



ÇANKAYA UNIVERSITY



2021 English Literature and Cultural Studies Club Newspaper

Voices from Çankaya University

"Special Issue: The Pandemic"



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This newspaper is prepared by the members of English Literature and Cultural Studies Club. For your comments, suggestions, and articles please contact cankayaelcs@gmail.com. We hope you will enjoy reading!

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PART I:

Epigrams on the Pandemic

- Not going to school made me happy, online classes made me realize how harder it is than face to face education. (Ecren Elçi)
- Think about a period in which everything is arranged and conducted online with the offline mood of people. (Eda Nur Haçkalı)
- People, who lock animals into cages, are caged by a virus. (Ahmet Özdoğan)
- The most intelligent creature in the world is defeated by a creature that cannot even be seen. (Nur Ferzan Uzunpınar)
- We came into this world because of those who ate an apple, and there are those who had left this world because of the ones who ate bats. (Hazal Böke)
- Each day I wake up to live yesterday. (Zehra Sena Özkan)
- We were told to stay inside and we did what they said, living in our rooms that eventually became cages. Yet our minds were outside, longing for the days that we used to live. (Kadir Demirpençe)
- Even the tiniest among all stones may be seen as the biggest treasure when up becomes down. (Hazal Sonay)
- For those people who don't want to wear masks and claim it's their right, it is your right to get sick and suffer. (Rabia Rozerin Koyuncu)
- Being in lockdown is another version of living. (Çiğdem Eltuğral)

PART II: Essays

The Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918: How It Started, Progressed and Faded Away

Pelin AYTER



Having killed millions of people, the Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918 has the greatest death toll of our world's recent history to take place in such a short time, surpassing any other disease including the black death, all major wars, and famine. The culprit for the disease was the *H1N1 influenza A* virus, a different strain of the virus that had caused the 2009 swine flu pandemic. Between February 1918 and April 1920, over four successive waves, the virus infected 500 million people, which corresponds to one third of the early 20th century world population.

While the 1918 disease was named 'The Spanish Flu', its first legal observation was actually in Kansas, US, in March 1918. The 'Spanish' tag was

coined because Spain was the only nation that did not censor its press, thus becoming the initial source of information for the virus and the disease. Spanish King Alfonso XIII was among the ones that became gravely ill with the flu, and his health status, together with his recovery were among the highlights of the Spanish Press coverage of the disease. Majority of the other countries did not want to hurt the public morale as World War I was still ongoing at this point, so an illusion that Spain which was neutral in this war-was hit the hardest was created by the disease's presence in their press.

The first official case recorded was in a US army training camp in Kansas named Camp Funston. However, there has been a publication of warning in the US Public Health

Service's academic journal as far back as January 1918, again regarding Kansas cases. Whether it originated in the camp or not, the close quarters within the army made virus transmission rather easy, while troop movements augmented its distribution. An outlier disease that may have otherwise died out in a local population got distributed to the world due to the wartime mobility. The disease first moved to other army camps in the US, and then soldiers from the infected forts were loaded onto ships, and the flu thus left for the war front. In the last six months of the WWI, over 1.5 million soldiers crossed the ocean on these transports, in one of the largest movement of people in the world's history.

In the last six months of the WWI, over 1.5 million soldiers crossed the ocean on these transports.

The first wave of the Spanish Flu, reported in March 1918 to be highly contagious compared to regular flu, was also relatively mild, so much so that some doctors even refused to believe that it was influenza. The second wave that hit the trenches of war was much more severe, reported with extreme fever, lung and nerve damage, severe bone and joint pains, bleeding from the nose, eyes and ears, and a powerful immune response. However, despite the difference between their symptoms, it is thought that the second wave is a hybrid form of the virus from the first wave, as people who had the virus for a second time had some immunity towards it. While earlier epidemics tended to hit the youngest and eldest of the population, in an unusual manner, the Spanish Flu of 1918 hit those in their prime of life as well. It is estimated

that 5-10% of the world's young adult population died during this calamity.

When the flu re-entered the United States with the returning troops in late summer, the sick people on the ships were quarantined, but the rest of the sailors and soldiers spread the virus among the populace. The general population realised the disease's full potential in mid-October when many American cities were hard hit and all public life came to a halt. There was a lack of official information, as Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States of the time, decided to play down the disease so the public morale would not be hurt during wartime.

The lack of information created a vacuum and thus led to all kinds of misinformation such as conspiracy theories, which included that this disease was a "German plot", or Bayer had infected Aspirin. Misinformation spread as fast as the virus, and

snake oil salesman made fortunes by offering cures such as castor oil, heroin, sulphur smoke, or gargling with disinfectants. Philadelphia was one of the hardest-hit cities globally, and a look at the governmental and media handling of 1918 could teach our contemporaries what not to do. Despite frequent warnings and the example from the military cases, the city made no plans for an epidemic, did not stockpile for medicine or equipment, not even a list of first responders was prepared. It must be noted that the medicinal community was already thin at this point as the majority of the doctors and nurses were still serving at the war fronts. The Journal of American Medical Association has already announced that this flu was nothing special, and it "[had] already practically disappeared from the Allied troops".



Philadelphia was planning the biggest parade of their history, designed to sell war bonds to support the troops. The day before the parade, the reported number for flu cases were over two hundred, roughly half of which were civilians. The navy wanted to intervene and cancel the parade, but the local government did not listen. On the day of the parade, several hundred thousand people gathered for hours while the parade took place. After the two-day incubation period, the hospitals began to operate at full

capacity, people queued at the entrances, while the rich tried to bribe for preferential treatment. A dozen emergency hospitals were opened to care for the sick and the dying. The medical staff themselves ended up as patients due to lack of equipment, and to deal with the shortage, the medical schools closed and sent their third- and fourth-year students to help with the emergency. Only after this point were all schools, churches, and theatres ordered to be closed, and public gatherings were banned. The local press was, in the

meantime, claiming that the worst of the epidemic was now over and created a public mistrust of government. The newspaper also told that the death rates could only decrease after that point, the day after this news, the death numbers set a new record for the city, and kept increasing. Not only medicinal staff but also undertakers were not ready to cope with the results of the epidemic. The poorest citizens had to be buried in massive trenches dug by steam shovels.



Another massive gathering, this time in numerous states all over America was for the Armistice Day. Luckily, the virus by then has gradually mutated into a weaker strain, and consequently, the third wave of late 1918 to early 1919 was short and relatively mild compared to the deadly

second wave. The fourth wave of Spring 1920 was only observed in a number of isolated locations; however, it was still deadly, even if milder compared to the notorious second wave. In the final months of the World War I, more soldiers died because of the pandemic than those who died in four

years of conflict. Yet, the story of the war grossly overshadowed the story of the pandemic, whose final global death toll is estimated to be between 50 to 100 million.

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The Exclusionary Policy of Expansion of the Covid-19 Virus: Class Discrimination of the Pandemic

Zeynep Hazal YILDIZ (Department of Western Languages and Literature, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University)

The Covid-19 pandemic is an ongoing serious problem that has catastrophic effects on the world order and humankind by means of health, economy, and education. The virus spread extremely fast and asserted itself in different countries. Since the end of 2019, humankind has been facing obstacles due to the ongoing situation regarding covid-19. According to the experts, the virus has particular effects on one's health depending on age, previous health issues, and immune system. Some are germ carriers who do not even know that they have the virus but could infect many, some could spend their healing process at home while some are hospitalised because they are in need of medical care. As might be expected, the duration of the disease might differ according to the stated circumstances. However, there is another, in fact, an underlying reason for the diversity of the effects of the virus which is class differences. People from different socio-economic backgrounds struggle with the issue of the virus from various perspectives due to inequalities. In this respect, the present essay intends to examine the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey through a class-based analysis by means of the Marxist class hierarchy.

To interpret the issue of the Covid-19 pandemic through a social class-based perspective, one should understand Marxist class hierarchy. According to him, society is comprised of classes which are the bourgeoisie and the

proletariat but there is also a transit class called the petite bourgeois. The foundation of the class hierarchy is based on the means of production. (Marx and Engels 49) The powerful capitalist bourgeoisie is the owner of the production and could merchandise the labour of the working-class while the proletariat is exploited by means of cheap labour force and therefore, class status is not determined by income but by the number of properties which constitutes the fundamental and underlying cycle of economic relations between work and property. In this context, the meaning of ownership is assigned a different meaning of 'rights' that are considered appropriate for each class member. As might be expected, the rights that are granted to the upper-class bourgeois are regarded as privileges to the working-class proletariat. For this reason, the Covid-19 pandemic also functions as a medium to separate classes and perpetuate Marx's theory.

The most fundamental need during the pandemic is easy access to medical assistance. If one could remember the beginning of the virus when the prices of colognes, sanitisers, and masks were increasing enormously, one could also see the corrupted ambition that has penetrated to the owners. They do not care about assisting many, especially the ones who are in need, but instead they look for earning more because they know that due to the supply and demand relation, consumption would increase as well. Their behaviour supports

Marx's argument regarding means of production since their corrupted motive is to produce more while marking up the price by means of consumerism thus, they would maintain their class status as the bourgeois. Even though taking a Covid-19 test should be accessible for each person, it has become a privilege too. As might be expected, state hospitals provide this service free of charge, while private hospitals request a 'small fee'. Consequently, people who do not have the necessary financial standing to go to private hospitals are obliged to apply to services of state hospitals. However, this group of people who consist of the working class, encounter threats regarding their health. For instance, the polyclinics of Covid-19 which are responsible for tests usually have crowded lines which contradicts with social distance while the upper class could go to a private hospital and without waiting in a line, they could get their service salubriously and fast. The problem becomes more serious when a person from the working class is tested positive because due to the occupancy of the state hospitals s/he would oblige to wait in order to be treated 'properly'. Moreover, currently, scientists are working on a vaccine and according to them, the treatment might be in the near future. However, as well as getting tested and treated, getting the vaccine would also be class-based. If a person has the financial power to struggle and overcome the virus there are lots of opportunities but for financially unstable individuals

the options are limited, and there is no alternative. As one could see even medical assistance which is the most fundamental necessity during a pandemic is a binary that differs according to social class status.

During the pandemic, scientists lay emphasis on healthy nutrition as well. Vitamins, supplementary foods, natural antibiotics, and many other immune-enhancing sustenances came into use by many. However, even though they seem necessary they are not easily accessible. In fact, for the working class, they are categorized as privileges because workers could barely be sufficient for their general needs like grocery shopping, invoices, and school expenses. This is caused by the economy; prices are too high that grocery shopping is turned into a privilege that is granted for the upper class thus, purchasing power has decreased. For this reason, the economy is another field that is affected by the virus. It is the prime motive of the relation between consumption and production. Due to the ongoing circumstance regarding Covid-19, a new era in business life has begun which is home officing. However, as might be expected, working from home is not a suitable alternative for each person; in fact, it is one of the privileges of the upper class. To start with the foundation of the economy, which is production, the working class need to work physically in order to produce in the name of the upper class. Factories are open during the pandemic and the workers are exposed to discriminatory behaviours by their managers. In factories where hundreds of workers work side by side, the administrator decides on behalf of the workers' health. The working hours are cruel and there is no social distance among

workers; as long as they are able to produce their health is not valuable. The hygiene needs are not entirely covered but despite this, the workers are obliged to continue their heavy schedule as opposed to their managers who have the privilege to stay home and quarantine themselves. Scientists emphasize the importance of washing hands frequently and accurately but in the case of factories, the toilets are used by hundreds of people. Furthermore, protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and sanitisers are not sufficient in many factories. In fact, due to the increasing prices of protective equipment, some managers pressure the workers to use protectors more than once (Yeni 2020). Common areas also pose a threat for the transmission and spread of the virus, nevertheless, in the factories the changing rooms are so narrow and air conditioning is insufficient, most of them do not have shower areas (Yeni 2020). The worker services are so crowded and yet many workers do not even have services and therefore, they had to use public transportation. During lunchtime, in the cafeterias, meals are served sitting side by side and facing each other. Due to these harsh conditions of the factories, the workers are subjugated to the dilemma of being fired and being infected with the virus thus, they chose the virus in order to 'survive'. In this case, one could see the paradoxical situation here, workers submit to the virus because they need to work in order to earn their living.

In the same manner, education is radically affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The situation is similar with the hospitals because schools are divided as public and private as well. However, this discrimination is between schools only on the surface, but it is based

on class stratification. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, education was a field of inequalities, but the pandemic aggravated it. To start with public schools, they continue education through EBA which is an education informatics network. The Ministry of Education had some problems regarding the system because at first, it was asynchronous, and students were watching pre-recorded videos of teachers but later it became synchronic. Nevertheless, for many students, education turned into a privilege. Public school teachers cannot maintain the students because they cannot closely observe student behaviours, acquisitions, and development thus, a proper and interactive learning environment cannot be formed. Most of the time students do not even attend classes and therefore, they fall behind the curriculum. On the other hand, private schools manage different systems which could be categorized as more beneficial by means of interactivity. As one can see there is a clear disparity that also separates classes because the working-class does not have the financial power to promote their children with the privileges of private schools. Due to the harsh working conditions, they cannot spare time to assist the educational development of their children.

The upper-class, on the other hand, have enough time for their children since they could stay home and stay safe besides, they could afford private schools which contributes to both educational and social development of their children. Moreover, the disparity come to a state of uneasiness when considering all the students who are living in villages. Most of them do not have computers or tablets to attend online lessons, in fact, they have no internet access. Especially during the pandemic easy access to internet is almost as cruel as easy access to medical care because due to the new normal, humankind is living in an internet era; meetings, lessons, museum tours, theatres, and concerts are all arranged online. However, in order to attend these, one needs to possess technological devices and in the case of students

in villages neither is possible. UNESCO arrays the possible negative consequences of online education and their list includes; “interrupted learning, high economic coast, and unprepared parents”. (UNESCO 2020) One could see the connection between the new system of education and class hierarchy because educational opportunities are limited to class boundaries.

In conclusion, as stated above, the Covid-19 pandemic has enormous effects on the world in terms of the healthcare system, economy, and system of education. However, as Marx suggested people are divided into the upper class and the working class regarding their means of production and therefore, the ‘dramatic’ effects of the pandemic differ according to one’s socioeconomic standing. As might

be expected, during the pandemic the relation between production and consumption continues to manipulate the working-class for their labour. Since the managers are so eager to earn more and ensure their social status, they do not abstain to exploit, manipulate, and condemn the proletariat. Even though the fields are different they are all interrelated by means of producing and working in the name of the upper class. The healthcare system, economy, and the system of education are the mediums through which the subdued position of the working class’ is demonstrated for the sake of the upper class.

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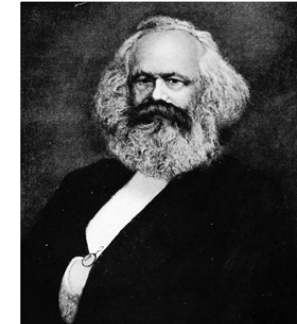
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Nexus between Alienation during COVID-19 and Karl Marx’s Theory

Cansu KIRICI (Department of Western Languages and Literature, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University)



Marxian term alienation has four dimensions, and all these are analogous to alienation experienced during COVID-19. Capitalism, in which the profit is more valuable than human beings, led to the objectification of labour because the proletariat has nothing to give but their labour; hence, humans confronted alienation due to materialism. Additionally, the destruction of nature by the capitalist dominions led new lethal viruses to spread among wild animals and humans; thus, it was inevitable that humans would have to confront a virus as destructive as COVID-19. This paper will scrutinise the alienation brought by capitalism in relation to COVID-19 by utilising the Marxian term of alienation.

Capitalism and Alienation

Based on Hegel’s philosophy, Karl Marx’s theory of alienation is defined as a result of an economic dimension, whereas Hegel’s interpretation of alienation is defined as a self-discovery process on the ontological dimension. Marx widened the issue of alienation from the philosophical perspective to sociological by utilising the capitalist economic sphere of material production,

which eventually led the society to transform into a commodity-producing commercial society by objectifying individuals. Thus, for Marx, alienation does not come from the state of consciousness; it comes out of the material conditions of capitalist economy. In a capitalist environment, the proletariat or the working-class suffer the ultimate alienation due to three reasons culminated by its system: wages, profit, and land.

“Political economy knows the worker only as a working-animal—as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs” (Marx, 1844, p. 19). Inherited from the feudal system, private property under the capitalist system reduced the relationship between the private property owner and the proletariat to an economic dependence of exploiter and exploited. After being exposed to the material practices, “man cannot develop and exercise his essential functions and capacities and subsequently becomes alienated to his natural functions, productive pleasure, and enjoyment” (Bağlama, 2018, p. 51); hence, individuals began to experience ultimate alienation.

The advent of capitalism generated new modes of alienation because humans work in jobs they hate just to get by with no purpose. The capitalist mode of production demands the worker in the mass production line; consequently, the object that the labour produces confronts the workers as something estranged; “The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer

belongs to him but to the object... the object exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him” (Marx, 1844, p. 57). When a worker produces something that he cannot identify himself with, it indicates that labour is involuntary; hence, alienation occurs in the act of production because the proletariat’s activity belongs to someone else; the worker has nothing else to give but his labour. The notion of alienation from the species refers to what makes human beings distinct from other beings, other than animal instincts such as having sex or eating; human beings can plan and create. Labour originates from the human essence because it is what they transform to meet their human needs; however, under capitalism, the estranged labour generates alienation from oneself and his roots. Human beings’ instinct to produce things spontaneously and autonomously are transformed into an unwilling activity under another man’s dominion, the capitalist. (Bağlama, 2018, p. 54). Lastly, alienation from fellow men suggests that as human beings enter the world of commodity production and profit maximisation, in order to survive, they evaluate the world materialistically; hence, they begin to treat and perceive others as objects, which causes them to become self-interested. Capitalism requires human beings to be competitive, covetous and self-oriented.

COVID-19 and Alienation

Viruses are one of the first living things on earth and an invisible enemy to human beings since their emergence. However, they are not alive like human beings because viruses require to hijack other living cells to survive and reproduce, which is their only goal. Additionally, viruses can be just as destructive as a bomb or a missile, and they are devious because a human can be infected and can spread the disease without any symptoms, resulting in killing many humans. Therefore, viruses such as smallpox, HIV, and Ebola have terrorised humanity for many years. Although many warned humanity against a new pandemic threat, others have not given any attention to it, and money has been dissipated for wars rather than healthcare field because they have forgotten the real invisible enemy, viruses. Additionally, deforestation has brought wild animals into contact with more humans, and industrial farming is pushing animals closer together, both giving more opportunities for viruses to combine into deadly ones. (IGES, 2020, p. 1) Consequently today, human beings are fighting against an invisible enemy, the zoonotic virus COVID-19 that evolved from bats, without any treatments or vaccines because they are not prepared.

Analysis on How They are Actually Analogous

Declared a global pandemic, COVID-19 has turned every aspect of life upside down by wreaking havoc. The borders have been closed, humans have started to wear masks and keep their social distances, businesses have been halted and lockdown has begun to 'flatten the curve' yet these have not prevented the virus from taking the lives of more than one million. Everyone was shocked

by the virus's sudden effect, and once in a lifetime, something extraordinary has happened; human beings shared similar fears, similar hopes, and similar dreams thoroughly. Nevertheless, humans shared similar sentiments even before the virus, but they have not been aware of it because the system insidiously imposed its notions to the subconscious, analogous to what a virus would do to the human body. Even before the lockdown and social distancing, humans were estranged, lonely, depressed, and alienated.

Capitalism has also indicated dominance not only over individuals but also over nature; hence, the respectful coexistence with nature has been eradicated. The greedy capitalists who desired more and more wealth have exploited, abused, and destroyed nature by deforestation; also, they have started to reproduce animals through industrial farming. These actions have set the place for the advent of lethal viruses to combine and because deforestation has caused human beings to interact with wild animals. Prior to the virus, humans had become indifferent to nature due to technological advancements and working. After COVID-19's advent, humans could not return to nature, meaning that they could not feel the purity, beauty, and tranquillity derived from it; hence, another alienation has occurred.

Whereas the single aim of COVID-19 is to hijack other living cells to survive and reproduce, the sole purpose of capitalism hitherto is to exploit and abuse humanity for its own interests; thus, capitalism is another wreaking havoc for human beings because it is no different from a virus. When humans have been locked down to their dwellings, they have felt the effects of a virus in human psychology vigorously; however, the advent of capitalism

also has led human psychology to alter. What makes humans unique from other creatures is that they can plan and create with their natural instinct. The rise of the materialistic society has caused humans to trade their labour in return for wages, which is a destructive thing to do for an individual because labour is the most profound and most authentic expression of the self. Subsequently, they have been not only alienated from the act of production because their labour belongs to another, but also have been alienated from the products they produced due to the fact that they could not identify themselves with the products. As a result of the objectification of the workers, they have been left with nothing to identify themselves with, which is similar to the COVID-19 situation. Even before the virus, human beings felt insignificant and purposeless, and with the virus halting the businesses, they have begun to feel severe sentiments regarding purposelessness and insignificance because they even could not leave their dwellings. Since most humans are not allowed to go outside, some resumed their jobs from their dwellings; however, they feel that they have been working in meaningless and purposeless jobs because they have been left alone with their sentiments, thus they have been 'alienated', isolated, and depressed.

In a society dominated by the capitalist order, one is either a predator or a victim; hence, human beings have to compete for employment, healthcare, and sustainable economic security. Many blamed human nature, implying that human beings are instinctively selfish and greedy; thus, the actions are caused by these notions. Nevertheless, to survive and pay the bills, rent, and get by, humans have become competitive and individualistic; hence, consciousness does not determine the way of life, but materialistic life determines consciousness. Therefore, instead of being a victim, many have chosen to become a predator by perceiving others as menaces, which led to alienation from fellow men. It is

an analogous case with COVID-19 humans have regarded others as a dangerous threat that might kill them. Hence, this attitude to others can be recognised as a survivor mode since if people cannot achieve standard economic conditions, they are likely to suffer from the destructive power of inequality. Considering that the government does not provide healthcare in many nations, humans who have economic independence could die of COVID-19. Besides, capitalism led only a few to control and own the means of production; thus, this widened the gap between the rich and the poor. As a result, many have suffered and have been suffering from the anxiety, insomnia and fear aroused by economic inadequacy; not everyone has 'Netflix and

chill' at their dwellings during the COVID-19

Conclusion

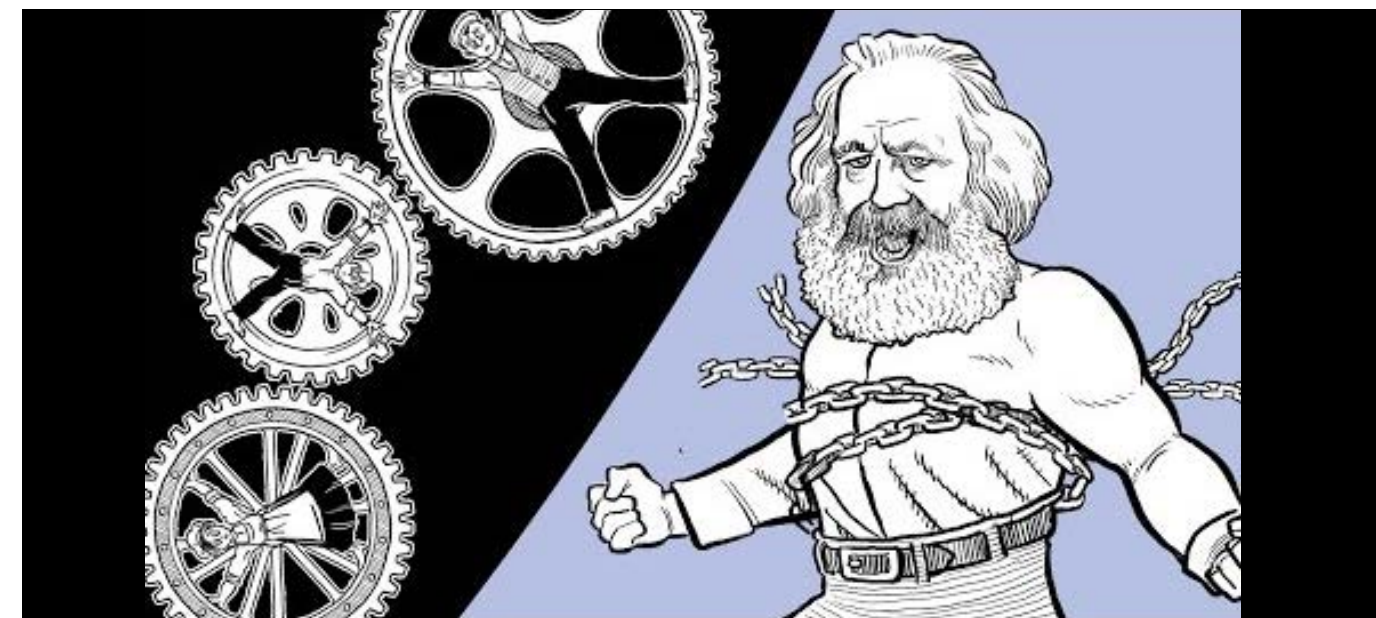
Today, human beings are confronting a deadly virus, COVID-19, and trying to survive; therefore, the alienation that emerged by capitalism has doubled since humans have felt alienated acutely. However, this incident might lead humanity to question and realise that they have to coexist with nature, every individual is creative, authentic and unique, and that their greatest treasure is a fellow human; hereby, they are not doomed to repeat history determined by the powerful onto them ever again. "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" (Marx, 1848, p. 45).

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PART III: Letters from English Literature Students to Writers or Fictional Characters

Letter 1 by Dilara Sena Baş

To: The Woman in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* by

Dear anonymous friend of mine,

I agree with the idea that each time you read a piece of work your interpretation may differ since you have experienced more and more. I have read your story in one of my sophomore classes, which is Short Story. At that time, I couldn't properly get you. Nowadays with Covid-19 entering my life, I have great empathy towards you because I now have the unfortunate chance to get the sense of being in lockdown as you were. Covid-19 which is also known as coronavirus has occupied our lives since March 2020. It was an ordinary day when the government announced a three-week break from education in order to avoid the spread of the virus. We all believed that it was true and prepared baggage for three weeks without knowing that it would last nearly forever. I think I will never be able to forget that day and the last time I walked in a great crowd in Bahçeli 7th avenue without any mask, without hesitation, and without social distance. Of course, I couldn't know that I shall not be close to human beings that much for a very long time. In this case, it is useless to fight back with the virus, but it needs precaution in each community to get rid of it. I try to remind myself that everyone on this planet is faced with a new type of disease which is unbeknown to the whole world and it is vital we should be hand in hand in this process. In this letter,

like you recounting a part of your life to us I will try to tell you mine during the period of Covid-19 by touching on some similarities in our lives like isolation, the need for companionship, and the relief of writing.

I would like to indicate that I'm not cooperating with John and Jennie or any others. I will try to be delicate when I'm talking to you because I feel your fragility and I hope this piece of writing will relieve you and distract your mind a little bit. I am sitting in my room with purple walls at this moment. This has been a room of my own for a couple of months. I know that you have suffered from the yellow wallpaper and its design in the room where you were forced to live in the mansion. Similarly, I am forced to live in this room, and I cannot go outside as often as before. Even going to a market is dangerous during the pandemic. With the lockdown, I have had a chance to observe my childhood room more. I genuinely changed the layout of my room more than ten times. I had a quite hard time getting used to the room that I have been away from for approximately four years. Some parts of the paint on my walls have been ripped off because my sister hung lots of posters on them. So, like you I see eyes looking at me on the walls. I even bought a wall cover with a design of moon and sun on it to change the appearance a little. Like the bars on the window in your room, I feel that there are invisible bars around my window and even at my door. I got the flu and I had the symptoms of the coronavirus

and like you, I locked my door and stayed away from my family members. I know you did this because of a feeling of insecurity due to John. Mine was different in that manner because I believe I was the danger. Nowadays our new normal is to quarantine ourselves and remain far away from the ones we love the most. In addition, like your eagerness to see flowers and nature from your window, nature became my escape place from this chaos. I go more frequently to the mountain house of my family where I can get rid of the mask that compresses my cheeks and hurts my ears and I can walk with my dog, get some fresh air whenever I want. It is very ironic that in my teenage years the mountain house was the place that I was escaping from but in today's conditions and as a grown up I now realize that a mountain house is a peaceful place. Nature embraces us even when she punishes us. She gives us this pandemic but again offers to turn into the wild and to our essence.

As social beings, companionship is a vital need in our lives. There is an old saying like "Friends are our family that we can choose". Sharing our emotions, hesitations and woes lighten the burden on our shoulders. Having a trustful companion by your side gives you confidence and self-esteem. I think you and your friend on the wallpaper who wanders and crawls around is a sign of that need. I see that this friendship between you and her started in a hostile way, but gradually you found her close to you and you even thought

that you and she are the same. In my case, I had to stay away from my friends because we are all possible patients of Covid-19. We all maintained our friendship on an online platform and even that helped a little bit to get out of a depressive mood. During the semester, we arranged online video calls with my mates to create enthusiasm in our study. I know that you want companionship but of course, in your situation, it is hard to have. The reasons for imprisonment may be different like patriarchy or a world-wide pandemic but it is in our hands to choose whether to be a captive of that imprisonment or create a free, independent sphere for ourselves.

Dear friend, Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own*, suggests a room is a tranquil place to write and create art. I call your diary writings a piece of art because even though maybe you didn't want anyone to read them, your readers get your passion, disturbances very well. I strongly suggest you to write more. Don't listen to John's patriarchal warnings because focusing on your imagination and transferring it on a blank sheet definitely is good for your psychology. If you write a novel, I would look forward to reading it. I started keeping journals and a diary on which I write what I have produced each day for myself in this crisis. I decided to write down everything I did in one day. This action was for doing something better each day. I even wrote that "I made a delicious cup of coffee for myself". I know that I can't do many of the things I want, like traveling, going to a bar, etc. but I can amuse myself with little pits of joy in life. You can call me a friend from now on and feel free to write to me about your daily routines. Soon I have realized that I am a part of a rare occasion

in course of time so what I write carries historical traces. When all this nightmare of Corona ends, maybe I will have something to show my grandchildren. I imagine a future scene of showing them some notes of mine or sharing some memories during the pandemic. I would definitely share with them that I have gone to İzmir and I have lived another crisis during a crisis. I mean that when I went to İzmir the next day there was an earthquake that took so many lives. I have lived the fear all through my veins and I realized that death is something very ironic. All these times we try to keep ourselves protected in our shelter but sometimes a shelter also can be your damnation.

I hope I can pass on my feelings and express our mutual points to you. I have achieved the relief of writing as I come near to the end of this letter. When you write you have an implied reader in your head, and you tell your troubles to her. You are mine in this writing. I know that sometimes people do not understand the struggles when it's in our mind and not in our body but hopefully, we can be pen friends from now on and we can overcome our struggles together. If you write please tell me your name, I am sure that your name sounds more pleasant than John's. You can mention what you have done for yourself only and maybe a little detail about your baby. I hope that you can see her more often.

It's like I can hear your response to this letter, and I think maybe you cannot understand the affection of this virus and its power on us and maybe you cannot sense its magnitude just like I cannot comprehend the difficulty you are in but if we can establish an empathy towards each other maybe we can detect more and more similarities. I understand much better now that things can change very quickly. As

Heraclitus said, "No man ever steps in the same river twice." And we cannot know whether we will wake up on the same day or what changes we will encounter without waking up to that day. Sometimes I think of my life before Covid-19 entered my life, but it feels like a very distant past. When I'm watching a movie, I see a crowded scene with people and even that makes me panic. We should have the strength of adopting the flux in our lives and also, we should provide a free zone just for ourselves. My dear friend, in this life where nothing is guaranteed, we might live the best we have or might not. Our feeling of isolation and need for companionship can be solidified in this way. Never forget that you are not alone, and every human being has that kind of time. Don't worry because against any kind of struggle we are all possible examples of showing anxiety and paranoia and you are not hopeless. Feel free to shout, write, walk, and never be chained!

With my best wishes,
Dilara Sena Baş

Classes Before and After the Covid-19 Pandemic:



Letter 2 by Enes Çakır

To: The Friar in the “First Story of the First Day” from Boccacci

Hello Dear Friar,

I am Enes, from the year 2020. I am a student of English language and literature. This letter will tell you my story of the year 2020 and the virus that killed thousands and how it changed our way of living. You should be wondering

why I am writing this letter to your divine soul; it is because people are being deceived by imposter saints. You are deceived by someone who looked like a saint, and everybody believed it too, however in the 21'st century people still believe in imposter saints, people are deceived to believe them and obey them. In America, in Turkey and in other countries, religion is used to intimidate people so that they do not stray away from what they

are taught to do. I myself, am very upset about your trouble with Ser Ceperello, after reading your story from *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio. The troublesome man, Ceperello, really played with everyone's innocent hearts and submitted himself as a saintly man by using your heartiness. I seek to comfort your kind heart because Boccaccio unearthed what kind of a man Ser Ceperello is. You could not have known that such men

could play their role best as liars, alas! Yet the truth is known at last.

The virus which spread from China is named Corona virus or the Covid-19. It killed over a million people on earth and still is killing to the date I am writing in December 2020. After February 2020 nearly every country had a lockdown. What I mean by lockdown is that the governments and scientific authorities ordered people not to go out, neither to work, or to prayer, nor to school or shopping. Some countries kept it loose and some kept it tight. Some countries did not have any lockdown at all! Yet we had the internet to amuse ourselves, do our jobs, attend our classes online and do our shopping. The internet is a blessing in these terms. To explain what the “internet” is, it is a worldwide web that connects everyone via electrical cables or invisible waves that we can interact with our smart devices such as telephones and computers, which in a few advancing centuries from your time, will be invented.

I am from the Eurasian country, Turkey which was once the Ottoman empire. We go through tiring times in the lockdown, since our economy is not fit to compensate for people not to work and stay at home, our government let people work with certain regulations like requiring workers to wear masks and stay apart in a circumference of 1.5 meters which they called the “social distance”. Many people died of this virus, and the ones who survived mostly got damage in their lungs, heart and other organs. Recent news from England says that the virus has evolved into a rapidly transmittable form, but we have not heard it coming to our country. My country bought the new vaccine from China, but it seems like nobody is trusting the vaccine yet, time will tell. However

not everything is going worse, since people are staying more in their houses, they have more time to spend with their families and beloved. From the social media I am seeing that people started to do more artwork and they spend more time on their hobbies. The virus, in a way, introduced us to our skills. So many singers and groups did online concerts and brought people once more together in a different platform. Some people said that the Virus caused us to be more antisocial, it is true in the physical form, but we socialized on the internet, we started to talk more to our friends on the phone and through video calling. Even though we are not together in the real world, we are together in the internet world.

What has changed in my life? In my daily life I was not going out every day, maybe once or twice a week, what I mean by going out is spending time with my family or my friends in a different place, visiting places or just chit chatting with them. I am inclined to be alone in tranquility, working on my woodworking projects/hobbies and playing games on my computer. I can say that I am more in my house rather than being outside. The virus assisted me to stay at home, and it brought everything to where I am happy. I can now attend my classes at home, I can do my shopping, nearly every governmental and private service is brought to my smartphone and computer. I do not have to arrange myself and my tasks to be with my friends, because I can now reach them whenever I want.

The virus allowed me to arrange my time to do whatever I want. Before the virus I had very little time because of school. I was getting up at 6 in the morning to catch the first bus to go to our school which is far away from where I

live, and going back took me a long time too, I was spending around 3-4 hours daily to get to my school and back. But now I usually wake up 10 minutes before our classes and with one button I can attend to my class, in my opinion this is a privilege nobody is appreciating. I am weary of living under my parents' shadow. It feels like their glance is constantly on me which disturbs me. I know that you were going through a pandemic as well and probably would say that yours is much lethal and people who stay at home are much depressed for they do not have the privileges we have, however times do change, and we are using what we are given. I am assuming that you are upset for the countless imposter saints such as Ser Ceperello, but it's the people's fault, they fall in every lie told to them without questioning, which is a huge frailty of people now.

Liars are all over the world, and the most common thing about them is the way they use religion for their own goods. They victimize anybody who falls in their hands, sadly you fell into Ser Ceperello's hands too. On the other hand, the virus has its ups and downs, but still, it is an illness that is able to kill. I cannot wish it to last longer so that I can play games and do other petty things. I wish to write longer but I am running out of paper dear Friar. I wish you all the best and stay healthy.

Enes Çakır
26/12/2020

Letter 3 by Çiğdem Eltuğral
December 5, 2020

Dear Gilgamesh,

I hope my letter is not troubling you. I wish to believe that your physical and mental health conditions are in a perfect position. About my situation, I can surely inform you that my inner world is on the messy side. Additionally, my physical appearance clearly shows signs of growth, especially in my breadbasket. Actually, I would like to describe to you what 2020 has brought to the world, rather than my belly fat, since this very topic that I am approaching to tell you is the only preoccupation in my mind, and probably in the minds of 7 billion others. I have raised the interest in telling you episodic details of the Covid-19 Pandemic period. I don't want to give you historical information on the exact date of the occurrence of such a terrible situation. Still, I can easily say that it has been 9 months since I have started questioning life in a broader sense, and most of the time feel the need to escape from all this blender. Well, you may have been wondering why I choose you to explain all this personal stuff. A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to read about your journey for immortality. I admired how you had a force in you that has driven you to escape from stationary living. You became aware of death, got scared, and fought for the sake of your immortality. I don't come across positive people that often, and therefore wanted to put my frame of life into words in this letter. I believe all that we go through in life is a journey that will continue till our death. This pandemic situation is just a small-time frame of the larger one; however, considering a 70-year life span, it is specific of its

kind because it has an impact from the East till the West.

When it comes to my experience, I should say that I did not consider it much of a big deal in the beginning. However, later on this troubling situation made it impossible not to think of death not only of myself but also about family and beloved ones. So, having both a mutual point: death, I want to explain further that you are lucky enough to take action to overcome your fear. When you lost your friend, Enkidu- sorry for reminding- you experienced a small-scale depression with which I empathize. However, you didn't kneel for your fate and went on a journey to change what has been written. Yes, I know what you are thinking: you have eventually failed all the tests, but more importantly, you have realized that you should live your extra life.

Considering my situation, the fear of death has struck me while sitting with friends at home upon hearing the news about a pandemic that caused schools to shut down for 3 weeks. What happened next was that I had to go to my parents' home. Unaware of my journey, I can humbly say that I tried to survive this pandemic regardless of the troubling world outside our house. I was surviving and left to my scary secret-consciousness, additionally, also left trapped at home, and felt helpless. I could not stop thinking about why I felt the need to entertain myself when there was so much going on. I strictly arranged a theatre/film schedule to keep up with the latest plays and was eager to attend free online courses such as drawing or Photoshop. I would be wrong if I say that it was not a fruitful period. I have to mention that all these psychological tendencies to escape from what is globally happening

led me to discover Freud. It must be an unconscious act that we human beings try escaping from anything problematic. Freud explains that unconsciousness influences behavior even though people are not aware of the underlying influences. You ran away to a possible solution while I had to passively entertain myself at home. From time to time, I felt amazingly suffocated by my routine's sameness and calmness inside the house. Yet, I should not lie; I have been able to get back on track with my workouts. I think in those moments of suffocation and distress, the feeling helping me with overcoming any sort of fear suddenly disappeared. Therefore, I had to pick all bits and pieces of motivation to take my mind from what I was missing.

Meanwhile, I understood that life is writing its own rules, and therefore, there is nothing to expect from it other than your own decision or beliefs. I mean, if you want to dye your hair purple, just do it. You live once they say, so... I think the pandemic has aroused the awareness of living by having accepted mortality. It is not so devastating after all. You get to watch tons of films or plays. Maybe also get to spend more time on the drawing courses you get mad about to follow, and try a book of delicious recipes. In one word: Appreciation. Yes! That's what I have learned. Leisure activities were not irrelevant before the pandemic; people merely had the time to involve in such. The pandemic gave the opportunity, but this time a hundred times more. Now, there were no excuses for not having time but being tired of escaping from reality. I ran too, but at the same time I was improving my life. For example, I did not give up on doing my daily skincare routine or the weekly clay masks.

Moreover, building my body was still an important goal. It was as if the hour had stopped, but the world was continuing to spin. If you want to understand these leisure activities, you can think of Enkidu's cleansing rituals before entering society. I don't know if he ever has mentioned his intercourse with Shamhat, but she was the one who taught him how our world works. For Enkidu, it meant a change crowned with a ritual, while for me, activities allowed me to float around in the home regardless of the coronavirus party outside. It is also quite funny how he became social and civilized with that cleansing session, and I transitioned to a less social and more introverted version of myself. Speaking of Enkidu, after he had sex with Shamhat, he was rejected by his acquaintances and was forced to leave, while in my case, you get excluded if you get to communicate with those party freaks.

I don't want to finalize my letter without mentioning a film I have watched recently, namely, *The Budapest Hotel* by Wes Anderson. The man in this film has the need to tell what he has experienced. In a way, this refers back to Freud's philosophy about the unconsciousness influencing our daily life. He was getting old, thus dying like you and me, and to pass his time or escape from the disturbing fact about his mortality, he tells his story to a guest at the hotel. As far as I remember, you felt the need to write your story on a stone - I'm glad you did- and I had the same need to keep my mind busy with more cheerful topics to turn my attention to entertainment rather than the disturbing news about the pandemic. I realized how your story got framed (narrated by somebody else), and my journey got situated in a restrictive frame that the coronavirus forcefully

has put me in. After all, I want to thank you for reading my letter, if you were able to read till here, and hope to receive any written piece of paper from you soon, because I know I have plenty of time to write back.

With appreciation and warm regards,

Çiğdem Eltuğral

Letter 4 by Gülşah Yaren Kumaş

To: Roderick in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Dear Roderick,

You are going through such a difficult time that getting a letter from someone you do not know probably is the last thing you would worry about. All I want is to have a heart-to-heart talk with you, yet I think first I should introduce myself a little bit. I am Gülşah and I am a senior student at Çankaya University. However, now I am not in Ankara but Çorum. I really want to say that it is just an ordinary holiday to see my family, yet the situation is more complicated than that. While everything was going on in the daily routine, one day we heard that a virus called Covid-19 broke out in Wuhan, China. This contagious virus has spread all over the world in a short time. The schools are closed and we returned to family houses. As you see, it is quite similar to your lockdown at your house and that is why I think we can understand each other. I know that the house of Usher carries a big role in your psychology and feeds your fear and imagination since it is full of terror and creates a threat for you. In this house, you lost your sanity because you could not see any reality in

it. I must confess that this sanity is familiar to me because of the lockdown. I assume that dealing with your family's death causes your corruption of humanity but I think you are trying to get rid of this corruption by inviting your friend to your house. Before his visit, you see your mansion as a living being with all its tall narrow windows, dark and shadowy atmosphere, and because of its gloomy mood; you start to feel just like him. Although I am not living in such a mansion, the pandemic creates this gloomy mood in my house, too. That is why I want to share some of my feelings about the pandemic and tell my experiences comparing them with yours such as self-isolation.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, isolation was quite unfamiliar to us. This virus is like an invisible fence for the world. At that point, this invisible fence is like your house. Cafes, restaurants, shopping malls are closed, and it affects the communication between the people. I could not see my friends or my relatives because this virus is a dangerous threat for everyone. I learned that especially old people are more affected than us. That is why I was worried about my mom and dad. I know you lost your family so you can easily understand my worries about them. During this lockdown, I think people need more from each other because we are at home all day, doing nothing and it negatively affects our energy. For example, for a long time, I did not want to talk to anyone. I watched movies all day. Although there are a lot of things to do in the house such as doing exercise or playing games with my family I have chosen this passive activity. I feel lonely since lockdown is something unfamiliar to me. You can understand this because there are many books and instruments in your house but you do not deal with them. I think you

also know this lack of energy mood very well because of loneliness; you wrote to your friend and asked for help from him because of your illness. You wanted a companion in this hard time. However, I want to warn you about something. You did not think of your friend when you invited him. He affected you and your house's gloomy, melancholic mood and you did not care about it. I experienced such a thing actually. During the lockdown, my friend invited me to her home and she said that she was bored and needed a companion. However, she did not tell me that her mother might be infected by the virus. I was very upset since she should have told me that news before I asked. I think we always think of other people's health and psychology before doing such a thing.

We have been pursuing our education online since last semester. I should say that online courses were not easy for me at the beginning. However, at some point, I noticed that I did not worry about the pandemic but my assignments. Actually, even though the assignments and courses are very tiring for me; it was good to forget the virus for a while. However, sitting all day with my computer, trying to organize my thoughts to study, and doing all these at the family house is quite hard. I really miss my home and habits in Ankara. I think mankind does not understand the value of something before losing it. I never thought I would miss drinking coffee with my friends so much. At the beginning of your friend's departure from your home, you could not understand that being with someone is very valuable. You called him yet you could not speak to him properly because of your melancholic mood. As time went on, you got used to spending time with him. I think we got used

to everything in time. However, till that time comes, we tend to be depressive. For example, before online classes, I felt so useless because I could not produce anything such as writing essays or creating new ideas. After my online classes, I started to feel alive. I still do not know whether forgetting the pandemic because of the online classes is something good or not... However, at least, I have started to focus on something.

The more time passes, the more our precautions are diminished. For instance, in the beginning, when we went shopping, we washed every package we bought. But gradually we gave up doing a lot of things, and the virus multiplied rather than decreased. People went on holidays, started seeing each other very often. It is like they could not see reality anymore. At some point, I have started to think that this virus will not pass and we should learn to live with it. So, I have had my epiphany that I need to get rid of all negative ideas and feelings.

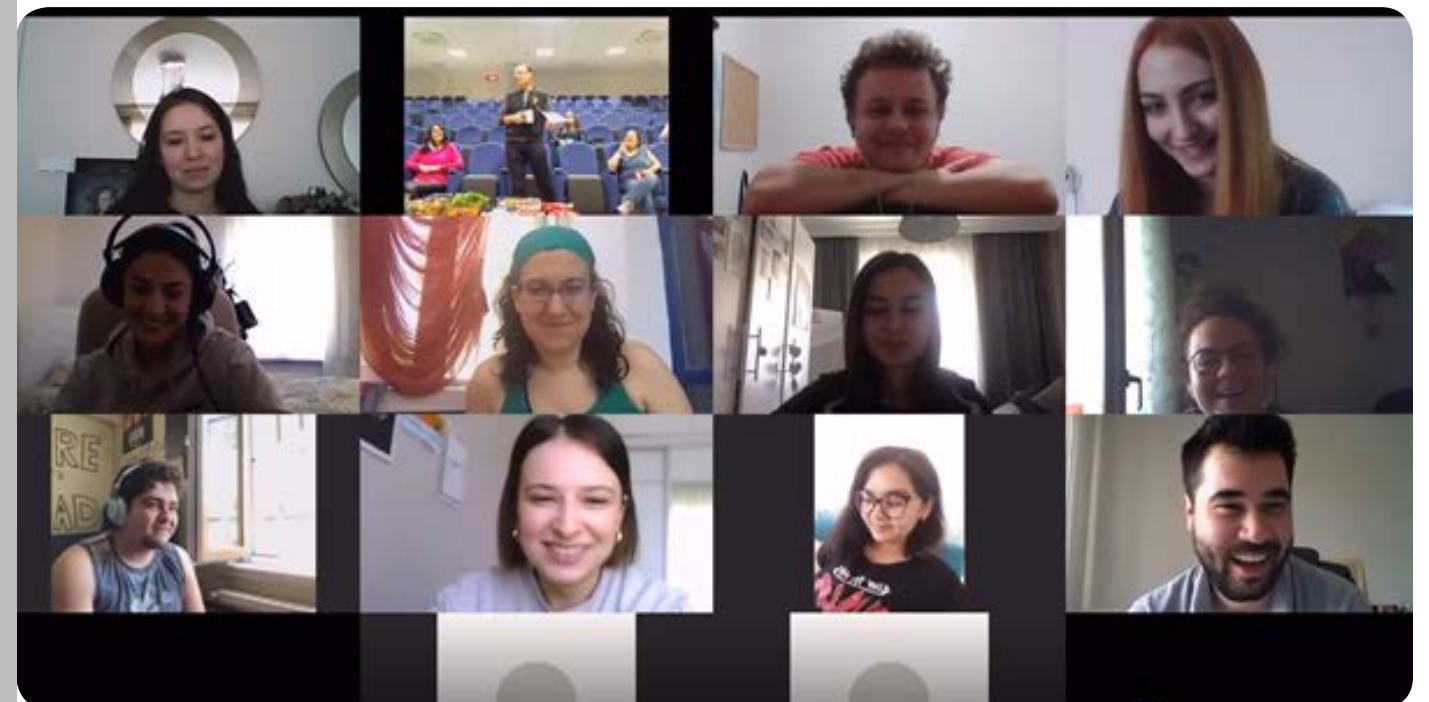
After that epiphany, I now want to spend time with myself or with my family. Probably, after your friend's return, you lived such an epiphany, too. He was impressed with your paintings and it shows that you want to make yourself busy by discovering your abilities. Just like you, I have started creating my own comfort zone. For example, at night, I cover my blanket, light my candles, and read for hours. I recommend you reading since while reading, I feel like I am not in this world. I know there are lots of books at your house so you can focus on different worlds with the help of literature. Maybe reading will help you forget your sorrows about your family and your anxieties about your dead sister. Speaking of your sister, you have lived with her dead

body for a long time. Probably I could not understand exactly how you feel but because of this virus, we are all threatened by the fear of death so I know how terrible this is. I appreciate your power both physically and mentally.

I do not want to make you uneasy anymore that is why I will talk about the happy moments in my life. I started making a puzzle, and I imagine what I would do after the virus and the places I want to travel. I watched movies about the virus, yet I noticed that this is not good for my psychology that is why I started to watch comedies. Your friend found you an activity which is singing a song to cheer you up and that is why I think you are lucky. You sing "The Haunted Palace" together yet I think the song should be more cheerful since it might be affecting your mind in a bad way.

Sincerely yours,
Gülşah Yaren Kumaş.

Social Activities Before and After the Covid-19 Pandemic



My dearest writer Giovanni Boccaccio,

I would like to write to you today in order to express my appreciation for your talent and creative work *The Decameron* (1485) because you visualized a vivid picture of the devastating bubonic plague “Black Death” in Europe from 1347 to 1351. Your work gives me a sense of awareness of the worse consequences of a worldwide deadly plague. Besides my appreciation, I want to share with you the situation of the world in my present day when we are all struggling with another deadly plague “The Covid 19 Pandemic”. This fatal plague’s origin is also Asia, particularly Wuhan, China and it has been spreading worldwide from December, 2019 up to now without a sign of ending. In addition to this coincidence, Italy is also one of the first countries that was hit strongly at the early time of the pandemic. Similar to the preventive measure in the plague “Black Death”, the country applied a national lockdown from the last week of February, 2020 when I was an Erasmus student in Rome, Italy. In fact, to prevent the spreading of the dangerous virus, all types of short preventive measures like lockdown or curfew or similar restrictions are necessary. However, the lockdown is no longer effective in the present time since it’s not simultaneously applied throughout the world at the beginning of the pandemic. Furthermore, the chance of having the Covid vaccines for less developed countries is limited, thus, these preventive measures cannot stop this fatal disease. In my opinion, the world lacks the cooperation to handle the pandemic but the cooperation of others is necessary in this crisis time. Vietnam may be seen as a

great example of the cooperation to cope with the pandemic. As a Vietnamese, I can say that Vietnam is luckier than other countries because the number of patients and deaths is pretty small due to the early and proactive precaution taken by the government. Contributing to this success is the cooperation of military forces and the citizens of Vietnam. This reminds me of Aristotle’s political thought, a state is a compound made up of citizens, therefore, the citizen’s contribution is definitely important in either a peaceful or crisis period.

Besides, I want to talk about another point of view on the plague in my generation. Similar to the period of the Black Death, in a religious aspect, people see the plague as a serious punishment of God who wants to have a quick purification of the world. Actually, I heard this warning some years ago. However, I just saw it as a nonsense rumor since I was not a really pious person. Unfortunately, this nonsense rumor has happened. Another reason I want to write to you is because your work brings me pleasure since the confession of the main character is humorous. In your work, ten storytellers in the story tell different stories every day to spend their time. I’m also doing storytelling to survive in this harsh condition where our daily life has become chaotic. In this way, you are my listener.

During the pandemic, all aspects of life from economy to social and medical aspects are affected terribly. Therefore, we are forced to change our lives to survive in order to stop the spreading as much as possible. For instance, due to the closure of schools, the displacement of traditional methods of learning is replaced with distance learning. Although this manner is

useful and proper now, we cannot ignore the uncomfortable effects of this method, such as constantly facing the screen of a computer or laptop decreases our vision acuity but increases a variety of health problems like obesity or nerve pain. In this situation, personally, I feel I’m getting stuck in a virtual world in which I’m surrounded by the screens of technological devices, such as laptop, television and telephone. As a matter of routine, I start and end my day with these screens without stepping out of the house because of the fear of the disease and a time limit for a heavy load of homework. Therefore, I associate my present life with a loop which has neither a starting nor ending point. Gradually, this loop starts to show a sign of burnout while the surge of the pandemic has no sign of stopping. That makes me feel unbearable suffocation. As a foreigner in different countries like Italy and Turkey, there was a period of time in Italy I felt myself lost in life, scared of death and angry with my choice of Erasmus in a wrong period because I could not get a full conduct of my professors in Italy. Therefore, self-study delayed the program until September then I lost the opportunity to apply for a minor. Besides, I was trapped in a little room without any type of physical interaction for 3 months. As a claustrophobic person, I experienced crying, fear, anger, depression and insomnia. Coming back to Turkey, again I had been put in twenty-eight days of quarantine. However, this period of time helped me calm down because Turkey is my second hometown where I have my friends, teachers, lovers and with the guidance of my teachers in this autumn semester, the feeling of loneliness went away due to my full schedule. Indeed, taking eight

all my time, however, I do enjoy this sort of a busy schedule with assignments and term projects. For example, writing a letter to you is one of my great assignments. As a literature student, I feel myself luckier than others because I can create my own fictional world to shelter myself during the time of writing. In this world, I no longer care about the chaos of reality since I was able to set a healthy and orderly world in which I feel safe and enjoy for a while. Similar to Minotaur in *The House of Asterion*, who feels safe, free and enjoyable while others see him as an entrapped creature in the Labyrinth in which he spends all the time to play, learn the art of writing and set rules for his visitors coming every nine years. Also, I’m able to imagine and dream what I cannot obtain in the real world. As you may see, I’m satisfied with my own imaginations of a trip to Vietnam, obtaining a good job in the future and the chance of talking to you since these imaginations are my repressed desires. In other words, this assignment gives me a chance to look back at what I have gone through since the pandemic broke out to see that my present condition has more positive responses to the present situation than before.

I believe, as soon as you finish reading my letter, you will encourage me to continue facing up the chaotic life in a realistic world without fear and pessimism because you know that my future will be better compared with my present time later. Therefore, I should face up this obstacle and see the world positively. Hopefully, we are able to defeat this crisis with our awareness and strength of mind in order to get back to our normal lives. In doing so, each individual has to act properly and ask less about their rights of freedom. Before leaving here, as a literature student, I would

like to say thank you for everything you have done to enrich literature. I wish you had created more works for the new generation including me.

Love,

Tuyet Bang Ngo

Wednesday, January 6, 2020

Letter 6 by Ahmed Özdoğan

To: Robert Langdon in *Inferno*

Dear Mr. Langdon,

I hope that you are in good health during this brutal pandemic. I just finished your journey told in the book entitled *Inferno* by Dan Brown. Your story is about an attempt of yours to stop the virus which was created by Bertrand Zobrist, who is a transhumanist and he aims to stop overpopulation in the world. I am sincerely sorry about reading it late but while having literature education, as you can guess, it is hard to read books other than English literature. In the novel, you are being informed by WHO about a virus that might kill all the human population, and your only aim as a professor of symbology is to stop it before it spreads because you are good at solving puzzles, but we didn’t care the Covid-19 in 2019 as you did. Actually, WHO didn’t care as it did in Zobrist’s virus, it is first considered as a non-lethal virus and would disappear in a couple of months in China, but it appears that it really kills people especially those who have chronic illnesses. You thought that Zobrist’s virus would kill many people to stop overpopulation but this virus did not kill but sterilized people. So, our stories started and continued differently but the only similarity between our stories is we both failed to stop the virus, and the continuation of our stories is also different. Covid-19 started in China and after a couple of months, many countries started to announce that

they have infected people. After Turkey announced that the virus has been seen in the first patient in Turkey, the number of deaths and infected people increased rapidly and we are stuck in our homes. Turkey started to quarantine people in their homes or the hospitals to stop the spread of the virus like many other countries. Restaurants, schools or public places are closed. Hugging people, going to sports, meeting people outside or eating dinner all together just became memories for us.

Last year, at the beginning of this pandemic, staying at home was like torture for me. I got bored and thought that it would finish in a couple of months. Now, almost a year has passed with a virus and everything has changed. While staying home was a punishment for me last year, now going outside, and walking in the street makes me feel like I am a survivor after the world, I look for a way to pass people without having a touch. I am completely uneasy when I go out. However, the only place that I feel safe has become my room. I am staying almost 20 hours in my room and the only way that I connect with other people is via my computer and phone. Seeing faces on the screen, being unable to hug our friends, lovers or relatives has become the most normal thing in our lives and I started to feel as if I have never hugged or met people before. Just a couple of days ago, I saw my little cousin who is just 5 years old and I opened my arms to hug him and he said he cannot hug because his father told him that hugging may make him sick. While I was working with my friends in the cafes, now I am using applications and connecting with anyone online. While I was spending time with my grandparents before, I am just calling them in order not to make

them sick. Sometimes I watch old football matches on the internet and I see that about 50 thousand people are watching the match in the stadium. During the pandemic, unfortunately, people cannot come together. So, I am thinking about how we met all together with my friends, cousins or relatives, a year ago. This reality of the past starts to become a dream for me. We are hearing good news around the world about vaccination but I don't believe that everything is going to be the same again as it used to be in the past. During your journey, you went to Italy, Istanbul, and many other places to stop the virus's spread but you failed. At least that virus didn't kill people. But now people are dying and the virus continues to prison us in our homes.

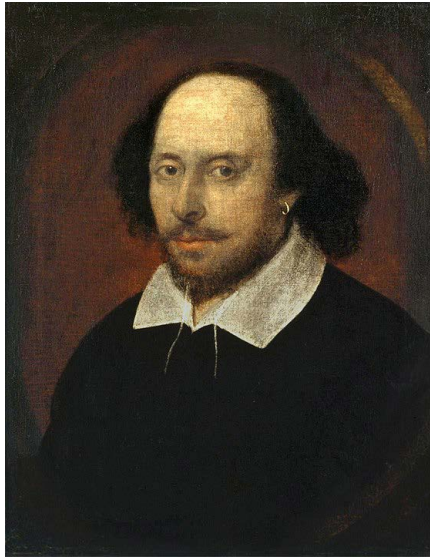
As I said before, I have changed because I believe that this will continue for a year or two years. After that, nothing will be the same as before. I hope that I am wrong about my prediction but screens, online life, and staying at home may be our future life. Before ending my letter, I wish you good health and a better future. I am looking forward to your answer, Sincerely,
Ahmed ÖZDOĞAN

Dear Ahmed,
It is a really sorrowful world that you are living in now and I agree with your ideas because when I rushed to stop Zobrist's virus, I knew that there would be great changes in the world and now, I see from your letter that all of them are happening. As you know Heraclitus once said "The only constant in life is change". The only significant thing can be learning to adapt yourself in the process of changing. I can advise you to not stop but keep your progress in this pandemic. However, I am not going

to tell you to be careful because if you are reading my journeys, you know that you should be careful. I am waiting for your good news because good news will come at the end of all journeys.

Sincerely,
Robert Langdon.

Letter 7 by Zehra Sena Özkan



Dear Sir William Shakespeare,

In our last correspondence you asked me how I, being a commoner and a woman, can attend the university. It is not really what you think; I do not have to disguise myself as a man nor pretend to be someone else. I wish I could say that we are living in a completely different time from yours and that the four hundred years passed were all progress and nothing else. Even though there have been developments in some areas of life we are still the same humans, fragile and subjected to fate- or as I prefer to think, the arbitrariness of existence. Just as you have experienced plagues, we have been struggling with a pandemic. Perhaps the epidemic has been a common occurrence all your life and you have become used to the idea of staying closed off for some periods of time; but we did not experience a disease that has such

a global scope in many years. It has affected humanity greatly. The 21st century may be defined by the word connectivity and this time it meant our downfall because the virus spread globally within three months and the misinformation it brought spread even faster. Panic swept across the world; there have been a plethora of explanations, suggestions, warnings from all kinds of people, all over the world that we tried to keep up with. At last, it was decided that everyone should minimize their contact with others, isolate themselves in their homes to stop the virus from spreading even more. When people failed to comply with this decision, similar to your time, governments enforced quarantines and lockdowns. Life has been limited to our homes since then, people whose job or education does not require them being there in person managed to continue yet others have had to lose their jobs or halt their education therefore naturally there have been economic fluctuations. As you can probably relate to, these are difficult times for everyone. I feel like if the cities were not as crammed in, quarantines could pass easier. I want to explain more about this situation so that you can understand how tedious it has become. For example, London is a crowded city, right? But right now, the world is many times more crowded. You probably heard of the discoveries of new continents by the Dutch or Portuguese. Those places are now filled with millions of people. Therefore, housing system has changed to fit in everyone, houses are stacked on top of each other, creating blocks of high buildings called apartments. Furthermore, they are so crammed in together that, when you look outside your window, there is a high possibility that the only thing you can see is other buildings. Nature is nowhere

to be seen in most of the cities, so it is impossible to take a walk outside without encountering a person, and possibly get infected. If only we could have a piece of nature, we could keep our distance from people and not feel so stuck inside.

I had not realized that I have been surrounded with very little life. I think I was not aware of this lifelessness because I was trapped in humdrum routines. 'Life' meant daily tasks that require completion. I finish my tasks, never once moving away from my desk then ask myself, now what? I think about the way I used to live my life, before quarantines and lockdowns. Most weekdays I would be at the university, it took up so much of my time. I had to commute for more than two hours every day. Apart from that, I used to go to the theatre but not very often. But now that I am compulsorily at home every day; I ask myself, what is outside that I crave so much, even though I know that my life is almost as limited. As much as I criticize the routines for substituting life, I have to admit that their insignificance was somewhat relaxing. Lately every other day seems equal to a historic event to be remembered later. I think I miss that kind of living, a bit empty perhaps but possibilities were endless.

I know that everyone experiences this period differently but in my case, there have been many layers of distress. At the very beginning of the pandemic my mother got seriously ill and we had to take her to hospital many times in a week. We were worried about the possibility of any of us catching the virus. Then my sister, who is a nurse, started to work in the pandemic service. Health workers are the second most afflicted from the disease. That is why I have been a bit gloomy. I realized that I kept

saying to myself, 'life signifies nothing' it is not routines, not the surroundings, it has no meaning. I thought I caught the phrase from one of my classes but when I looked it up, it turned out to be from Macbeth. I went and reread it. As you well know, in act five, scene five, Macbeth mourns after Lady Macbeth's death:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time.
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.
It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

These words perfectly reflect our condition. Ever since the pandemic has started, we have been continuing our days with the promises of a 'tomorrow'; a tomorrow that brings the cure for the disease, news of the vaccine and return to normal life. And the 'petty pace' of the lockdown restrictions has made the understanding of time alternate between a calculable entity and an intangible concept. Just because we were forced to stay inside, every day dragged itself but looking back at the year, it passed away so fast. There is a saying, 'tough times build character,' I do not know when this phrase was formed, or whether you were aware of it but considering the difficult times we are living, it is quite ironic. You say that the world is a stage, and we are but players, characters on it. In a way it is similar to my understanding of life as routine; the tasks we are supposed to complete are roles we are to play. But when we think beyond these roles, life seems quite absurd. We are forced to realize that life does not really mean anything and it does not last long enough to come up with a meaning too. I think experiencing the pandemic has been a reminder

that life is limited. We follow the statistics of people who survive the virus and who are infected with it, wondering if we are to become one of these at some point. We go outside wearing masks so that we do not get sick. The idea of death is reminded to us every moment and our usual roles have lost their meaning. What is left to us is but fret and count the days then? We are indeed poor players of this life wrapped up by the pandemic. I wonder when you wrote this part, were you feeling stuck and helpless too? Perhaps you felt angry because life felt very elusive to you as well. In the last century, the arbitrariness and absurdity of life has been advocated by a group of philosophers called existentialists. I admit that I am very inspired by them. But I am inspired by you too, that is why I wanted to write a letter all the way back to four hundred years. I do think that life is absurd but its lack of meaning opens up so many possibilities to explore. I should tell you, there is a writer called Jorge Louis Borges and he writes about you saying that you have nothing and no one inside you. You know that actors wear masks; Borges says that you are the very mask; an indication, or a sign of someone. One could even say that there is no one beyond the hollow eyes of it. However, the multiplicities of the masks imply that there is someone behind them, carving their futures, filling them with life. Borges claims that this is the reason you have everything and nothing in you at the same time. I think that arts are the way out of this absurdity, nothingness. Literature, theatre help us to see life from many perspectives within the same body. In dire times like these, whether it is escaping from harsh realities or getting involved in other realities, we can find relief, distraction or simply enjoyment.

I cannot wait to hear back about your comment on Borges’ idea. Until then,
Forever your student,

Zehra Sena Özkan

Letter 8 by Elif Bilge Taşpınar

Dear Shahrazad,

I am writing to you because our situation is similar. You are an educated wise woman. You try to protect all the women from dying in the country. The King is murdering women thinking women cannot be trusted. You stop the King from killing by telling stories each night after you get married to him. I must congratulate you for your success. Also the plan is very smart that you are leaving the story in the middle of the most exciting part. People have curiosity in their blood. I also like the way your father tried to stop you from marrying the King. I am glad you didn’t let him succeed. So, you are telling stories to survive, and I want to tell you my story.

We have a pandemic going around the whole world. I can guess what you are thinking about it. It must sound like a joke. But this is real, unfortunately. This started in China and according to the news the sickness occurred from a man who ate a bat soup. Either it occurred from that or not eating the bat soup, pretty disgusting, isn’t it? Well it is China, I wouldn’t expect any less from them. Anyways, after it started it spread too fast. We first saw Italy’s situation and how bad it was there. People were dying and it scared us. Then it came to our country. First, there was just a man who got sick but then his family got sick and then other people. Like the women dying each day because of the king, here the virus has been killing people each day. So the government thought the best

solution was shutting everything down for a little while. It includes schools and some working places. Then going out of the houses became forbidden at the weekends until the summer. In the summer because of the economy the people and the government acted like there was no sickness. So it spread more and more because foreigners came and everybody went on a holiday. Now we are again in the houses and cannot go out. People are still dying each day. So you telling stories to save the women from dying does not work for us the same way, but it might help us during this time by keeping our hopes and dreams alive. So a lot of people are trying to stay home. They have a lot of free time. So we can read novels, stories, educate ourselves, and talk to other people about our experiences. This way time does not pass for nothing, and it might save us from dying by keeping our mental processes alive. Uneducated people and people who do not read anything generally think that this sickness is a joke, resulting in people who still don’t wear their masks when they go out. The people who are sick are also going out and spreading their sickness to other people. Reading, and telling stories educate people like you educated the king with your stories. Because people want to believe what they want to believe unless someone or something shows them the truth.

So, we have been having this pandemic for a year. When it started I remember I was at school and I did not go home straight after that because we were going to be trapped in our houses. So, I made my day the most of it. However, after that day the time was too valuable to spend it for nothing. Those times I decided to read books and watch movies. Reading books and watching movies were kind of a survival for me. This is

a metaphorical kind of survival. I would psychologically die and be depressive, negative all the time. I would also kill the valuable time if I didn’t educate myself. These times I both educated myself while being at home and survived from this.

Anyways, I talked about my situation in the whole letter but don’t judge me because of that. It is just that we have been in a very difficult situation and we cannot go on our lives as before. Well, I have some questions for you that I am dying to learn. How have you been? Are things better after you taught the King that not all women are the same? What about the King’s brother Shahrayar? Did he get married again and is he happy now? One last question, are you still using storytelling to teach people a lesson and survive from things? Well, I would like to know the answers.

I would like to hear from you soon,

Best wishes,
Elif Bilge Taşpınar

Letter 9 by İpek Tunalı

To: Gregor Samsa in Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*

Dear Gregor Samsa,
Halo! I think I should introduce myself at the beginning of my letter because I know that your life is not going well and I don’t want to give you another reason to be anxious. I suppose delivering a letter from someone unknown is surprising but not in a good way... My name is İpek and I am writing these words from my hometown Eskişehir. I wish I can write my letter from where my university is, Ankara. I can feel that you have a question mark in your mind right now. Let me explain why I am in Eskişehir... One day we woke up and we saw that a virus called Covid-19 is out

in China. It was just like your metamorphosis; our world was about the change and we could not do anything about it. I can say that we are living our metamorphosis since March. Because there are countless changes in our world. For example, since the day when the virus broke out, I could not go to school as I did before and that is why I am not in Ankara. In terms of changing our daily life, I think we can understand each other. I know that you could not go to work as well. Before the pandemic, I would find myself nearly in tears because of the way I scorned about going to school in the morning. But now, if someone said that I were to go to school tomorrow, I would run to my university despite the considerable distance between Eskişehir and Ankara. In addition to this, there is another reason that I have chosen you and I have a question for you. How can you live in your room without going out? I am serious about that question because I have no patience anymore. Since the Covid-19 was out, we have to stay in our houses to protect ourselves from the virus. People did not obey the rules and the government established regulations about staying home and as you can guess; it is called quarantine. During the quarantine, most of the time I was in my room. Because our school decided to do online classes, I have a lot of things to do and I am not only isolated from the outside but also isolated from my house. I know that you feel under pressure because of your family. I can say that I also feel under pressure because of my school. While trying to get used to this process, it was really difficult to focus on the lessons. While I was pushing myself to do something for school, I also needed to be patient and force myself not to be depressed. I guess this part is the most difficult one. Because when

you are on your own, you could not help thinking. I know that you are an overthinker... Don’t worry, you are not alone. I am also an overthinker now. Time passed and the government decided to bend the rules. The government called that process “the new normal”. I think this was ironic because while nothing is normal all around the world, calling this new process normal is not normal. With the new normal my overthinking level became higher than before. Because my family were going to work, and they needed to use transportation. People need to stay away from crowded places but this is not possible. While I am thinking about my family, I can barely concentrate on my lessons. While I am struggling with all these feelings, another feeling has surrounded me as well. My graduation is coming... Honestly, I am scared of feeling like you, like a bug... Because when you realized that you were a bug, your first reaction had shocked me. You thought that you could not go to work anymore. I am pushing myself to empathize with you, but I am sorry. My first thought would not be work, but the unimaginable terror of living as a bug for the rest of my life. As I said before I am scared because I don’t want to feel like a bug when I graduate. I know that if you are unemployed you have no difference from a bug. Because of the pandemic, unemployment has increased, and it is getting hard to find a job all around the world. The envision I had about my future has been stained and overshadowed because of these circumstances, and I do not know how to clear it back to its former bright state. But after I started to write my letter, I feel like I am taking my mind from these unfortunate events and feel comfortable a little bit. Because I know that you can

understand the whole process of our metamorphosis. This whole pandemic situation also reminds me of the apple that your father threw at you, because after that part, you started to die slowly. There is just one change, this virus was not caused because of an apple, but a bat. It was like your dying process but with one difference, the starting point of this pandemic is a bat. The bat part is just an assumption, but I can say that I found some kind of similarity between the apple and bat. Also, it is known from the myth of Adam and Eve, an apple can start the change. This is the end of my letter, I hope one day I will write to you again and this time I am going to give you the news that the pandemic is over... Also, I hope that I have not bothered you with all my problems, but I need someone who can understand me. Thank you for being my shoulder to cry on. Take care.

Best wishes,

İpek Tunalı

Letter 10 by Nur Ferzan Uzunpınar

To: Dunyazad in *One Thousand and One Nights*

Dear Dunyazad,

Hello, let me first introduce myself to you. My name is Nur Ferzan Uzunpınar. I am twenty-four years old and a university student in Turkey. Unfortunately, this is my last year, and I will probably graduate without sitting in a classroom again. You have listened to different stories from your sister for one thousand and one nights to survive. This is the story of how I survived the global pandemic that started at the end of 2019. I choose you to write a letter because even though you seem to be an unimportant character in *One*

Thousand and One Nights, you saved your sister's life by listening to her and making her tell those stories for almost three years to her husband, King Shahryar. I also saved myself and people whom I care about from the virus by staying at home. I know you can understand me when I talk about how difficult staying at home is because you were waiting in a room, and listened to stories. So, Duniyazad, you are going to listen to the story of how I saved lives.

I am sure you are very confused right now and ask why you have to stay at home and how a literature student can save lives? Let me start from the beginning. At the end of 2019, we started to hear about a fatal virus that emerged in Wuhan, China. To be honest, at first, I did not care about that too much. Since we are living in a world of disasters already. For people on the other side of the world, the only thing I could do was to feel sorry for them. However, everything turns upside down in a couple of months. That virus spread the whole world through transportation and caused a global pandemic. The first case appeared in Turkey on 11 March 2020. The first thing you should know about Turkey is that human life is not important here. Religion and money are very important, and selling religion for money is the most profitable job. As in previous crises, I knew that my life and my loved ones would not be a priority for the government. The first thing to be done to survive in Turkey is to question everything that people at the top say and take care of yourself. I isolated myself as much as I could during the pandemic. I barely went out and tried to avoid any contact with people. Do you remember the story that your sister told you titled "The Merchant and the Demon"? In the story, the demon spared the merchant's life with the stories told

by three old men. I felt like my life was spared every day I stayed at home. I cannot remember any period in my life that I stayed this long at home. I know it sounds like a cliché, but your own home's walls start to feel like a prison after a while. There were three things that I could do during the lockdown; playing games, reading books, and watching movies. Do I feel bad about it? No. This period was psychologically very challenging for me. Even my nightmares had changed. I do not remember how many times I saw myself left in the crowd without a mask and trying to cover my face. Somedays, I did not feel good even to get up and do something. I am using the past tense, but this situation still continues. I am avoiding a depressive mood just by focusing on my school responsibilities. However, I feel overwhelmed some days. It is not physical but mental. The worst part of it is that I got used to this feeling. At the beginning of the pandemic, when I felt bad, I tried to do things that I enjoy in order to overcome my anxiety. However, now this feeling has become a part of my life, and to avoid this, I escaped to a virtual world where the pandemic did not exist, and spending time in this world helped me greatly. Getting lost in the pages of an unreal world created by a writer made me forget the fact that I have lived in the same room for months.

The duration of the pandemic is very difficult for me. However, just like you, I know my duty during these tough times. I should stay home and wait until the pandemic is over. I know that the waiting part is familiar to you. You have to stay in the room where Shahrazad and Shahryar are having sex and wait for them to finish so you can do your duty and make Shahrazad tell a story. I am sure that you must feel very weird, and

there have been moments that you struggled. However, you did it and stayed in that room for a thousand days. At the end of the One Thousand and One Nights, King Shahryar did not kill Shahrazad. I do not know how my story is going to end, but I am doing my best not to catch the virus and spread it to the people I love. No matter how mentally difficult it is to stay home and wait for the pandemic to be over, I have stayed and continue to stay at home to save my life and my loved ones. So, this is my story Duniyazad. I know that it is not as interesting as your sister's stories, but this is all I have. I hope my waiting will be over someday and be free just like you.

Stay safe and well,

Regards,
Nur Ferzan Uzunpinar
06.01.2021

Dear Nur Ferzan,

You are right, I can understand how difficult it is to stay in one place and wait for something to end. I was waiting for sex between Shahryar and Shahrazad to end and you are waiting for the end of the pandemic. To be honest, after listening to your story, I feel much better about my situation, at least there is an action in my room. I hope the virus that you talk about will disappear soon and you can go back to your normal life. However, until that time, please take care of yourself and the people you love. You are doing the right thing by staying at home, even though it is very overwhelming for you. You are like a hero in the stories that my sister told me. Please keep saving lives as a hero. I wish you luck and good fortune in your life.

Stay Safe,

Ankara City Center Before and After the Covid-19 Pandemic



PART IV: Journal Entries on the Days of the Covid-19 Pandemic

An Entry by Çiğdem Eltuğral
27 November – Friday 17:16

Between four walls – “Bibbidi Babbidi Boo”

Okay, life is chaotic I do agree, but regardless of the many troubling events that occur while living. I do not agree that we are survivors. Yes, we could be the survivors of 2020 at the end, yet, I believe life to be a book whose chapters we ourselves write. I mean, each decision we make actually foreshadows how our life will proceed. I decided to undergo a surgery, and this of course, would affect my performance in the midterm week. It’s almost like in the tragedies of Shakespeare. When Macbeth’s ambition for being a king has led to his death, it is obvious that his weakness in personality is the main drive for dying. It is well deserved actually. If he had worked harder, he could have become a better king anyway. This pandemic has made me understand that there is really no such thing as relying on life to put you somewhere you desire so much. I realized that my first term with the pandemic was more fruitful than the second term, and this all because I got used to the blender. I think my weakness is, as anyone, that regardless of the value of things happening in life; I continued living. Besides maintaining motivation, I believe, is the most difficult thing in the world. For, without it you get totally ignorant. I also sensed a clash with my actual goal and that of my education. If I want to continue my studies in Holland, I have to take some drawing courses, for which I can sparsely arrange time. The pandemic has also shown me that I have been too harsh upon myself.

Well, maybe it’s not because of the pandemic but eventually I came to recognize it during this period. It stroked me late that I had surgery, which could cause a decrease in my motivation and performance. It’s weird that I only appreciated my healing process when I talked with a psychologist about it. When the new year is coming close, everyone expects something from the year as if it is Santa Claus or the Fairy Godmother who will touch it with her magic stick. During this pandemic, I learned “I (love) you”- a phrase I came across on *Instagram*- Maybe you should just love yourself more and care more about yourself. It doesn’t seem wise to wait for a new year to cheer you up; rather than that, I believe every day is a new day and should be appreciated as if it is the new year you have waited for so much.

An Entry by Eda Nur Haçkale
8 November – Sunday 11.30

Dear Diary,

It’s Sunday morning, and I hope the whole day will be great. I wanted to make a difference today and started to write when I woke up, not in the evening. It is half past 11 right now and I am sitting on my desk writing these lines. Today what I want to talk about is not my whole day since I am at the beginning of the day, I just want to talk about my feelings. Our last meeting was not so good because of the earthquake, but I can say that we got good news afterwards. Although we lost a lot of people and were sad, hopeful things also happened. As I have learned from the news 114 people died unfortunately, but among all the pain, the news we received from

the little two girls gave us hope. One of them is Elif and the other one is Ayda. They were rescued from the debris hours later and both were three years old. They were so cute that it was impossible not to smile. Everybody started to call them as miracle kids. Indeed, it was like a miracle because I do not think how they endured so many hours with their tiny bodies. In short, as I said before, among all the bad news we have also got some hopeful news like this. However, it is impossible not to be angry because if those apartments were built solid, we would not have lost any lives today. As always, precautions were taken after something bad happened. I wish it were not like this. Speaking of these feelings, I remembered something we learned and talked about in Özlem Uzundemir’s theory class which is called Allegory of the Cave. On the one hand the pandemic, on the other hand, earthquakes, and all we can do is sit down and follow the news. So, it reminds me of the prisoners in the cave because we are also like them chained in our homes without moving and all we can do is watch TV to learn about the pandemic and how it is going, so the cave is like the screen we are watching nowadays. That is the only thing that explains exactly how I feel right now.

Çankaya University Before and After the Covid-19 Pandemic



An Entry by Rabia Rozerin Koyuncu
22 June – Monday 22.15

Eventually I got used to the fact that there was a virus and it had the possibility to kill people. So I did go out again and again but in a very careful and panicked way. Everyone including me was afraid to get close to one another but there were of course some careless people who did not care about other people's health, or even their own. I believe we fought both the virus and ignorance at the same time. The fact that there was a problem and that was "ignorance" got even clearer in my head and I don't know why, but it led me to do so much more thinking like it was my job to educate the world. When I realized that I could not do that, I realized that I needed to work on myself more than ever because I didn't want to become one of them. I did a lot of soul searching during this quarantine time and decided what kind of a person I wanted to become. This pandemic was both the worst thing that happened to me and the best thing at the same time. I have never been a person who needed anyone all the time since I love being alone and gathering my thoughts and doing things alone sometimes. I actually need that from time to time but I apparently didn't appreciate it as much as I thought. I literally got to know myself better than I ever did before. At first I lost myself but eventually as I got used to the situation I managed to find myself. Still it was a depressing time and it was hard to keep living life to the fullest, but rather than sitting and doing nothing I found other activities. I started memorizing new songs and singing them and doing it to relax myself which has always worked like a charm but the downside is that I can't sing 24/7. I have also

made myself a "to read" list of books that I have always wanted to read some world literature classics and self-improvement books. I have regained my reading habit . So I can't say that nothing good came out of it as well.

An Entry by Zehra Sena Özkan
26 October – Monday 23.00

I should stop this habit of checking my phone as soon as I wake up. Waking up to an information bombardment is not logical and extremely damaging to my mental health. I have always started the day with my phone but it was not this bad pre-Covid19. Now, I wake up, go straight to Twitter to see what has befallen the world while I was asleep. Did the number of cases go up in Turkey and in the world, are governments still not responding to the climate crisis, what happened to the wildfires in America etc. It is, most of the time, bad news. After I experience this high state of anxiety, I go on to perform my daily little tasks, with the burden of information on my shoulders. Every person with conscience and awareness, who also happens to have a smart phone with the connection to the world, is an Atlas nowadays. I wonder if this is the reason I feel tired all the time; I should really limit my screen time.

An Entry by Hazal Sonay
4 June

After two and a half months, I went outside for a walk. The simple things that I had always been able to do now seemed like a huge privilege because of "you know who", I'm sorry but I won't call it by its name. So, let's go back to my exciting hiking adventure. My mother and I went for a walk because we felt like

we were overweight, even though we were not. I can assure you, this thing called 'quarantine' turned our whole regular habits upside down and left various side effects on us, although it was meant to protect us from the virus. You had to see me, I made a combination for a walk because I was going out for the first time in two and a half months and it felt wonderfully good. You may laugh at me; I can handle it. ☺ But going out into the streets is not like watching what is happening outside on television and I realized this very well because when I got out, the sad picture I saw was that everyone was walking as if they were running away from each other and treating each other as infected. Frankly, my mother and I acted the same way and I realized that this behaviour was done in a reflexive way. I confess this here that I missed everything I complained about in my old normal life, and I promised myself that if we return to our normal lives, I will not complain about anything again. We greeted the few familiar faces we encountered on the way home from afar, and believe me I was filled with indescribable happiness even with such a small thing. I hope we can go back to those good old days.

An Entry by Ecem Türkeri
24 December – Thursday 20.00

Hello again. Today is Thursday, December 24, 2020. This is my last entry and I want to end this by talking about something really important and valuable for me. I lost my uncle last year, exactly today, December 24, 2019, and that day was a really difficult day for me and my family. My uncle had been fighting cancer for about a year and it actually went well, but unfortunately, like many cancer patients, he could not stand it and left us. I have 2 uncles and of

course, I love them both so much, but the place of my uncle who passed away was so precious for me. I would have compared him so much to my father, maybe that is why I loved him so much. My childhood was always spent at my uncle's house, we used to meet all the time, but of course one did not know how precious those moments were back then. So, December 24th is such an important day for me. A lot has changed since my uncle had gone. Life is not as good as before. It was as if everything started to go wrong when he left. A few months after he left, the disease called Covid-19 appeared, and nobody's life was the same as before. We have experienced so many things in this 1 year, but it passed so fast that we could not understand where the time went. This last year was a tough one for me, perhaps it was for most people. After the overlapping news of illness and death, I actually understood one thing very well, and that is health. Health is more important than anything. Health is perhaps the most valuable and significant thing we can have in life because we cannot do anything unless we have it. We can have a lot of money or have a lot of friends with us, but nothing is fine without health. This past year has passed with good and bad. We learned a lot. We were so sad, maybe we cried a lot, sometimes got angry, sometimes laughed, but we lived this life for its worth, in a healthy way. There are seven days left until 2020 is over and we will leave another year behind. I hope the new year will be marvellous for everyone. I hope we can live this life to the fullest, with laughter and health because life is too short to be sad. Bad things happen, of course, they are a part of life, but the point is to live this life despite all the bad things.

An Entry by Nur Ferzan Uzunpınar
25 April – Saturday 21.30

It has been a month and a half since my last video. A lot has changed in this not-long time. By the way, the reason I did not shoot videos was that everything seemed a little unreal to me. Everything happened very quickly. Suddenly we started to be quarantined on the weekends. We learned that the schools would not be opened during this period. We started online education. While these were happening, my father got sick. We did not know if it was corona or just flu. Actually, we still do not know. We went to the hospital four times. At that time, not all hospitals were doing tests on the patients. The doctor said that coming to the hospital was more dangerous and that my father had to quarantine himself at home. My father's severe illness made this period much more difficult. I was constantly worried. While I was sitting in my room, lecturing, or watching something, I would constantly listen to the house and try to understand the severity of my father's coughs. I was doing it to make sure he was getting better because I know my dad wouldn't tell me even if it got worse. My father is a person who can recover quickly, but this time he was unable to recover for about two weeks. We were staying away from each other in the house. We were not meeting with people because of the quarantine, and now we had to stay away from each other even in the house. It was a very depressing time. As if this was not enough, this was the period when social media mostly spread fake news. Everyone was talking about something; even they did not know. The things I read were also pretty bad things. It really puts you in the depression stage. Also, the Minister of Health was

publishing the disease table of the day at a certain hour every evening. There is a novel called The Hunger Games. They put people on a platform and force them to kill each other. The last survivor wins the game. At the end of each day, the names and pictures of people who died are reflected to the sky in the book. Our current situation was no different from that novel. We were infecting each other and causing each other's deaths, and at the end of the day, the Minister of Health announced the number of people who died. I felt unfortunate every time I looked at that number. It was just a number, but they were real people. That number was someone's mother, father, brother, and lovers. Death is a part of life. I can never deny it, but seeing it in such a chart was very disturbing for me. I was unhappy during this period, but frankly, I still had an absurd hope that it would end. I thought I got used to the new life. I had not left the house for about two weeks. I was aware that I was overwhelmed, but I did not want to admit it. I was constantly distracting myself. I have always wanted to be interested in painting all my life. I also had a painting class this school term, and I was excited like a child. However, when the schools are closed, of course, the process of the lesson completely changes. I had to write a ten-page report for the lesson I took so that I could paint it peacefully. I started painting at home. I was drawing something every day. It was very comforting to me at that time. I was happy that I had time to do something I love. This was the last period I was not aware that the epidemic was going to get much worse. There was only a slightly overwhelmed but still hopeful Nur in the video.