

Post-Apocalyptic Pandemic Fiction: Ancestral Portrayal of Ravaging Human Plague Novels

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Abstract

Nowadays, the world is facing one of the historical challenges that it has not witnessed for a long time. In the Chinese city of Wuhan, at the beginning of December 2019, news channels, broadcasts, newspapers, and magazines have started to talk about the spread of an “epidemic.” This word may not have been used for some time, but it has now become the most widespread. The COVID-19 virus has had a direct impact on individuals, families, provinces, and the countries of the world as a whole.

Keywords: COVID-19, apocalyptic works, Novels.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the world is facing one of the historical challenges that it has not witnessed for a long time. In the Chinese city of Wuhan, at the beginning of December 2019, news channels, broadcasts, newspapers, and magazines have started to talk about the spread of an “epidemic.” This word may not have been used for some time, but it has now become the most widespread. The COVID-19 virus has had a direct impact on individuals, families, provinces, and the countries of the world as a whole.

This type of suffering has been foreseen by many authors a long time ago in some apocalyptic works that have anticipated our present time situation. Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* have tackled this issue and prophesied the terrible situation that we are facing today. When we read these works, we feel that these authors are living among us these days, and the details, events, and scenes described in the novels strongly remind us of the Corona pandemic nowadays. The patients in these novels are all sentenced to death and

the survivors take over the mission of saving who is left. These novels have been written in the past to talk about the future. They even describe the events of many years to come after 2019, when the pandemic has started to invade the world. Accordingly, they prove to be apocalyptic and consider each single detail related to the issue of the pandemic and the reactions of the people. They portray not only people’s reactions to the pandemic but also their feelings and suffering. They excel in describing real emotions and reactions and prophesy the characters as real ones who live among us. They teach us how to deal with this plague and tell us more about its different implications than do the several accounts by physicians, social historians, and other concerned people.

The covid-19 epidemic has become a hot topic for writing in many economic, medical, social, educational, political, and many other fields including literature. Therefore, this topic has been chosen to discuss and present the effects, similarities, and differences between the Corona pandemic and other types of epidemics that humanity has experienced in

different eras. Despite the lack of sources and references in this field, this paper is based on historicism which provides the theoretical framework that will be used in tracing the topic through history and in discussing and studying the topic in the literary works that have dealt with the topic starting with Daniel Defoe and ending with Jack London. Abd-Raboo (2021:444) states that "New Historicism delves into the historical, cultural and ideological realities surrounding any given literary work" In the 17th and 18th centuries, the terms "epidemic" and "pandemic" have been unclearly used in a way that can be exchanged in various social and medical contexts. "The first known use of the word "pandemic" was found in 1666, referring to "a Pandemick, or Endemick, or rather a Vernacular Disease "a disease mainly dominating in a Country" (Harvey, 1666).

The term "epidemic", has been an accepted term for what we call today both an epidemic and a pandemic. An apocalypse is a worldwide disaster that can dramatically affect civilization, like war, famine and plague, post-apocalyptic fiction involves circumstances that lead to mass unrest and widespread death. It explores the opportunity for human survival following an apocalypse. There are curious similarities between the current Coronavirus pandemic and the historical outbreaks of plague and pestilence. In books of history and literature, many writers like Daniel Defoe, Mary Shelly, Edgar Allan Poe, and Jack London predicted the outbreak of massive plagues and wrote about them. Their works read like guidebooks to today's situation and reflect on the worldwide fear of pandemics, a fear that remains very much alive.

The paper will study the following works: Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826). In *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Daniel Defoe gives a literary and historical account of the bubonic plague in 17th century London. In this book, Defoe gives a narrative of events, anecdotes, and statistics regarding the Great Plague of London of 1665. He identifies specific neighborhoods, streets, and even houses in which events have taken place. It

provides tables of casualty figures and discusses the credibility of various accounts and anecdotes received by the narrator. The second novel that the paper will study is Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) which is one of the first apocalyptic novels. It gives an account of a future world that has been ravaged and destroyed by a plague; resulting in the near-extinction of all humanity. It describes how a few persons appear to be immune and avoid contact with others. Iryna Senchuk's (2020) discusses study entitled Daniel Defoe's "A Journal of The Plague Year" presented at Philological Sciences: international scientific-practical conference, Odessa, November 27-28, 2020, discusses multiple perspectives of London. Daniel Defoe constructed the image of the capital city as an epicenter of commerce and culture, contributing to depictions of a fluid, dynamic London as represented through the city's crowded streets, noisy taverns, and bustling markets –locations familiar to the community of his eighteenth-century readers.

"Andrea Haslanger's article "The Last Anima": Cosmopolitanism in *The Last Man*" (1826) reads Mary Shelley's apocalyptic novel as a case study in two varieties of Romantic cosmopolitanism: the progressivist (associated with historical perfectibility and a federated Europe) and the Cynic (associated with animal life and radical freedom). "A global pandemic is the cause of human extinction in *The Last Man*, and its spread is the consequence of particular political and economic conjunctures; the international mobility and freedom the novel so valorizes in its first volume later leads to the communication of disease and finally comes to characterize the homelessness of the last man, Lionel Verney" (Haslanger, 2016, 559). It suggests that progressivist cosmopolitanism characterizes the novel's depiction of political improvement at home and abroad, while Cynic cosmopolitanism shapes its treatment of life once states and their populations have disappeared. Not only does Cynic cosmopolitanism offer a way to understand the novel's focus on animal life as Verney becomes the last man, but it also holds potential for discussions of Romantic cosmopolitanism more generally.

Dr. Marwan Khaleel and Yousif's paper "Epidemic manifestation in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Covid 19: A Comparative Study" shows people how to deal with the current global epidemic and support the exact chronological sequence of the pace of the development of an epidemic. From the appearance of the first symptoms to the disastrous pinnacle, and then back to usual life. The paper focuses on explaining the similarities and differences between the current case and what happened in 1666. However, the study recommends from a literary point of view that history reiterate itself and that people should understand past inaccuracies to be ready for any difference of trial.

Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*

Covid-19, or the Coronavirus, as the World Health Organization (WHO) calls it, is considered one of the most severe viruses that has struck humanity in the twentieth century. It is not considered a health epidemic only but is considered a global crisis that has affected all societies and countries in all their aspects, and the economies of the world. We also find that the effectiveness of this epidemic varies from year to year. On 8 September 2019, the first case of the Coronavirus was recorded in the Chinese city of Wuhan, which has led to a serious global epidemic affecting humanity. In August 2020, more than 25.3 million injuries were announced around the world, which led to the death of more than 848000 people, and more than 16.6 million recovered. The number of patients and casualties is still increasing.

The Symptoms of COVID-19 include shortness of breath and fatigue, loss of sense of smell and taste, cough, and fever. Some infected people have mild symptoms, while others developed acute respiratory distress syndrome as a result of multiple organ failure and blood clots. The disease usually takes about five days from infection to the appearance of symptoms and may extend from two to fourteen days. The infection is transmitted from person to person through the secretions of the mouth and nose, which contain the virus resulting from sneezing or coughing. Therefore, the World Health Organization suggested some preventive

measures such as home quarantine, wearing masks or face masks made of cloth, staying away from social gatherings, social distancing, and washing hands with soap and water in order to reduce the chance of spreading the virus (World Health Organization, 2020).

Daniel Defoe is considered "the father of the English and European Novel". Defoe was a prolific and versatile writer, producing more than "three hundred books, pamphlets, and journals on various topics, including politics, crime, religion, marriage, psychology, and the supernatural. He is distinguished for his harmonious writing with a well-chosen vocabulary. His writing is alive, in spoken English of his times, very attainable to anyone. He succeeds in making characters with the needful qualities to survive, especially in his time. Defoe most known book *Robinson Crusoe*, came out in 1719 and *A Journal of the Plague Year* followed in 1722. In his last years, he also wrote a huge travel book about Great Britain, *Moll Flanders*, and more than a dozen other novels. *Journal of the Plague Year*, is a description of his experiences during the year of the plague in the City of London. This book is a direct description of the events that took place during the year 1665 when Defoe was five years old. *A Journal of the Plague Year* seems to be a guiding portrait that shows people how to deal with the current global epidemic. It offers a precise chronological sequence of the development of an epidemic, from the appearance of the first symptoms to the calamitous climax, and then back to familiar life. The bubonic plague spread in the city of London, and the book gives a descriptive report of the incident. Defoe worked hard to produce a responsible literary witness to identify a set of circumstances and places in which the plague was rampant. The book describes the events of the great plague of 1665 in detail. Different kinds of accounts such as mortality bills, and oral tales make it one of the most famous published literary works that give an accurate account of the deadly epidemic which agrees, more or less, with the current time Covid 19. Defoe's *Journal* is an unusual account of the devastation and human suffering inflicted on the city of London by the

Great Plague of 1665. It was published in 1722, more than 50 years after the plague that struck London, Defoe was nearly five years old. It consists of observations or memorials of the most marked occurrences, as well public and private, which happened in London through the last great visitation in 1665.

The bubonic plague lasted about 18 months (from 1665 to 1666), and it was the last outbreak of the plague that occurred in London. It is estimated that around 100,000 people, or roughly a quarter of the city's population, died within 18 months. The narrator, H.F., tells parts of the rumor that the plague has struck Holland, and in a cautious manner follows the deaths. In London, certain parishes have been smitten, but the cold environment helped to reduce the rapid spread of the plague during the winter period. Meanwhile, the number of deaths was growing gradually during the months of May and June, and here the narrator felt reluctant to stay in London or leave it. In the end, he decided to stay in London. He recounts that the rich were leaving the city, while the poor remained and were affected by the disease, and so many of them abandoned the tricks of astrologers and fortune-tellers to overcome anxiety and fear of the plague. Lord Mario and Aldermin started to put preventive measures in place to limit the spread of the disease such as quarantine, and enacted rules and regulations which included the employment of investigators, researchers, and guards to take care of homes, closing infected homes, closing places of recreation, and other activities that people needed. According to H.F., home quarantine was not the appropriate solution to limit the spread of the plague because it caused more damage in some cases, in addition to Londoners who would find some tricks in order to go out and gather. The government acted quickly. The mayor issued a group of orders that strongly changed life in the city. All events and meetings were banned, schools were closed, and the city was separated into more easily policeable quarters. Infected people were locked in their houses with their families and were prohibited from leaving under the penalty of death. Upstanding citizens, deputized in different capacities as seekers, investigators,

and watchmen, were — under the penalty of death — tasked with overseeing this quarantine. Defoe's text is technically a novel; however, historians and epidemiologists have praised it as a perfect report of life in London during "the Great Plague." Defoe, who is most known for his novel *Robinson Crusoe*, did live in London in 1665; However, he was quite young. The narrator presents a scenic and comprehensive look at life inside a London beset with a pandemic far more in a way that causes extreme fear than the one we face today.

The purpose of writing this journal was didactic. "I have set this particular down so fully," the narrator states, "because I know not, but it may be of moment to those who come after me, if they come to be brought to the same distress." (page8). It aims to put a blueprint that future societies can follow when they face such terrible circumstances. Defoe's book documents the rigorous order that emerges in the plague city, while other pestilential narratives focus on the anarchy that accompanies pandemics. The Great Plague claimed nearly 100,000 lives. The narrator, H.F., records the terrible progress of the disease that has no known cause and therefore no known cure. Defoe employs his skills as a journalist, novelist, and Londoner to knit together evidence with storytelling. In doing so, he presents a vivid picture of a plague epidemic, but also the mean streets of seventeenth-century London. Some inhabitants are shown to be brave and caring, but many are understandably plain scared, confused and desperate. The most sensational and wicked acts tend to be reported as gossip with the weekly bills of mortality acting as sobering anchors of evidence. Defoe gives an attractive study of human behavior and in particular the conflict of mind to take a grip in circumstances of threat and unexpected change.

A Journal of the Plague Year is considered a masterwork, a realistic representation, offering trust through the circumstantial detail. The author employed the research method (newspapers, testimonies of witnesses) making up very persuasive material that is why it is very complicated to draw the line between reality and fiction. The novel offers the London

pandemic of 1665 (between 75000 and 100000 people died) and tells us the death toll is about 100,000 people from a realistic point of view. It tells the event of the pandemic in a historical context. (Didier Raoult, et al, 2013). After this period, the plague has been forgotten for decades before it emerges again on the 9th of June, 2003.

Similarity Between the Events of Bubonic Plague and Covid 19

Daniel Defoe's novel provides a description similar to what is happening during this period of the Covid-19 epidemic. A journal of the Plague Year is one of the horrific novels that jumped into drawing an analogy to the current situation. In both epidemics, imagine the feeling of people wandering the streets without seeing those around them; the precautionary measures taken by governments and how people are responding to them; how to prevent people from attending the funeral of their loved ones.

Through the previous argument, we find that the bubonic plague and Covid 19 are similar in that they have the same effect on people, but the plague is considered more dangerous as it is not only considered a health epidemic but a real disease that affects societies in many aspects. Also, both epidemics are similar in providing some examples of people's suffering physically and emotionally, such as the suffering of despair with sadness, and we also find that the crises of 1665 and 2019 have an impact on personal religious life as many people returned to God and changed their religious nature, as the narrator has reported on the growing interest of people in the church, and the appearances of scenes of sincere faith that he saw from Londoners. (Marwan Khaleel Yousif, , Assist Lec, Waleed Khalid Razzyq, Qays Khaleel Naif, 2021).

This short survey highlights the amazing similarity between Daniel Defoe's historical fiction *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) and the current Covid19 related circumstances in the world. In his realistic depiction of the Great Plague of London (1665-1666), Defoe refers to certain human tendencies and signs that

resemble the types in which people have thus far reacted to the Corona pandemic and the brutal containment measures. In particular, the poor suffered because the rich fled the city for places of safety in the countryside and the poor suffered the most. By comparing Defoe's account with the current Covid19 in the world, we realize the great value of literature that shows the power to clearly capture human behaviour at times of crisis so provide readers with worthy lessons for life.

This novel gives a new perspective on the power of fiction to tell life's timeless realities. Defoe started writing the *Journal* around 1709. His main purpose was to caution the people of England against the next fit of the plague from the Continent. He did not know that his words would ring true even after four centuries. The reality of Defoe's depictions in his novel seems to be relevant to the situation that the globe has witnessed in 2020. Reflecting on it critically might teach us serious lessons for the future. The narrator starts by mentioning that the plague had come back from Holland in September 1664. He says, "some said from Italy, others from the Levant ... others said it was brought from Candia; others from Cyprus." (page 1). Nobody knew from where it came, but everyone accepted that it had come from "somewhere" outside the country. In the situation of the Covid 19, too, neither Italy, nor Spain, nor the United States (US) has conclusively traced the virus's origin, although all fingers refer to China.

Defoe depicts the thousands of despairing people fleeing London by whichever means they could find. "Nothing was to be seen but wagons and carts, with goods, women, servants, children ... innumerable numbers of men on horseback, some alone, others with servants, and generally speaking, all loaded with baggage and fitted out for travelling, as anyone might perceive by their appearance." As the complete lockdown was abruptly announced and enforced overnight all families also bought supplies and some people escaped big cities to save their lives from the unseen virus. The poor and marginalized are hardly surviving even though their meager resources

and savings keep depleting. (Sunil Samuel Macwan, 2020).

During those days, most people discovered some peace in religion. The plague-afflicted Londoners turned to God for reassurance. Thousands turned to God to find spiritual intensity in prayer, the Journal's narrator said: "People shew'd an extraordinary Zeal in these religious Exercises and as the Church Doors were always open. People would go in single at all Times ... locking themselves into separate Pews, would be praying to God with great Fervency and Devotion." (page 50). "A Journal of the Plague Year is a novel written by Daniel Defoe and first published in 1722. It can be considered as a descriptive report of Defoe's experiences of the endemic year when the bubonic plague was spread in the city of London. The style of the novel is simple and with a constant repetition of the same themes in its construction. In the novel, Defoe works hard to produce an authentic literary work that has a credible witness to identify a set of circumstances and places in which the plague was spread. Furthermore, the novel draws up lists of casualty numbers and examines the reliability of different considerations and tales collected by the narrator" Through this text, we comment that Albert's novel, *The Year of the Plague*, is considered one of the most successful novels that have achieved high sales during the current period due to the spread of the current Covid 19 epidemic, this novel emphasized the role of the human factor in addressing a social crisis, which is the spread of an epidemic. complex, the plague epidemic during a past period of time, which is the year 1665, and the author of the novel recounts the human role he played and the actions that took place, the struggle to reduce the impact of a fatal disease, as well as the social and personal drama of quarantine, isolation, and death (Marwan Khaleel Yousef. et al, 2021).

In conclusion, we find that Defoe's use of his great talent during his writings for this novel, and a description of the events that individuals experienced at the time of the spread of the plague through areas in London, are similar to the current events experienced by various individuals during Covid 19, where the rash

behavior shown by individuals as a result of fear of Coronavirus, the spread of bodies and the dead, the fear and panic that afflicted the people, the strict measures taken by the government at that time in order to reduce the spread of the disease, and quarantine measures, all of these are similar to what happened during the Corona crisis.

Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*

The Last Man deals with an imaginative situation of an epidemic that affects people's lives. This novel, as Jim Green, described it, "is the first post-apocalyptic science fiction novel," (Green, 2020, p.87). The time of the novel events is presumed to be happening in the 21st century and ending in the year 2100. The novel, which is narrated by Lionel Verney, concentrates on the lives of various people and their reactions to a plague that reaps the lives of their relatives, families and beloved people. In this novel, Mary Shelley is assumed to be reacting to the death of her husband, children and friends in documenting incidents that recorded the extinction of the whole of humanity.

Mary lost her step-sister who committed suicide. After that, she suffered, together with her husband Percy, the pain of losing her young children. In 1822, the death scenario was crowned with the death of her husband Percy. The main theme of the novel was death, which prevailed at that time. People showed great panic and felt scared of the continuing aggressive death which spread everywhere. Their fear appeared when the theory of contagious disease prevailed. The disease would spread soon due to close contact and body fluids. Consequently, there should be an urgent procedure to be followed in order to save souls. People and things were isolated, trading goods were limited to their lowest limits and the obligatory quarantine was imposed. Conversely, some other people believed that the disease may affect anyone by just breathing the polluted infected air. They believed that it was a matter of miasmatic air. Malaria, for example, was believed to be a miasmatic disease. Mary Shelley was aware of the contemporary philosophical-scientific

discourse and she was miasmatic who believed in the causation of disease by miasmas. She wrote *The Last Man* to demonstrate her suffering of the real apocalypse that was happening around her, and the loss of almost everyone she loved. The novel was published in 1826 for the first time. She discussed a future life (late 21st century) destroyed and imagined the extermination of the entire human race by a plague and anticipated harrowing scenes of suffering and death that, in reality, we are living and witnessing now in our real present time.

The context of the novel can be represented in three aspects; the black death, romanticism, and 19th century England. What we are interested in most in this study is the context of the plague or black death. Black death devastated Europe since 1347 and continued to affect the whole society there till 1351. It was a widespread pandemic and took the lives of more than 25 million people. Many researchers assured that one-third of the population passed away due to this epidemic. In Shelley's *The Last Man*, people were aware of the danger of the black death and had a previous idea about the result of the infection and fought to resist it. However, there was no escape; it was an aggressive plague that affected every single family, if not individual. It caused a great number of deaths. It spread very fast and invaded the places of the higher population like cities more so than villages which had fewer people. When the Great Fire of London happened, it helped to end the plague there, but it had the chance to spread in less populated areas, like villages. Mary Shelley used that scenario in this novel to talk about an imaginative world which will take place in the 21st century to announce the expected end of the world in 2100.

On the other hand, Mrs. Shelley depended on the concept of romanticism which prevailed at that time to lead her characters and help them react to the incidents the way she wanted them to. Lionel Verney and Adrian, the main characters in the novel, were led by their imaginative faculties and thoughts to develop their characters throughout the developing events and consequently face the plague. Both

characters developed and changed to show strength in defending others and helping them survive. Adrian was able to help 1500 people to flee out of England and find a safe place that was not infected by the plague. As for Lionel, he was presented as the hero who was an extravagant young survivor who could not be subdued or overcome. Shelley succeeded to embody the emergence of these two characters in the novel to present them as heroes and survivors. They struggled powerfully and bravely to face the pandemic of the 21st century. Lionel wanders the empty streets of Rome among the dead monuments. He begins to write his history. Mrs. Shelley made these two characters as typical representatives of romanticism. The power of imagination and the language they used were typically romantic. She employed the description of nature and its beauty which was not affected by the plague as a powerful side of the society which was completely infected. Nature inspired Lionel and encouraged him to stick to the romantic language in describing the Alps as "the glorious Alps clothed in dazzling robes of light by the setting sun" (Shelley, 1826, p.549). Only nature and the narrator survived the plague. The power of nature was untouched by the plague and the heroic powers of Lionel also survived. Concerning the concept of mystery and remoteness, it was dealt with by Shelley in a different way. She employed them through the aggressive and devastating spread of the plague in the future rather than talking about the past like other romantic writers. Mary Shelley was able to imagine a pandemic that killed not only a great number of the population but also all people were killed except one person who is *The Last Man* by the year 2100.

Lionel Verney is the main character and the narrator of the novel. His life is very tragic from the beginning due to the death of his parents in his early childhood. Lionel committed some thefts, although he was a shepherd until he met Adrian and Earl of Windsor who took him and raised him up. He was taught many things in life and grew up as a strong man. Together with Adrian, Lionel confronted the plague which was a great threat to the whole world. Lionel was the only person

left alive at the end of the novel. He was infected by his wife. In the article 'The Obvious' (2018), Wlizio assures that "after the plague has conquered most of the world it comes for Lionel too. Lionel's infection is the only instance of a person-to-person transmission in the book" (p. 65). He spoke about the infection when he was talking to an African person. He said:

We talked—I know not how long—but, in the morning I awoke from a painful heavy slumber; the pale cheek of Idris rested on my pillow; the large orbs of her eyes half raised the lids, and showed the deep blue lights beneath; her lips were unclosed, and the slight murmurs they formed told that, even while asleep, she suffered. 'If she were dead,' I thought, 'what difference? Now that form is the temple of a residing deity; those eyes are the windows of her soul; all grace, love, and intelligence are thrown on that lovely bosom—were she dead, where would this mind, the dearer half of mine, be? For quickly the fair proportion of this edifice would be more defaced, than are the sand-choked ruins of the desert temples of Palmyra.' (Shelley, 1826,p.449)

He was the typical representation of Shelley's message and anticipation of the future of the world that would suffer an aggressive pandemic that would reap the lives of a tremendous number of people. Critics also believe that Lionel represents Mary Shelley, herself, who lost all of her family and friends due to many reasons. The pandemic that affected society caused the death of characters one after another, leaving the main character, Lionel, lonely in the world. The matter is used again and not explained which represents Shelley's feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Lionel's sister, Perdita, was three years younger than Lionel. He took care of her since she was two years old after her parents' death. She was a strong, independent, reserved, and loving girl who lived in a cottage near a castle at Windsor. She married Lord Raymond after their love relationship. However, he was untrue to her and left her for Greece to help in defeating the Turks. When he was killed, he was buried in Athens. Perdita refused to return

to England and leave his tomb. She believed that she would stay close to him. When she was forced to leave for England, she threw herself into the sea in order to be buried next to her husband in Athens. The character of Perdita represents the theory of apocalypse of loneliness. She does not want to be alone after her beloved dead husband. Perdita reflects Mary's feelings of loneliness after her husband's death. She refused to be away from him and did not accept the reality of such as alone. Thus, she committed suicide as a reaction of her refusal. In an article written by Rebecca Barr which was entitled "Pandemic and the horrors of solitude - solitudes: Past and present." Barr assures that "Loneliness has been called a 'modern plague'" (Barr,2020, 73). She also claims that the theme of loneliness is basic in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. She argues that: "The Last Man" uses the plague as a catalyst for its deconstruction of society, culture, and friendship, it is not ultimately a tale of the deadly infection. It is a story about an apocalypse of loneliness" (Barr, 2020). Accordingly, it is not a story of death, but one of the characters refusing to be alone after losing their relatives or family members. Perdita Verney is a clear example of this concept when she refused to leave the place where her husband was buried to stay close to him to the extent of committing suicide. Loneliness is imposed on the characters; they did not choose to be alone. The plague caused the loss of souls of many friends, relatives, and families. People were aware of the fact that they have to avoid being close to others, otherwise, they would be infected. This concept conveys the recent situation of covid-19 pandemic. People are also forced to stay away from each other in order not to be infected. This situation which caused many results and consequences to the whole society. It is exactly the same situation of the people in "The Last Man". They felt frightened of getting infected and tried to avoid it by being far from each other. However, this did not work. All people were dead due to many reasons, disease, killing, or drowning for example.

The novel in general starts as a romantic-era novel which tackles many issues of the

characters who seek love. They fail and succeed, find love and then lose it like Raymond who falls in love with another woman after his marriage. He chooses to hide and bury his sorrow by travelling to Greece. His reaction was completely romantic. The tone of the events changes as the narrative progresses, becoming sadder and darker. People's attitudes varied when the virus began to reap souls. The invading plague is described in the same way as the invading Covid-19. These themes foreshadowed the current state of the world, demonstrating that the novel is an apocalyptic tale that reflects our current condition. At the time, a siege was enforced to halt the spread of the plague and to protect the inhabitants from infection. The document explains the complete narrative of the quarantine in Covid-19. A description of the scene appears in Shelley's novel

'No one appeared on the walls; the very portals, though locked and barred, seemed unguarded; above, the many domes and glittering crescents pierced heaven; while the old walls, survivors of ages, with ivy-crowned tower and weed-tangled buttress, stood as rocks in an uninhabited waste. From within the city neither shout nor cry, nor aught except the casual howling of a dog broke the noon-day stillness. Even our soldiers were awed to silence; the music paused; the clang of arms was hushed. Each man asked his fellow in whispers, the meaning of this sudden peace; while Raymond from a height endeavored, by means of glasses, to discover and observe the stratagem of the enemy. No form could be discerned on the terraces of the houses; in the higher parts of the town no moving shadow bespoke the presence of any living being: the very trees waved not, and mocked the stability of architecture with like immovability.' (Shelley, 1826, 176)

People were afraid of the plague as if it is an inevitable fate that will kill everyone on land. Mrs. Shelley referred to it as an enemy. Even the trees paused to wave, but there was no sign of life. Even though it was depicting a calamity, the tone is romantic, and nature sympathized with the humans who were

exposed to the enormous, aggressive murdering beast.

To summarize, Mary Shelley went to considerable lengths to communicate her point of view and sentiments about some incidents that occurred to her. In her work, she tried to bring the genuine personalities of family and friends back to life. She gave a thorough explanation of the natural reactions of people to any unforeseen calamity, such as the plague. She described their fear and panic. In one way or another, she succeeded to predict the present case of Covid-19. Shelley in *The Last Man* delivers this message "the vast annihilation that has swallowed all things- the voiceless solitude of the once busy earth" (Shelley, 1826, 193). In other words, she foresaw the current events that we are witnessing now. When people are exposed to a similar situation, the message she conveyed to the future foreshadows that they are all same. They are terrified of being ill, as well as of losing their loved ones and families. They actually lost everything. She demonstrated a thorough awareness of scientific facts and ideas, which she applied to the story. She began her work, influenced by the era in which she lived, and progressively revealed her life views.

Conclusion

The concept of pandemic, fear, and the consequences of the invasion of the pandemic that on human society has been presented through some of the literary works which tackled the issue. Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* have shown the reaction of people towards a disastrous situation that they could not avoid and have provided critical views of human nature during crises that have proven true in the Covid-19 pandemic. Every writer has tackled the concept from a different perspective. However, they all share the thought that the disaster cannot be avoided. Besides, the characters of the novels represent the human feelings and reactions when a calamity occurs. These apocalyptic novels anticipate the present life that all societies all over the world are living in the present time. The results of this study argue that what is happening at present

has really been anticipated in these novels under investigation. Human responses to the disaster are nearly the same, however, their reactions, as has been shown in these novels, varied and the fate of the characters that represent society has been also different.

In *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Defoe has excelled in describing the feelings of fear of a civilization destroyed by the pandemic. The bubonic plague which has spread vigorously is portrayed in the story in a sequence that followed the spread of the pandemic. It gives a real description of real incidents as if he himself has witnessed the progress of the pandemic and the sufferings of the people at that time. According to Defoe, people's reactions have ranged from bravery to fear. The story also succeeds in delivering the government reaction which has been to enact necessary laws to enforce the quarantine to prevent the spread of the disease. The story reflects our existing life nowadays due to Covid-19 pandemic to which people have reacted differently. Some people have been frightened to the extent their immune system has been affected. Others have lost confidence in the true reports of the World Health Organization. They think that it is a kind of promoting the disease in order to promote its vaccination or medicine. The quarantine, which has been imposed in each country and among countries as well is also presented in the story. Defoe also discusses the issue of asymptomatic people; that is, people with no symptoms. Children in recent time played the role of asymptomatic people, the WHO has warned that they may be infected without symptoms, but they will be a very strong reason to infect the elderly. The danger is great for those who suffer from chronic diseases. Defoe discusses the issue of infection of the others, and mentions the time of infection as "a walking destroyer perhaps for a week or a fortnight before that...." just the same time as the World Health Organization claims the time of infection of Coronavirus which usually takes about five days from infection to the appearance of symptoms, and may extend from two to fourteen days. Accordingly, when the quarantine is enacted and people are told to

stay home, social distancing has also been needed to prevent the further spread of the virus. This idea is also discussed by Defoe. Borrowing some of his expressions one may say 'had breathing death upon them', is exactly now Coronavirus which spread by breathing. 'embracing and kissing' children are also some expressions which are newly mentioned and stressed in society. People who are accustomed to hugging and kissing whenever they meet have started to stay away from others to prevent infection. Mary Shelley on the other hand, as an apocalyptic novelist, discusses the concept of a pandemic as apocalyptic event from a different perspective. Starting from the title of her novel 'The Last Man' she decides to make society empty except for one person. All people die due to the spread of the disease which reaps the souls and leaves Verney to be the last man on the land. She succeeds in conveying the real reactions of the people during times of pandemic. Her knowledge of science has enabled her to describe the disease and its consequences perfectly. The prospect of extinction has made people at that time fear that humans, like dinosaurs, will be extinct. Accordingly, humans will die out and the infection, which will sweep them all and the human race will be wiped out.

Moreover, the novel is one of isolation, namely being alone in the world with no companion. The novel embodies Mrs. Shelley as a lonely person after the death of her friends and family. It is claimed that the story tends to represent the characters as real ones who happened to be in her life like her husband, her children and Lord Byron as a friend who all passed away. She reflects the situation as if it were all been real. It is claimed that she has not accepted their death and wanted to bring them back to life as characters of her novel. She has anticipated the present situation of Covid-19 pandemic. Through the travails and reactions of her character in times of pandemic Her description gives a full idea about what is happening during the plague onslaught. What is more effective in her description is that when we read the novel in recent times, we think that she is present with us to see what is happening during the pandemic of Covid-19. People and

their behavior in addition to the psychological and emotional situations have been delivered during the incidents of the story to show what is likely to be the existing life nowadays, and show remarkable parallels to human behavior observed during the Covid-19 pandemic. At the very beginning of the incidents, people have tried to avoid being infected and followed the social distancing technique. They have suffered from the loss of their relatives and friends. They try to escape the inescapable. The invasion of the plague destroys the whole society and damages people healthily, psychologically, and economically. Her portrayal of the events is a typical parallel to the existing situation of Covid-19 pandemic.

To conclude, the two novels anticipated our present life. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they represent the human life of hectic procedures that always people find themselves going through. In spite of the fact that people are trying to survive, they have to prove their bravery and face the plague. This is a motto that some people believe in. However, when it comes to a situation like an aggressive, uncontrollable invasive disease, the matter is completely different. The study discusses the concept of pandemic in three novels that anticipate the recent Coronavirus pandemic that the whole world is suffering from. Further studies and research, I think, are needed.

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