

The Collapse of Civilization and Beyond: A Socio-Political Study of Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*

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Abstract:

This paper which is titled "The Collapse of Civilization and Beyond: A Socio-Political Study of Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*," is about a dystopian world created by an incurable plague. The aim of the paper is to show how the apocalypse is at the core of her work. Shelley's prediction of the collapse of civilization as demonstrated in her text represents an original approach to her personal and political struggles, this approach detaches her from others, therefore, making her form a new literary genre.

This paper uses the critical analysis approach to achieve its conclusion. It criticizes the ideas and beliefs of civilizations that have been established by human beings throughout the ages and cannot be irradiated. It analyses Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* to critique this narrow-minded belief and demonstrate aspects that resulted in the collapse of civilization.

Key words: *The Last Man*, Apocalypse, civilization, seclusion, power.

المخلص:

ان هذا البحث بعنوان "انذار الحضارة وما بعد الانذار: دراسة اجتماعية وسياسية لرواية آخر رجل لماري شيلي" يتناول العالم المدمر والتي انتجت بسبب وباء قاتل لا يمكن الشفاء وانجاة منه. وان الغرض من هذا البحث هو بيان كيف ان موضوع نهاية العالم يتجسد في جوهر الرواية. يتمثل تنبؤ شيلي بانهاية الحضارة كما هو موضح في نصها نهجاً أصلياً لنضالاتها الشخصية والسياسية، وهذا النهج يفصلها عن الآخرين، وبالتالي يجعلها تشكل نوعاً أدبياً جديداً.

كما وان هذه الدراسة تحاول ان توضح ان الحضارة التي بنيت على مر العصور بجهد الانسان ستتلاشى مهما كانت قوتها. ولذا يرد البحث ان ينقد كل الافكار الضيقة. وان الرواية يتناول موضوع العزلة وعواقبها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرجل الأخير، نهاية العالم، الحضارة، العزلة، السلطة.

پوخته:

نهم تویرینهومی که ناونیشانکهی بریتیه له "له ناوچونی شارستانیته وه دواى لهناوچوون: لیکۆلینهومی که کۆمه لایهتی سیاسی له رۆمانی (کۆتا مروف) ی ماری شیلی "روونکردنهومی که ده باره ی جیهانی دۆزهمی که به سهر مروقایهتی دا هاتووه وه هویه کهی بریتیه له هاتنی نهخوشیه کی کوشنده. مهبهستی نهو تویرینهومی که به سهرمینی که چون بابتهی تیکچونی جیهان رمنگی داوتهوه لهناو ناخی رۆمانه کهیدا. یشینهی کهانی شیلی له باره ی دارمانی شارستانیته ههروک رمنگی داوتهوه لهناو رۆمانه کهیدا نهو پیشان دهدات که چون خوی کیرکی کردوه بوگه یشتن به مرامی خوی. نهم نوسینه جیای دهکاتهوه له نهوانی تر وه نهو وادهکات که ببته جوریکی نوسینی نهدهی نوئ که پینستر نهکراوه.

ئەم نوسىنە بىرىتە لە روونکردنەوهىكى رەخنەبى وە دەپوێت لە كۆتايەكەى وەلامى پرسىارى لىكۆلینەوهكەى دەست كەوتى وە ئەو رەتباتەوه كەوا ئەو شارستانىتەى كەوا بە هەزاران سأل دامەزراوە لەلایەن مەروفايتى لەناو ناچیت وە هەر بەردەوام دەبیت. وە ئەم لىكۆلینەوهى شىكردنەوهىكى رەخنەبى بۆ رۆمانى "كۆتا مەروفا"ى ماری شىلى دەكات وە رەخنە لە بىرە تەسكەكان ئەگریت وە هەر وەها باسى تەنباى مەروفا ئەكات لە زۆر روانگەوه.

كلیله وشە: كۆتا مەروفا، كۆتایی ژيان، شارستانیەت، تەنباى، دەستەلات.

Introduction

The title prophesizes a dystopian future which will bring about after civilization's collapse. of life in a global pandemic Further, it's a future depiction novel, wherein the future of mankind is depicted as utter destruction. The novel shows the collapsibility of civilization and asserts that civilization might be considered a strong fact but in reality, it is a fragile establishment. It is about seclusion and boredom which is the reflection of Mary Shelly's life because Shelly underwent a bitter life, she was tormented by the death of her children. She chose isolation as a shelter wherein she repressed her anger and nursed her grief. In the novel, the apparencey of the seclusion, no doubt, reflects her real life and what she presents in the novel can be considered as an outlet of her own injured psychology (Mellor142). She prophesizes the end of the world and the calamities which are accompanied by it. It is an apocalyptic novel which presents the incapability of humans in confronting a deadly plague.

1. The Phantom of Seclusion in Apocalyptic Milieux

Isolation has a profound affiliation with psychology since psychology intensely foregrounds the mentioned issue. There is a tremendous dispute among scholars regarding the meanings of social isolation because the meanings of the term have not been pinned down by the scholars firmly. No doubt the meaning of the term is changeable according to its context.

Isolation might be considered as a tool by which the painful effects are mitigated and sometimes might be abolished. Individuals instinctively use it as a means through which they eschew the repression that is resulted from painful effects. Isolation can be considered a hindrance to the bodily symptoms which might emerge as a result of repression. Hence, isolation is a form of defence from external repression. Freud considers it as a way whereby hysterical conversion and obsessional neurosis are defeated (Bateman and Holmes 89). Isolation can be labelled as a "Defense mechanism" and it is one of the profound characteristics of obsessional neurosis. Moreover, isolation is a kind of disconnection from society, the victim ruptures his connection with the outside world concerning thoughts, ideas, and impressions (Mijolla 875).

Social isolation is a severe and perpetual form of punishment (Coplan 3). Therefore, it affects negatively the psychological arena and causes mental disorders because it's a tool by which punishment is fulfilled. It can be considered as a way through which the concept of belongingness collapses and the deprived belongs to no one except himself and it causes a negative impact both psychologically and physically (Ibid 5). The cause mainly is a negative peer separation, its situation is caused by various factors and it results in social and emotional devastation. Furthermore, solitude is an omnipresent phenomenon, it can be spotted in various stages of life. It is a relative term because scholars, poets, philosophers, and other elite segments of society are ambivalent about the nature of solitude whether it is a blessing or a curse (Ibid 3). The experience of solitude by humans during the

wide duration of their life has enlightened their view towards the concept. The experience enables humans to respond to and understand solitude subjectively, some considered it as a secure shelter wherein they flee to when earthly cares attach them, whereas others on the contrary referred to it as a complete torment. Thus, social solitude can be regarded as a demerit because social affiliation is a necessary relationship for adaptation in life and that's because it ensures the survival of the human species. Living within the social group ensures the evolutionary advantage (ibid4). Societies have been established to verify survival and protection for their individuals, thus living within a social system is a way by which survival is secured. On the contrary, social isolation can be regarded as a merit state because the Greeks and Romans exalted the state of being alone and attributed it to morality and wisdom. Their philosophers encouraged solitary because they supposed that it brought about excellence, happiness, and sagacity. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), the great French philosopher argues that individuals should strive for getting rid of the group to eschew the state of coping with the entire actions and behaviours of their society or group. According to him living with society implants conventional thinking and dogmatism. Moreover, Donald Woods Winnicott (1871 – 1971) asserts that psychological maturity, self-realization, and self-discovery all are attained in isolation (Coplan7,6,5).

Harry Stack Sullivan(1892-1949), an American Neo-Freudian psychiatrist, states that; social needs are essential to be assured for individuals in societies because if they are not fulfilled, it catalyzes a negative self-system and psychological consequences which might cause even physical decline (Ibid 7). Therefore, according to Sullivan humans should live in groups and societies for ensuring social needs and this is of the utmost importance. Living inside society ensures both psychological and physical health because a certain individual is required to belong to a certain society and live with them for maintaining a positive relationship. The vice versa of what is mentioned leads to physical and psychological agony (Coplan 5). Thus, isolation is not just deteriorating the psychology of the individual but it affects the physicality of the individual as well. Therefore, to assure the maintenance of life and survival, abandoning solitary is of the utmost importance.

Some texts of literature appreciate solitude and consider it as a way through which success is accomplished. Authors, for instance, Beatrix Potter and Emily Dickinson, assert that; it's the pain of isolation and long absence from society which yield genius and creativity (ibid 6). Therefore, literary writers exalt loneliness because they believe that it's a good way by which artistic talent is acquired. So, in their writings, especially their personal stories, they encourage solitary for the sake of creativity. Regarding the view of theology on isolation, religious figures accentuate isolation and they believe that solitude is an opportunity through which meditating is fulfilled, for instance, Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk spends years in solitude (ibid 6).

In an apocalyptic context, isolation is regarded to be the most pivotal and prominent issue which can be noticed. Various characters in literary fiction undergo isolation willingly or unwillingly. Therefore, the clash with the isolation and perpetuating life during the apocalypse are travail challenges that the characters are experiencing. Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fictions involve worlds that are: fearful, gloomy, isolated, and surviving in such worlds is arduous. Isolation is the most fearsome trait of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds because it has a dual effect on the characters. It has influence over the physical side and the psychological ground of the character.

Mainly the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives exalt the stories of survival, either the survival of a certain individual or a certain group. Therefore, it foregrounds the notion of isolation because the idea of survival in a harsh condition always indulges in isolation. Quandaries of social isolation are mitigated by the feasibility of coping with independence and the capability of surviving (Joyce 9,10). Apocalyptic discourse and narrative are very much likewise Robinsonade or cast-away narratives because both of them embody social isolation, independence, and survivalism.

The Last Man (1826), an apocalyptic dystopian science fiction novel, written by Mary Shelley, foregrounds isolation. In the novel, isolation is presented in various ways. The main character, the hero of the novel undergoes isolation from the beginning of the novel and finally at the end he remains alone. He is represented as a strong character, he confronts seclusion and he enables himself to cope and finally survives alone. At the very beginning of the novel Lionel undergoes isolation, he becomes an orphan and casts himself away from his society. He overthrows the calamity of his isolation and he survives by his willpower.

Lionel's zest to live and to survive in his depressed social milieu and his capability to cope with the isolation wherein he suffers is very much likewise Schopenhauer's theory namely "Will-to-live". The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) asserts that the will to live is a very powerful source by which humans undergo their life besides all calamities. He states that the will to live is: an irrational, blind, and ceaseless impulse, it is subjective and without knowledge. Nevertheless, it's the power of that "will-to-live" which motivates the individuals to be happy with all those calamities in their lives, besides it makes them clutch their lives as if it is a precious vow which should be fulfilled (Schopenhauer 358).

Lionel has a miserable life, being alone from the onset of his life Besides he has to care about his eldest sister. Such a condition doesn't prevent him to love his life and cope with its calamities. Such a fact reflects Schopenhauer's attitude towards life. According to him, the monotonous, boredom, trouble and anxiety of life nor can prevent man from pursuing the pleasure of life, neither it can prevent him from risking for achieving it. Thus, life is controlled by melancholy and its pleasure is too rare (Ibid 359). Lionel himself affirms such a philosophical and universal idea as he states "I cannot say much in praise of such a life, and its pains far exceed its pleasure" (Shelley 9).

The hero is deprived of any sort of social interaction, he totally withdraws himself from society and civilization and he believes that isolation is more secure than encountering society. He is ever deprived by his society; he never felt the tranquillity of belongingness. Being fatherless and then motherless aspires his heart towards independence and power. He lives fighting ferociously against his own loneliness, endeavouring to overthrow it. Such notion is apparent when the hero states "Thus I felt, when disappointment, weariness and solitude drove me back upon my heart, to gather thence the joy of which it had become barren" (Shelley 29). Thus, the hero is not just suffering from isolation but the melancholy of life is another affliction that deprives him of joy. Furthermore, he regards himself as a victim of his society because he believes that his society grants him nothing but deprivation and torment. He states "I become the victim of ingratitude and cold coquetry – then I desponded, and imagined that my discount gave me the right to hate the world" (Shelley 29), the assertion quo illustrates the amount of the torment wherein he suffers. Besides, the isolated orphan lives in an ambivalent state about his condition. He wants to get rid of the civilization in which he

suffers and at the same time, he wishes to belong to it. Thus, he asserts “I continued my war against civilization, and yet entertained a wish to belong to it” (Shelley 14). The quotation reveals that isolation is difficult and it has a negative side effect on the psychology of humankind, besides, it works reversely to the instinct desires of man.

In the novel, there is a triangle relationship between Isolation, immunity, and plague. When the plague emerges people differently respond to the plague. Their response mainly depends on their scientific background and scientific attitude towards the plague at that time. Such a fact casts the people into the abyss of scepticism and people start to live in an ambivalent state. Some quarantine themselves and undergo the entire isolation; individuals start to quarantine themselves each in total separation from the other. They believe that isolation rescues them from the deadly plague. Thus, absolute quarantine is used by them as a tool that might lead them to a safe harbour. But contrary to their expectations, they notice that isolation is void from any guarantee because the plague is not transmitted via human communication but “infection depended upon the air, the air was subject to infection” (Shelley 185). Hence, people find no way to escape and apocalypse come to their homes, Adrian with a gentle smile mocks the incapability of mankind “ ‘Then to avoid it, we must quit the world,’ ” (Shelley 193). The deadly plague “was not what is commonly called contagious, like the scarlet fever, or extinct smallpox, was proved. It was called an epidemic” (Shelley 185).

There are mainly two different types of isolation in *The Last Man* which are willingly and unwillingly. Some characters in the novel are deprived of their society against their wish. Lionel Verney, in the very beginning of the novel reluctantly isolated from his society, suffers loneliness and he is presented as strong enough to cope with the calamity by which he is afflicted. He describes himself “[As] an unprotected orphan among the valleys and fells of Cumberland” (Shelley 9). Such isolation causes pain, turmoil, and oppression. Finally, at the end of the novel he, is again, afflicted with isolation because he survives and is the last man alive (Mudrow 61). On the contrary, some characters within the emergence of the plague completely isolated themselves because they believe that the plague might transfer via encountering. Such isolation can be called “willingly isolation” and it has no benefit because scientists at that time assert that the plague can transmit via air. The discovery disappoints all the people and labels isolation as a futile action and vulnerable prison (Ibid 62). So, within such a scientific discovery of that time it became obvious that there is nowhere to flee from the plague and isolation is nothing but a waste of time and a cowardly reaction. Scepticism is regarded to be the master of the situation because those who willingly isolated themselves are living in a hopeless state. After all, science discovers that the plague transforms through the air.

Examining the novel, as its actions in an alienated context, exalts the harsh atmosphere in which the protagonist Lionel Verney suffers. He is alienated by the society in which he lives because of his father’s social rank on one hand and the poverty that he inherits from him on the other hand. He endeavours to find a meaning for life when the plague spreads. He is contrary to almost all people living in England who choose confrontation with the catastrophe that starts. He finds confrontation with the “invincible monster” (Shelley 176), communal feeling as a means by which defeating the plague is assured. Thus, Lionel finds meaning in life from the abyss of crises wherein he lives. He doesn't succumb to the harsh situation and he finds isolation as an idle reaction to the plague. His natural selection obliges him to live in such a harsh atmosphere, the decisions of nature wherein he

lives are unchangeable. Thus, nothing is to be done with the calamity which results from the wrath of nature. Neither he nor any of the characters can change such an atrocious reality. Lionel, when realizes that, he cannot change his reality and wipe out the plague, decides to change himself for the sake of surviving. To adapt to the harsh situation is to change the vice versa is to fade out. The attitude that Lionel follows is the application of the philosophical theory of Viktor Frankl. The core idea of his philosophy is finding meaning in a hazardous and arduous situation. He states that when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves (Frankl, meaning, 116).

Isolation as presented in the novel is labelled as a source of some negative outcomes at the individual and community level. Anomie is regarded as a state in which the infected individual endures a demoralizing and disorganizing state. Social isolation is the most apparent factor which causes it. The sense of meaninglessness and having no entity or rank in society are the most two apparent characteristics of it (Bell 105). Lionel tolerates anomie in various situations in the novel. He is afflicted with such an invidious social state because of his being isolated by his society. The orphanage, being uncivilized, and being deprived of parental sympathy, all played an important role in depriving him totally of the community wherein he lives. Moreover, he is the last man to survive and he is deserted by all his dearest and nearest friends. Thus, isolation is the most significant affliction through which he passes. He started his life as a deprived orphan, isolated himself from society or being isolated by society. Isolation afflicted Lionel and demoralizes him and besides, it deprives him of all the elements of civilization. Lionel states “Bread and water did not tame my blood, nor solitary confinement inspires me with gentle thoughts.” (Shelley 12). The assertion illustrates the impact of isolation upon individuals. It demonstrates that isolation brings about an anomic individual. Lionel’s isolation bequeaths him with nothing but demoralization and cruelty.

Thus, such a confession can be noticed as an evidence of the reliability of being anomic as a result of isolation. Lionel lost his parents at five. Such an incident deprives him of the society to which he belongs and it makes him alone and undependable. His loneliness demoralizes him and makes him an uncivilized person. In his early life, he commits petty theft. Such incident in his life regrades to be profound evidence of being an anomic person as a result of loneliness. He, before reuniting with Aderian, has lived a breakdown life, he uproots moral values and standards of his society, and he is dysfunctional unable to integrate within normative situations of his social world. He became a shepherd because he is incapable to find a career in his society and he is failed to have a success in relationships.

Lionel lacks a usual social and ethical standard; his orphanage and loneliness make him deviate from the norms of his society. Destitute and lacking the means for providing oneself makes him think of lawless activities for maintaining survival. He asserts “All sheperd-boys alike, while our flocks were spread over the pastures, we schemed and executed many a mischievous prank, which drew on us the anger and revenge of the rustic.” (Shelley 9). The quotation illustrates the impact of loneliness upon him and others likewise him, and it shows the importance of educating because they are uncivilized. Lionel is the worst one among them, he makes himself their leader, “I clamed as my reward their praise and obedience” (Ibid 9). Thus, it is obvious that he is the most secluded and deprived person among them. Such deviation which Lionel endures is caused by total deprivation and loneliness. Lionel is afflicted with social deregulation, and loneliness, and his imperfection of social

order makes him an anomic person. This state of living from which Lionel suffers is exactly likewise Merto's attitude towards isolation. He asserts that a deprived individual by society, for whatever reason, might be afflicted with demoralization. If a certain individual fails to experience societal co-living or not being able to consider cultural norms, anomie will be the most probable outcome by which the individual afflicts. Alongside the above-mentioned, deviant behavior results from seclusion because those individuals who provide no utility to their society, they possess a keen sense of worthlessness and thus isolation for them is regarded to be a compulsory choice. Therefore, they become an anomic individual because they are deviated (Avison et al. 425,426).

Another character in the novel who suffers from isolation is Perdita Verney. She is intensely in love with Raymond and her love immerses her in grief and melancholy. She is too sympathetic and unable to restraint her feeling and such characteristic makes her a weak person being unable to cope with her departure from her husband Raymond and whereupon she commits suicide. She lacks self-control and is unable to manage her feelings. Therefore, her isolation profoundly affects her, deteriorating her emotion and abstains her from having a normal life. Lionel describes her sister as emotionally weak, unable to control her behavior, and living in a desperate state. When they go to see Raymond after he is released from Constantinople and returns to Athens by ship, Lionel describes her sister's momentary state as "Happy are women who can weep, in a passionate caress disburthen the oppression of their feelings; shame and habitual restraint hold back a man." (Shelley 137). Thus, the above-mentioned quotation elaborates Perdita's incapability of self-control and her limited capacity for managing her emotional response. Therefore, she lives in a self-dysregulation state, and because of that, she becomes unable to maintain her life whereupon isolation winds up her entire life. The situation from which Perdita suffers is theorized by sociologists. Low self-control in any individual leads to destruction, accidents regarded to be one of the fundamental benchmarks by which self-control is measured. Any individual who can bear atrocious incidents is a self-control person, in contrast, one who is incapable of overwhelming the calamities which face regarded to be a self-dysregulation person. Such theory sheds light on by both Gottfredson and Hirschi they endeavor to spot it inside families and within the development of the childhood (Clinard et. al 97).

Perdita falls into the abyss of isolation and grief after Raymond passed away. She lost control over herself and the isolation deprives her of being stable and she intensely becomes dissatisfied with her own life. She feels that after Raymond, life for her has no meaning, and the isolation in which she falls tatters her soul. Raymond's death burdens her with such a sort of gruesome which is intolerable. Therefore, Perdita finally throws herself into the water and commits suicide, she does not cope with the isolation whereof she suffocates. Her suicide is described by Lionel as an avoidable choice "I felt ... that it was better to die so, than to drag on long, miserable years of repining and inconsolable grief" (Shelly 172). The quotation reveals the fact that death for Perdita is a secure shelter wherein she becomes safe from the melancholy of life and her isolation from her husband. Death is preferred by her over isolation and being living long miserable years. Therefore, the impact of isolation is too severe upon her which makes her abdicate life for the sake of eschewing its torment of it. The level of the social interaction has an effective and significant role in promoting suicide, on this foundation Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) the French sociologist asserts that the absence of social interaction is a vital factor which causes suicide (Clinard et. al 318). This theory is applicable to the situation of

Perdita agony. She commits suicide after she loses her husband, which is regarded for her the collapse of her strongest social relationship. The kind of the suicide which she commits is regarded to be “Anomic suicide” because this category of suicide committed as a result of a rapid and big alteration in one’s personal style of living, falling in a normless situation and break-up of a long duration co-living embedded with adoration like the life of a certain spouse (Ibid 319).

At the societal level isolation separates countries and societies from each other. Such an atrocious process hurts nations because positive international relations support mutual investments, therefore the absence of the positive interactions collapses all the investments that are achieved as a result of an interaction. When the plague starts countries sever their connection with each other as a means of mitigating the spread of the infection. Lionel delivers news about the spread of plague and the forced isolation via newspaper “... fearing the virulence of infection during the coming heats, a cordon has been drawn on the frontiers of Thessaly, and a strict quarantine exacted.” (Shelley 178), the quotation shows the outcome of the plague, forced isolation regards being the most necessary process by which safety is assured. Nevertheless, the isolation which is used as a therapy from the plague is not without side effects, it can be examined as a “necessary evil” because it might demolish the morality of the individuals and retardate societies. Suicide sometimes resulted from isolation; thus, isolation is regarded to be poison to our shelter (Clinard et. al 328).

Isolation in *The Last Man* works as a phantom that is depicted everywhere, and almost all the characters are afflicted by it. The political issue, the sociological state, and the plague all work as a dynamo and they accelerate the process of isolation. For instance, Raymond deserts Perdita because of the political upheaval that happens and the war which causes calamities and destruction, he causes suffering to Perdita and pushes affliction and morbid upon her, and she suffers seclusion as a result of her commits suicide. The novel ends with isolation, Lionel remains alone and he suffers seclusion the plague defeated all and it afflicts Lionel with loneliness and the calamity of forfeiting all the members of his own family. Lionel asserts “Loneliness is my familiar, sorrow my inseparable companion” (Shelly 372). The assertion shows the level of seclusion in which Lionel suffers, he used to live alone and become familiar with that. He is forced to live in isolation, his circumstance governed like that. Such a condition has two different readings: According to the philosophy of fatalism it’s a super and metaphysic force that endows Lionel with such an end, and vice versa to the precede opinion, incidents which are happened create such an end for him, thus, the condition wherein he lives is determined by causes and effects. According to the philosophy of determinism, it’s the law of causality which is responsible for the destination of man, all the events are happening because they are designed to happen and they are determined. Thus, according to the doctrine causes play a great role in bringing about a certain event or end (Baer et. al 305 ; Fischer et. al 42). Whereas, fatalists believe that all ends are predetermined and causes and actions have no role in determining the end (Fischer et. al 42).

Thus, the extreme isolation in the novel can be observed in the end. Lionel Verney more than all the other characters undergo the affliction of isolation. He is the last isolated man who remains alone after the plague wiped out all the humans upon the earth. He finds himself alone but he never gives up hope, and endeavors to survive and cope with the environment in which he finally falls on it. He states “A solitary being is by instinct a wanderer, and that I would become. A hope of amelioration

always attends on change of place, which would even lighten the burthen of my life” (Shelley 373), the quotation shows the impact of the suffering caused by isolation and how loneliness devastates him. Besides that, he never succumbs to the atrocity of isolation, hope gives him the ability to survive even after the apocalypse. He possesses the feeling of dualism “I called myself hopeless, yet still I hoped; and still disappointment” (Ibid 361), he realizes that nobody on the earth is alive but still he seeks to find somebody.

Lionel is doomed to suffer a solitary life. He, in the final scenes, appears to show the ultimate tragedy of man’s defeat on the earth, besides it shows Lionel’s ultimate loneliness (MacArthur 49,50). His solitude is highly noticed when he is disappointed “I felt behind no human being in the towns through which I passed” (Ibid 363), the assertion indicates that he reaches the peak of solitary and frustration.

2. Civilization as a Source of Power

Throughout history, Human beings have endeavored to regulate themselves, therefore, various organizations and systems are invented either arbitrarily or rationally to implant harmony and regulation. Civilization is considered a device by which social order is maintained. For accomplishing peace and social order, ancient kings relied on religion for bringing about social order, thus, religion at that ancient time can be considered a source of power that organize society on behalf of civilization. For instance, the Anglo- Saxons convert people to Christianity for the fulfillment of social order. In the modern world, the law imposes itself to be a preponderant agent, therefore, it regulates the relations among people and vehemently establishes harmony and regulations. Power plays a vital and supreme role in enabling the law to be established. Over time and years, the law becomes very strong, especially in the developed nations and it becomes a generator for establishing civilization. Organizing society, social adjustment and assurance of human safety are the most important tasks which are maintained by civilization (Pound 20,21,22,23). To recap; From a religiously organized society, mankind shifted to a politically organized society which is mainly considered a civilized society.

The Last Man is a narrative that visualizes the causes behind the collapse of civilization and it shows the catastrophe of the collapse. The main cause that the novel mentions and through which the process of collapse is completed is a deadly epidemic plague. Thus, the plague, in the novel, is a dynamo by which the apocalypse is brought about. Besides, it is one of the most prominent and strong causes predicted to happen in the time of the apocalypse. The probability of an invasion by plague is a very strong likelihood that might happen even in the real world, especially in the modern and post-modern eras and even nowadays. Therefore, the fictional narrative of the novel is very much close to reality.

Apocalypse through plague is considered to be the most fearsome and ascertainable catastrophe which might destroy the entire life of mankind. Therefore, Plague is an emblem and omen of apocalypses. Plague has a long root in the history of mankind and it always presents itself as a phantom of death and destruction. Thus, in very early history, nations conjured up the plague as an agent for the apocalypse which is considered to be a heavenly disaster. Besides, it is considered to be a cataclysmic event, a global disaster that might devour all the humans upon the surface of the earth.

Since time immemorial, specifically, in the late medieval age, Ottomans conceptualized the deadly plague as a heavenly curse, consequently, they believed that the plague is an emissary of God and no one has power but Him to vanish it. Besides, other supernatural powers, saints, for instance, have the power to seek alleviation from such a disaster. The Othman society at that time absorbed such attitudes and they relied upon them (Varlik 210, 211).

Mankind's attitude and his understanding of the plague developed through the ages. Such development was strongly depended on the development of science. When it outbreaked for the first time it was named 'Black Death' and such a designation for the plague embodied no scientific basis whilst it is purely subjective (Ibid 125). More importantly, history tells us that the black deaths ravaged humanity in waves and some areas on earth were affected profoundly while other territories were kept in safe because the plague did not influence all areas simultaneously. Byzantine sources shows that ten successive waves of the black plague seriously impacted people of that time, the wave succeeded the first wave. In 1361, the second wave of plague's onslaught rampaged people and highly affected them, this wave came nearly fourteen years after the first one and its infection spreaded in Mediterranean ports and it is transmitted to Constantinople. In 1372, the third wave of the black plague initiated mainly in Thessaloniki and Constantinople and this wave affected even very remote and isolated places and communities besides drastically affecting the adjacent areas of the afflicted places (Ibid 119). Thus, the plague (Black Death) has a historical dimension and nations in the Mediterranean drastically suffered from such a fatal disease. Therefore, *The Last Man* has direct relevance with the history of mankind on the earth and it depicts a real incident that previously, caused the loss of mankind and the likelihood of its reoccurrence still is a threatening fact for humanity.

Plague is presented by Shelley as a means whereby apocalypse is eventual, it's a foe that defeated humanity and power that is undefeatable. It is the most hostile fact which devours humans and wipes them out on the surface of the earth. Such a fictitious tragic dramatization which is presented by Shelly is a factual scientific reality that cannot be evaded in the real world. Plague is a scientific term in the world of medicine, it is a disease caused by a bacterium and the casualty afflicted with the lymph nodes. It causes inflammation and produces swelling, fever, chill, headache, and extreme exhaustion. The disease develops and finally, it causes death when the bloodstream of the casualty amplifies with bacteria and then fatal septicemia develops which causes organ failure. It is a transmission one because it is transmitted from animal to human (zoonosis) (ibid 17,7). Thus, *The Last Man* is science fiction because it fictionalizes a real scientific disease that is experienced by mankind and even predicted to re-happen in the far future.

Apocalypse is always accompanied by chaos because when the latter happens, all the rules, social norms, and current political rules and laws of human civilization, are demolished. Therefore, the former finds a suitable environment to grow in it. In *The Last Man* chaos began to emerge when Lord protector Ryland abdicates his authority. His serious conversation with Adriana illustrates Rayland's characteristics and his quality. Crisis evinces cowardice and fear into Rayland's heart, therefore he is regarded to be a weak unfit person, unable to maintain his leadership. He states "Everyman for himself! The devil take the protectorship, say I, if it expose me to danger!" (Shelley 195). Such an assertion may be the outset of decentralization and chaos. As such, the plague as an omen of the apocalypse disorganizes the system of authority and implants the seeds of chaos among the

population. The arrival of the plague in the novel shatters the whole society and causes a radical change in the current political system and social norms. It makes an awfully big mess and collapses the center of order in the country. Such a feature, which is apparent in the novel, is the most protuberant character of apocalyptic fiction because, in the real world apocalypse causes a state of disorder and chaos a huge commotion, and a bloody mess. In apocalyptic fiction, such reality is imagined and precisely depicted. In *The Last Man*, the virulence of the plague suspends all relevant state institutions. It voids the respective state from work life-life. “The overgrown metropolis, the great heart of mighty Britain, was pulseless. Commerce had ceased” (Shelley 208), the quotation illustrates the influence of pestilence plague upon country chaos becoming the sole master of the moment. Besides plague -As an agent of apocalypse- freezes trade all over the world and creates a state of panic, “Trade was stopped by the failure of the interchange of cargoes usual between us, and America, India, Egypt and Greece” (Ibid 186).

The chaos which is observed in the novel is political chaos. This happens when the power of civilization fades out and practising the rules in the country becomes difficult. Thus, the overall situation in the novel has roots in political science. Chaos in politics is a genuine and profound subject matter, it emerges when vagueness in a current political ruling system grows exponentially and rules of policy become incapable to regulate society. Uncertainty in the political system is regarded to be the most important factor which leads to chaos (Kiel 119). Rayland the Lord protector abdicates the protectorship and Adrian takes his place. Such an incident creates political instability. The reason behind the previous facts is the breach in which the whole world falls into. The chaos which demolishes the political system of the country vigorously devastates various other grounds. Chaos is rife in almost all countries as a result of the apocalypse, “[The]diseased nature had suffered chaos and death” (Shelley 186).

The organized political life and pre-formed social constructions are doomed to fall into the abyss of chaos when apocalypse outbreaks. All formulated, upon agreed social constructions and rules for managing civilization fade away. As such, it is the retrieval back to the condition of nature (Curtis 18). Furthermore, the apocalypse degenerates the spiral of human history and decimates the hard-acquired civilization by using an agent. The plague in *The Last Man* is a tool through which chaos emerges and the apocalypse is maintained. Lionel asserts “A sudden break was made in the routine of our lives” (Shelley 186), the quotation indicates the occupation of the area by the chaos. The novel focuses on the events which cause the apocalypse, eschewing the aftermath of the apocalyptic life (Curtis 6), such a feature, which is the feature of almost all apocalyptic fiction makes *The Last Man* to be imbued with chaos because any action which works to bring about apocalypse should be consorting with chaos. As such, every tragic event in the novel engenders a chaotic state politically and socially, generally apocalyptic events erase: the organized system of food distribution, medical care and the overall system of governance thereby the country falls into an unstable state(Ibid 2). Such a fact is present in *The Last Man*, Lionel asserts “The crop had failed, the bad corn” (Shelley 214). People in the novel suffered from the signs of the apocalypse, those signs cast fear in their hearts and implant disorder among them. The Diminishment of Food supplies causes a tragic apocalyptic event such as floods not only create a chaotic state but threaten the national substance of the population. The political upheaval in the novel causes great instability and economic crises, it ends

with a great war between Turks and Romans. War is considered to be another factor by which chaos is maintained. Inhabitants of the earth battle against each other whilst their shared enemy and the wild lucifer -Plague- devours them. The Greeks and the Turks fight each other and finally, the latter is defeated by the former despite the catastrophe which encompasses the world.

The plague in the novel as an apocalyptic agent causes a lack of food and as a result of that a great riot in society outbreaks which leads to larceny, looting, and bloodshed. Such a sociological fact is apparent in the novel, for example, people in North America want to change their atrocious state, they deserted their ruined and havoc territories and left for Ireland as a reaction to the calamity from which they are suffering and as a way by which they could survive. When they landed in Ireland, they take over the deserted houses, superabundant food and abandoned cattles. Shalley asserts “As they exhausted the produce of one spot, they want on to another” (235), such an atrocity action can be understood and its insight meanings can be approached through sociology. Abraham Harold Maslow (1908-1970) with his “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs” evaluates the factors and motives which enlarge the scope of human needs in life. Striving for obtaining those basic needs is an innate feature because they are the basic needs by which human beings are living. According to the theory; if a certain group of people is doomed to undergo a harsh atmosphere and they lost some minor basic needs in their life, innately and for the sake of being survived, they clutch the major needs. Therefore, seeking food and obtaining it, in such a harsh circumstance, become the most basic need. They get satisfaction in their life merely by obtaining their daily food(Maslow52). Such a sociological fact is noticed in the novel because the primary need of the Americans who migrate to Irland, is food.

Diminishing food supplements and searching for a secure place are the most profound factors which oblige people to strive for. People from North America, emigrate to occupy empty houses in Irland. They are demagogues, lawless and plundering every deserted piece of equipment. They implant riots among people living there -Irish people- and as a result of that; some Irish people join them to create a chaotic band. They start to venture from Irland to England and when they reach the outskirts of Widnor, they start to battle with each other. Such a prominent behaviour is deeply studied and scientifically observed by sociologists and thus, it is a fact of the outer reality of the world. The real behaviours of the humans within each other cannot be observed and it is not real when they live under the hegemony of civilization, governmental rules and social instructions. The exact behaviours of mankind and their real social behaviour emerge when civilization, governmental civil laws and all social instructions are absent. Civilization works as a preservative factor that protects the overall society from villain attitudes that endeavour to overthrow society and fall it apart. Civilization is a fact which is developed by humans. It’s an organized structure which is consists of two main grounds: Information and material. Its primary objectives are guaranteeing of human survival, enhancement of livelihood, social cohesion and convincing individuals to cope with themselves (Lan 6). According to the former information, civilization can be looked at as a guard which protects the unity of society and its individuals, therefore in its absence individuals are no longer bestowed with peace and tranquillity. The fact is apparent in the novel, civilization is on its way to collapse, it weakens gradually by the agents of the apocalypse which makes a society without civilization. North American people who came as immigrants to England, get benefited from the absence of civilization and battle the English, the incident reveals the importance of civilization and rules in societies because when there are no rules and order man might act aggressively. In the absence of civilization, according to

Shelley men start animosity toward each other, “Shall man be the enemy of man, while plague, the foe to all, even now is above us,” (Shelley 240), therefore, enmity among people starts when civilization tatters because civilization aims to organize humans and brings about the human entity with co-existence (Lan 7).

3. Conclusion

It is believed that civilization has been strongly established, and its roots deeply dig down on societies hence it cannot be collapsed easily. The research, throughout the critical analysis of the novel proves that civilization is a brittle construction. Any unexpected adversity might wipe it out and retrieves the well-developed earth, civilization, and humanity to the old dark ages. Moreover, the ideology which asserts that man is a powerful creature on the earth is refuted because if nature decides to inflict a calamity upon man, he will be easily devastated.

Earth and even the whole universe have been subjected for the sake of man, hence man's control on the earth is not its own heroism. A slight upheaval in nature eradicates man. Civilization in the novel is presented as a force through which society is controlled, it is depicted as an agent which systemizes the society and implants harmony and tranquillity, it is a society's regulator force that ceases all malicious attempts. Thus, its collapse causes fear, danger and villain activities in society.

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