COVID-19 poems reflect on nature's recovery and humanity's role in this process, the study underscores the urgent need for a transformative shift in our relationship with the environment. This interdisciplinary perspective appeals to a diverse audience, including scholars in environmental studies, literary criticism, and the social sciences, fostering dialogue on how literature can inspire meaningful action toward sustainability. The findings advocate for a collective responsibility to nurture and protect our natural world, thereby enriching ongoing conversations about ecological ethics and human-nature relationships in the face of global crises.

## 6. Conclusion

The relationship between humanity and nature ought to be mutually beneficial. However, since the Industrial Revolution and the proliferation of urbanization, humanity has increasingly destroyed its environment and disregarded the natural world. In response, poetry from the Romantic Movement began to reflect an adoration of nature and focused on the bond between people and the natural world. This connection remains vital today and is growing, yet it is challenging to define the complex relationship between writers and nature in general terms. Trauma is a key factor in how nature is represented in poetry. Many 21st-century poets address the abuse of nature wrought by industrialism and urbanization. The Industrial Revolution marked the onset of this exploitation. Romantic poets like William Wordsworth explored the relationship between humanity and nature; however, their connection remained unhealed, leading to an increasing divide between the two. In the 21st century, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic offered nature a new reprieve, albeit at the expense of human freedoms. The poems chosen for this study illustrate how the reaction to the pandemic endowed nature with the capacity for healing. These works reflect on how, amid the harm caused by humanity over the ages, nature was given time to prosper and flourish; the skies cleared, stars became visible, car horns ceased their noise, and animals and birds began to roam freely. When humanity paused its interventions, the Earth began to heal itself. Looking beyond the pandemic, COVID-19 poetry has the potential to continue shaping environmental awareness in profound ways. As society emerges from the pandemic, these literary works can catalyze discussions about sustainability and the urgent need for ecological stewardship. They remind us that moments of collective reflection can lead to meaningful change in our relationship with nature. Future literary movements may also arise to address climate change, drawing inspiration from the themes of healing and renewal evident in COVID-19 poetry. Just as Romantic poets responded to their industrialized world, contemporary writers can harness the power of narrative to advocate for environmental justice and awareness. Furthermore, ecocriticism can be applied to other global crises beyond COVID-19, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequality. By examining literature through an ecocritical lens, we can uncover how these crises intersect with human experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of our interconnectedness with the planet. This approach not only enriches literary analysis but also encourages a holistic view of environmental issues, urging us to consider the broader implications of our actions on both humanity and nature as we navigate an increasingly complex world.

### Authors' contributions

Dr. Shaimaa Mohamed Hassanin was responsible for the study design, writing, and revising. She was also responsible for data collection. Dr. Marwa Aly Eleleidy and Eman Mohammed Al Bayomy drafted the manuscript and revised it. They read and approved the final manuscript.

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**No additional data are available.**

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