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Comparative analysis of *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake* in terms of Gender, Nature and Politics

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Table of contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Contextualization of <i>The Last Man</i> and <i>Oryx and Crake</i>	6
	2.1 <i>The Last Man</i>	6
	2.2 <i>Oryx and Crake</i>	7
3.	Representation of Gender in <i>The Last Man</i> and <i>Oryx and Crake</i>	8
4.	Nature in <i>The Last Man</i> and <i>Oryx and Crake</i>	18
5.	Politics in <i>The Last Man</i> and <i>Oryx and Crake</i>	24
6.	Conclusion.....	30
	Work Cited.....	34

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the elements of Gender, Nature and Politics from the novels written by Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood, *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*. The first section focuses on the characteristics of Gender and its different and similar use in two novels. This section offers an analysis of male and female characters of both novels from different ranges of society. The second section focuses on the analysis of Nature and natural elements presented in novels. The elements that will be analysed in this part are sublime, catastrophe and the plague. The final section offers an analysis of politics represented by the elements such as political regimes, revolution, and the function of the plague around the politics.

Key terms: Gender, Nature, Politics, The Last Man, Oryx and Crake

El propósito de este estudio es comparar y contrastar los elementos de Género, Naturaleza y Política de las novelas escritas por Mary Shelley y Margaret Atwood, *The Last Man* y *Oryx and Crake*. El primer apartado se centra en un análisis comparativo de las características de género en estas novelas. En esta sección se ofrece un análisis de los personajes masculinos y femeninos de ambas novelas pertenecientes a diferentes estratos sociales. El segundo apartado se centra en el análisis de la Naturaleza y los elementos naturales presentados en ambas obras. Los elementos que serán analizados en esta parte son lo sublime, la catástrofe y la peste. La sección final ofrece un análisis de la política representada por elementos como los regímenes políticos, la revolución y la función de la peste en torno a la política.

Palabras Clave: Género, Naturaleza, Política, The Last Man, Oryx and Crake

1. Introduction

In this essay, I will discuss three elements which are present in novels by female writers, Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood, during different periods of time. Both novels belong to the same genre which is dystopias.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, female writer of Romantic age, was born on 30th August 1797 in London. She was an English female novelist, short story writer, and essayist that belonged to the Romantic age of Literature. One of her important works are *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* published anonymously in 1816 and *The Last Man* published in 1826.

Shelley belonged to the family of a philosopher and a radical political journalist, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft who was a female thinker and activist of that time. Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in 1792, died after the birth of her child, Mary Shelley.

The education of Shelley consisted of passing many times in her fathers library and talking with frequent visitors in their home such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. From an early age Shelleys interests in books increased at great speed. The favourite activity of young Romantic writers was writing stories addressed to a limited audience. The passion of Shelley was escaping from her imagination by writing and reading books. She was surrounded by intellectual people and her environment was full of writers and thinkers. Shelley kept a diary where her childhood and maternity were described. "As a child, I scribbled; and my favourite pastime, during the hours given me for recreation, was to write stories." - she recorded in *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, Volume I, in June 1812 – May 1814.

Also, Shelley stated in her diary that she was interested in science. "Attended Garnerin's lecture—on Electricity—the gasses—& the Phantasmagoria." (MWS Journal, 56)

Shelley's married life had some similarities with her parents' life, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Mary and Percy Shelley were against traditional marriage. They met for the first time in London. Percy was a poet and student of William Godwin. However, he was still married to another woman, Mary and Percy moved to France together. During their married life they had four children but unfortunately only one child survived while the first three children died. It was a hard time for Mary and Percy, an inappropriate time of writing.

Mary Shelly belonged to the Age of Revolution that was spread from 1780 to 1830, where three revolutions took place, The American Revolution, The French Revolution and Industrialization. It was a period of changes, inequality between working and middle class and new innovations and technologies. England moved from agrarian to industrial society and was involved in an eight year war with American colonies. This young romantic writer was influenced by these social and economical changes. Shelley grew up around intellectual people, thinkers, activists and writers whose main topics of discussions were Nature, Imagination, Supernatural, and the role of women. She spent a lot of time riding the main work of her mother, Mary Wolstonecraft Shelley, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). It was a contrasting concept of the Enlightenment where logic and reason play the main role. Mary Shelley died in her house in London on 1 February 1851.

Margaret Atwood, Canadian contemporary writer, novelist and critic, was born in Ottawa, Ontario on 18 November 1939. Atwood is considered a prolific writer who up to today has fourteen novels, nine short story collections, sixteenth books of poetry, and ten volumes of non-fictions published. Atwood, a daughter of a forest entomologist and former dietician, moved to Toronto when she was seven years old. Her interest in books increased in childhood when she spent time in rural areas reading fairy tales and children comic books. Also, it was a time of early writing of children's plays and stories.

Atwoods education was based on English studies, philosophy and French. She obtained a degree in the University of Toronto and Master in Radcliffe College, in Massachusetts. Atwood began her doctoral dissertation called *The English Metaphysical Romance* but unfortunately this word was not finished.

At the beginning of her career as a Canadian writer, she worked on the publications of poetry books while she was a lecturer and teacher in three different universities, the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Sir George Williams University in Montreal, and the University of Alberta. Atwoods early publications were dedicated to poetry, and the

second book *The Circle Game*, published in 1966, was nominated to the Governor General's Award.

From 1969 to 1979, Atwood published several novels such as *The Edible Women* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976), and *Life Before Man* (1979). She touched upon the themes of gender, politics, and national identity. These topics were related to the current situation of her personal life. It was a period of time while Atwood was experiencing the divorce with the first husband. After a while, she met Graeme Gibson, with whom she had a daughter.

Atwood never stops mixing her two passions of life, teaching and writing. Later publications of Atwood's novels have already had different topics. Her central point of discussion was women, morality, and feminism. Atwood based her female characters in the disutopia world. Novels such as *The Handmaid's Tale* published in 1985 and *Oryx and Crake* published in 2003 contain these themes as morality, gender roles and technology.

Margarte Atwood is still publishing novels and short stories. The Testaments, the last work of Atwood, was published in 2019. Atwood's novels, poems and short stories have been translated into more than 30 languages and were published throughout the whole world.

2.Contextualization of *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*

2.1 The Last Man

The Last Man which takes place in the distant future in 2100 was published in 1826. The novel begins with a flourishing civilization but ends with a plague that wiped out all of humanity except for one person, Lionel Verney. He is also the first-person narrator of the novel. Lionel lives with his sister as wild creatures until they meet Adrian the king's son. Perdita, the protagonist's sister, marries Lord Raymond, who will soon become the new Lord Protector of London. But soon the couple breaks up and Raymond leaves for Greece where he will be captured by the Turks. After Raymond is released, he decides to lead the army to victory over the Turks, but the plague has already killed all the inhabitants of Constantinople. Soon Raymond was found dead in this city. Out of great love for her husband, Pardita commits suicide by throwing herself from a ship.

The plague begins to advance gradually to Italy and France and then to England. Londoners decide to leave their homes to survive. The only thing left for living beings to do is travel to France, then to Versailles and then to Switzerland. The last four that managed to

survive were Lionel, Evelyn, Adrian and Clara. In Italy, Evelyn dies on a lake Como. They decide to take boats and go to Greece, but the storm prevents Clara and Adrian from reaching the place. Having reached the last person on earth, Lionel remains for a year in Rome, where he writes his story about the plague.

2.2 Oryx and Crake

Oryx and Crake, a post-apocalyptic novel by Margaret Atwood which was published in 2003 is the second dystopian novel by this writer. The novel takes place in an unspecified future where the protagonist and at the same time the narrator is Jimmy or Snowman. This story is told from two different perspectives of the main character. At the very beginning and end of the novel is a post-apocalyptic future where the scenario is similar to the idea of the last man on earth. The other perspectives of the novel are the flashbacks and memories from Jimmy's past whereby readers are reminded of what led him to this future.

The novel begins with Snowman recounting his life after the disaster. He lives outdoors with creatures whose name is Crakers. He often hears voices from the past and recalls his childhood. Jimmy lived with his parents, who were both engineers at OrganInc, a genetic splicing company. The relationship between Jimmy's parents was strained and eventually, when he was a child, his mother left home and left Jimmy with his father.

Jimmy had a friend, Crake, with whom they were close until the end. They met at school and spent their time playing computer games or visiting pornographic sites on one of which they saw Oryx for the first time.

After graduation, Crake offers him a job at BlyssPluss, a company that develops drugs against ageing. While working in the department of advertising Jimmy learns about another part of Crake's project, creation of creatures similar to people but with the best qualities taken from humans and animals. The names of the first models are Crakers. In this phase of his life, Jimmy meets Oryx and they begin a loving relationship. Oryx used to sell pills and teach Crakers botanika. One day a pandemic broke out in one of the towns where Oryx worked. The epidemic spread all over the world. As a result, Jimmy is left alone with the Crakers in a land that is slowly disappearing. Due to the lack of electricity, food, and water, Jimmy and the creatures have to be carried from the asylum. In the wilderness, he realises that he is not the only person and that there are others who are still alive.

Oryx and Crake is a dystopian novel where many scientific and cultural trends have been borrowed from modern society. In this way Atwood became a critic of modern life, providing readers with a field for reflection on the future and the present.

3. Representation of Gender in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*

Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood present the gender issue in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*. In this chapter, I would analyse the gender roles of women and the negative impact on them. Also, the main female characters of both novels will be analysed and compared.

The Last Man, published in 1826, is set in the future 21st century and represents the catastrophic destruction of mankind by the virus called cholera. One of the main issues of Shelley's work is the lack of balance between woman and man in the imaginary future world. The novel deals with the criticism of the patriarchal society and the role of women in it. Shelley's novel will be analysed through the elements such as women's experience, their domesticity, love, and education.

In this novel we can see the influence of her mothers work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Two Marys, mother and daughter, have lived different lives, but in many ways they are similar. The point is not only the common name, not the fact that both had illegitimate children, not how many trials they had to endure. Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley were united by the will to live and the desire to live it with their heads held high. It was the age when a woman was almost a creature without rights. However, they inscribed their names in the history of literature and philosophy. In 1790, Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in which she discussed conservative criticism of the French Revolution. And two years later, the scandalous treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published. Wollstonecraft talked about women who should have the same rights as men and should receive a decent education. To those who argued that women can't get an education because they're stupid, Wollstonecraft replied: no, they're stupid because you cut them off from good schools.

Oryx and Crake, the novel written in the 21st century, is set in the same future reality as Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. Atwood showed the near future society that was destroyed by the plague created in the laboratory. As *The Last Man*, *Oryx and Crake* could be analysed through the gender issues according to male and female roles in the society. Atwood, as a

female writer and feminist, pays a lot of attention to the social stereotypes around women and the lack of their right. So the principal female characters could be analysed and compared with the women from *The Last Man*.

In this chapter, the aim is to compare the principal female characters of *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake* such as Perdita, Evadne, The countess of Windsor, Idris, Oryx, Sharon, and Ramona. As the novels are set in two different societies where the women were born and grew up, I will divide the characters of both novels belonging to a low and high society to compare and find the similarities between them. Also, some characters, Idris and Sharon, will be analysed through the role of motherhood. Not only women will be analysed, but I will also talk about men, especially the main characters, the narrators, and the last humans on earth, Lionel and Jimmy or Snowman. It will be important to mention the male and female status in society and how it differs from each other.

Eva Antal mentions in her work: "In the novel (*The Last Man*), all the characters are associated with the forces of culture and history". (3, Antal) Although this quote was only about *The Last Man*, it can also be applied to *Oryx and Crake*. In both novels, men deal with ambitions, politics, culture, and society while female characters are involved in the historical events but without any powers and voice in it. There is a clear representation of the patriarchal society. The role of men in this future reality is the creation and "the proliferation of the plague" said Eberle-Sinatra (99). In the case of women, they are represented through the destruction, less important figures in society, and "controlled, marginalised and subordinated" (Sinatra, 100)

The destiny of the people from *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake* completely depends on their rights and freedoms in a given society, regardless of whether it is a man or a woman. Both Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood, who recreated the worlds of the future, represent a society with inequality between the two sexes and the presence of gender stereotypes in it. So, for example, talking about the lower rank to which the characters of *The Last Man* Perdita and Oryx from *Oryx and Crake* are attributed. They are women with a difficult life destiny. Both women have something in common. For example, Perdita and Orix belong to the lower society. Perdita lost her parents when she was still a child and lived on the street with her brother due to the lack of housing. Oryx was sold by her mother and expropriated in the flower trade and then her body. Both women had a difficult childhood where they had to survive very complicated moments of life.

Perdita is the sister of Lionel Verney, the main male character. She is a young, impulsive woman who falls in love with Raymond. "Perdita senses the upcoming danger with the election of Raymond: she is not only afraid of losing her beloved companion but also fears Raymond's "utopian" powerful plans." (Antal, 7) Perdita marries Raymond and starts to get involved in each Raymond's activities and plans. She can reform or improve the administration of the country. It is a powerful union between Raymond and Perdita where she has the voice and the influence over him counselling his ideas. Later in, Raymond is untrue with her starting new love relations with Evadne. Perdita hardly survives this situation and goes "into a state of apathy" (Banerjee, 33). It deeply affected her and she decided to move to Greece, the place where Raymond died. In Constantinople, she buries the body of her loved partner and finally commits suicide.

According to this character, Shelley highlighted that "the wife submerges her identity into that of her husband, sacrificing herself for his welfare." (Mellor, 154) She emphasises the nature of women and their role in society in the future 21st century. Perdita is an example of a woman whose central preoccupation is love and happiness. She was passionate about her relationship with Raymond and mentioned it to Verney:

Lionel, you cannot understand what woman's love is. In days of happiness I have often repeated to myself, with a grateful heart and exulting spirit, all that Raymond sacrificed for me. I was a poor, uneducated, unbefriended, mountain girl, raised from nothingness by him. All that I possessed of the luxuries of life came from him. He gave me an illustrious name and noble station; the world's respect reflected from his own glory : all this joined to his own undying love, inspired me with sensations towards him, akin to those with which we regard the Giver of life. I gave him love only. I devoted myself to him : imperfect creature that I was, I took myself to task, that I might become worthy of him. I watched over my hasty temper, subdued my burning impatience of character, schooled my selfengrossing thoughts, educating myself to the best perfection I might attain, that the fruit of my exertions might be his happiness. I took no merit to myself for this. He deserved it all-all labour, all devotion, all sacrifice; I would have toiled up a scaleless Alp, to pluck a flower that would please him. I was ready to quit you all, my beloved and gifted companions, and to live only with him, for him. I could not do otherwise, even if I had wished ; for if we are said to have two souls, he was my better soul, to which the other was a perpetual slave. One only return did he owe me, even fidelity. I earned that ; I deserved it. Because I was mountain-bred, unallied to the noble and wealthy, shall he think to repay me by an empty name and station ? Let him take them back; without his love they are nothing to me. Their only merit in my eyes was that they were his. (Shelley, 114)

Perdita agrees with the fact that the function of women in a patriarchal society is marriage and love. She is accepted by society after changing her status from premarital to

marriage. Marriage is the way that opens women's social upbringing and a sense of self-importance. Shelley pays attention to the lack of independence of women and their "constitute a striving after the patriarchal ideal of femininity" (Banerjee, 35). In this kind of society to which women aspire they are weak and inferior to men. In the representation of the life of Perdita, unhappiness without a husband is shown. The woman is incomplete without a husband in society while the reverse is already accepted by people. This hierarchical representation of gender relations deals with a man who is stronger and superior and a woman who is weak and inferior.

Perdita and Oryx have one element in common. Both belong to a patriarchal society where women are objectified and completely dependent on men. If Perdita gives all of herself, her body, and her heart to Raymond, then Oryx is forced to sell herself on pornographic sites, survive and be kind and attractive. The next point that Perdita and Oryx have in common is their social background. They survived a difficult childhood.

Oryx is the love of the main character, Jimmy or Snowman. Oryx's first appearance comes when Crake and Jimmy find her on the pornographic site "HottTotts". "She was only about eight, or she looked eight. They could never find out for certain how old she'd been then. Her name wasn't Oryx, she didn't have a name. She was just another little girl on a porno site." (Atwood, 52)

Shaista Irshad in her work stated that "Atwood deconstructs the belief of masculinity as biologically superior and femininity as biologically inferior. She nullifies the essentialism associated with gender and sexual identities proving them to be the product of social and cultural construction." (Shaista, 7) From birth, Oryx became an object of society. She was born in a small village belonging to not rich parents. Her father died and the mother had to feed all her children. The period of life in the village passed under the supervision of local women who looked after her and prepared her for adulthood. Preparation meant "look pretty and healthy" (Atwood, 67) and all girls from this village go through this stage. The purpose of this was the transaction. Oryx recalls this as follows:

In the village, it was not called "selling," this transaction. The talk about it implied apprenticeship. The children were being trained to earn their living in the wide world: this was the gloss put on it. Besides, if they stayed where they were, what was there for them to do? Especially the girls said Oryx. They would only get married and make more children, who would then have to be sold in their turn. Sold, or thrown into the river, to float away to the sea; because there was only so much food to go around. (Atwood, 67)

In this way, Margaret Atwood shows the role of a woman in a patriarchal society from the very birth. From the beginning, her body and herself were objectified. Her body became a tool for making a living, being manipulated by men, and climbing the social ladder. Her role in society is completely dependent on her femininity and attractiveness. For Oryx since childhood, the sale of the body has become the norm and does not look strange and unusual. The sexual objectification of women was her reality. Femininity and sexuality became the key aspects of the patriarchal society where Oryx lived. Oryx, from childhood, had to dress beautifully, and look young and attractive to attract male attention and popularity on a porn website: "Oryx had a wig like that. She liked to dress up, change her appearance, and pretend to be different women. She'd strut around the room, do a little strip, wiggle and pose. She said men liked variety. " (Atwood, 138)

Using the example of the female character Oryx, Margaret Atwood creates a society where a woman is objectified, sexualized, does not have an exact name, and in society, her role is inferior to that of a man. Oryx's real name was never mentioned in this story, but it was said that she forgot it. Oryx had different names throughout her life. Another name that was given to her is "SuSu". This name was given to her by her abuser "Uncle En" at the time when she was selling roses on the street. Oryx had been given a new name by Uncle En. "They were told to forget their old names, and soon they did. Oryx was now SuSu" (Atwood, 75). Although in *The Last Man*, all characters, both female and male, have a name that has some meaning and is related to the character himself. In *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood does not reveal the real name of Oryx. In the case of Oryx, the name does not have a specific meaning but is a symbol of the woman's non-identity in society. As Losada Sánchez said, "The new name also acts as a symbol of the vanishing of her old life and the new servitude and duty she has with Uncle En as a street vendor under his lead and protection" (21) At the beginning of each new stage of her life, she is given a new name. This is exactly what happened when Oryx started working at Crake, who would offer her a whole list of new names. Although this gesture can be seen as an opportunity to choose, in fact, it once again proves the control of men over women and their dependence.

The experience and trauma that she received in the adult underworld of the Internet did not make her tough and aggressive, but rather her character is wise, gentle, and caring. Although this experience is associated with men, she does not hold a grudge and does not blame them for her difficult and cruel childhood. On the contrary, she empathises with and justifies her abusers. For example, the man who brought her to the United States of America

and who kept her in the garage for so long, she finds her "kind man who was rescuing young girls" or when she cannot hold back her tears when she knows about the death of her "Uncle En".

She refused to say anything negative about the man; she appeared to be simple, truthful, and sincere. When asked how she felt about her captor, she said she would always be grateful to him. The prosecution failed to shake her testimony, and the guy got off scot-free, although he was ordered to send her to school immediately. She said she wanted to study child psychology. (Atwood, 151)

As Losada Sanchez mentioned, "She (Oryx) seems to have assumed, understood and accepted her past, present, and future, and she appears to be at peace with it, even when it comes to her mother selling her when she was a child." (19). These characteristics make her kind to men and hard experiences with men are not projected on her future relationships with them. As she does not express anger at men, she does not feel sorry for herself: "Oryx had neither pity for him nor self-pity. She was not unfeeling: on the contrary. But she refused to feel what he wanted her to feel. Was that the hook – that he could never get from her what the others had given him so freely? Was that her secret?" (Atwood, 113)

Margaret Atwood either wants to show a woman with a strong side who survived these problems and does not return to her past, or she is a woman who, after a tragic childhood, does not trust men and does not associate herself with them, although she has emotional and intimate relationships.

Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, has had a lasting impact on her daughter's attitudes towards gender inequality through her work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792). The eighteenth-century became the starting point for the feminist movement in England. As for Atwood, the feminist movement in the twentieth century has already gained popularity, "feminism rose to be one of the most important political and cultural movements in the West (and elsewhere)--securing far-reaching consequences for women's personhood--and then got beleaguered by complacency on the part of women by various forms of masculinist backlash" (Banerjee, 3) Both authors, Shelly and Atwood, touch upon the topic of gender inequality in different segments of the population. In the 19th century, education for girls was not so necessary, which is quite different from boys who completely enlightened themselves with their studies.

Education is the next point that could compare both novels. Through the life of Perdita and his brother Lionel, Shelley highlights the difference between female and male education. "Shelley emphasises the need for education as a key both to understanding and possible change in society through her narrator Lionel, whose intellectual awakening stimulates him to become a writer," (Sinatra, 103) Lionel would like to convert himself into a "father of all mankind" and tries to obligate Perdita to believe in the same ideology. Lionel, a child of the Lake District, is a well-educated man who spent a lot of time in Nature as a shepherd and later on as a thief. Lionel's aim in this life is to become a writer and he describes his visions as:

I was already well acquainted with what I may term the panorama of nature, the change of seasons, and the various appearances of heaven and earth. But I was at once startled and enchanted by my sudden extension of vision, when the curtain, which had been drawn before the intellectual world, was withdrawn, and I saw the universe, not only as it presented itself to my outward senses, but as it had appeared to the wisest among men. Poetry and its creations, philosophy and its researches and classifications, alike awoke the sleeping ideas in my mind, and gave me new ones. (Shelley, 27)

However, in the case of Perdita, it is a completely different situation. She is an uneducated woman whose knowledge depends on her brother. The relationship between them is unequal because Perdita's cognition of the world is limited and she is still behaving like a woman to whom love is the central preoccupation of life and perhaps the reason for death.

In the 20th century, education became the norm for all gender and social status. However, for example, for Oryx, since childhood, education was not a priority in her life. Oryx did not attend a school or receive an education like her peers. The only way to learn was while she was locked in the garage and Uncle En was teaching her English. Jimmy remembers this in his conversation with Oryx:

When asked why the garage was locked, she said it was so nobody bad could get in. When asked what she did in there, she said she studied English and watched TV. When asked how she felt about her captor, she said she would always be grateful to him. The prosecution failed to shake her testimony, and the guy got off scot-free, although he was ordered to send her to school immediately. She said she wanted to study child psychology. (Atwood, 151)

The next point that could compare women in the two novels is who belong to the middle and high-class society. In this case, the characters that could be compared are

Evadne and The Countess of Windsor from *The Last Man* and Sharon and Ramona from *Oryx and Crake*. The comparison will be based on their roles in their families and society.

Evadne, another woman who falls in love in *The Last Man*, is a Greek princess and a friend of The Countess of Windsor. Evadne's beautiful appearance makes her suffer the problems with men. Her love partner is Raymond, however another man, Adrian loves her, too. Raymond becomes the centre of her life and the main reason for her death. Evadne fights for him in Constantinople after discovering his death and finally dies pronouncing his name.

As Suparna Banerjee mentioned in her work "(Evadne) is also a victim of this gender-based disparity of opportunities. Of an ambitious and energetic nature, she first becomes a slave to her passion" (Banerjee, 36). Evadne represents a clear example of a woman whose life and death depend on one man. Her soldier personality rises during the suffering of Raymond's loss and she can end her life in the war.

However, Shelley focuses on the fact that the patriarchal roles are also followed in the royal families and the monarchy. The Countess of Windsor is a mother of Idris and a Royal woman who becomes a widow. She occupies the position of the future Queen of England acquiring the power of this country. She is shown from a negative point of view as cold, scheming, and haughty. Her strong personal ambitions to wish her daughter to marry Raymond destroy herself and her relations with Idris.

Shelley highlights the unequal roles of men and women inside the families where women's main preoccupations are love, emotions, and relation while men are shown as ambitious, purposeful warriors and soldiers. Each gender has a prototypic role in society followed by stereotypes.

In the case of Atwood's novel, Ramona could be compared with Evadne and The Countess of Windsor from *The Last Man*. If the main occupation of Evadne and The Countess of Windsor's lives are family and relationships with men, Ramona was accepted by men according to her attractiveness and the role within the family.

Ramona, who represents female sexuality in every action such as salad eating, conversation, or the way of dressing. She often uses words like "sweetheart" to refer to Jimmy, who is not at all used to hearing it because it was not the norm in his family.

"Ramona is presented as a figure of constructed feminine attractiveness, a desirable female object for male consumption" highlighted by Suparna Banerjee (Banerjee, 106). According to Jimmy's father, Sharon looks "not so hot" as his assistant, Ramona. Sharon was criticized by her husband for being anti-sexual and lacking in femininity. Ramona, on the contrary, due to her appearance, was popular in society because she was considered a real woman who possessed these characteristics. Despite such different opinions on women in society, both characters suffer from gender stereotypes. However, Sharon and Ramona had access to education and work. Society forced them not to deviate from gender roles. Sharon must return home and leave what she loves, the work, to care for her child while Ramona becomes the "object of sexualization for man consumption."

Jimmy's mother, Sharon, is a scientist, an activist of a secret subversive environmentalist group with which she decides to leave her home and abandon her child:

At one time Jimmy's mother had worked for OrganInc Farms. That was how his mother had met his father: they'd both worked at the same Compound, on the same project. His mother was a microbiologist: it had been her job to study the proteins of the bioforms unhealthy to pigeons, and to modify their receptors in such a way that they could not bond with the receptors on pigeon cells, or else to develop drugs that would act as blockers. (Atwood, 18)

Her personality is strong and independent. Shelly shows us, Sharon, as a person who is in a relationship but does not belong to or depend on her husband. Sharon is completely different from the female characters of *The Last Man* where no one takes into account their opinion and education. This makes a difference between *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*. Society assigns a different role to Sharon based on her gender, as to be a mother and take care of her child, whereas she chose her way and decided not to follow the laws of a patriarchal society. Evadne and The Countess of Windsor did have that choice.

According to this kind of character such as Sharon, the difference between two novels could be found. There is one aspect that makes Sharon not belong to the patriarchal society, this is motherhood in the novel *Oryx and Crake*. Leaving work and completely dedicating herself to the child made her unhappy and lost. As is commonly believed in this kind of society, a woman is born to take care of children and family, as we have seen in the example of *The Last Man*, Perdita or Evadne. However, Atwood shows us that this is not the case at

all and that the child will worry about his mother, who develops emotional problems due to her complete immersion of herself in home and family:

Snowman has a clear image of his mother – of Jimmy’s mother – sitting at the kitchen table, still in her bathrobe when he came home from school for his lunch /.../ she would be looking out the window and smoking. (Atwood, 19)

Sometimes Jimmy sees her mother happy and excited talking about cells and microbes:

Though on some days – days when she appeared brisk and purposeful, and aimed, and steady – she would want to fool around on the computer herself. He liked it when she did that – when she seemed to be enjoying herself. She was friendly then, too. She was like a real mother and he was like a real child. However, those moods of hers didn’t last long. (Atwood, 18)

In this case, Jimmy's mother is not suitable as a role model for a woman and will not be accepted by society. This aspect makes her special in this story and teaches that a mother should have her own space like work. According to it, this woman feels free and the emotional health of the child and mother will not suffer.

Sharon's case is completely different from the case of Idris, a mother of two children, in *The Last Man*. Idris is the wife of Lionel and mother of two children, Alfred and Evelyn. She is a representation of the traditional role of a wife and a mother whose family and domesticity have been mentally destroyed. The inability to save her children and finally the death of them cause psychical troubles. Idris's eldest son becomes ill with plague and she, without any doubts about the cold weather, goes out to look for a doctor for her son. She died as a heroic mother who saved her children from a serious illness. Shelley's representation of potential motherhood has the character of the self-destruction of women whose main role is inside the family. Idris' life is based on the limitation of the relationship. Her unique role in the patriarchal society is to be a good wife and mother. Suparna Banerjee stated:

Thus, Shelley links Idris's obsessive absorption into motherhood to the absence in her life of any other field of endeavour that can engage her physical and psychic energies. In Shelley's perception, then, woman-as lover and as mother, within the family or outside of it-are doomed to frustration, suffering and (self-)destruction. (38)

Idris, as one of the main female characters, lacks any type of activity and interest outside the family. Idris is identified with domesticity, motherhood, and nature. Her realisation as a woman in this kind of society is the interaction with men and her child care.

Idris and Sharon make a good comparison between two novels due to the representation of different kinds of motherhood. Both are mothers, but they transmit different attitudes toward their role in the family. Idris completely immersed herself in the family and gave all her free time to her family, children, and husband. Sharon tries to act as a mother to her child by playing a fake role for Jimmy. To appear more believable or real as a mother, she puts on makeup and dresses in pretty clothes. Sharon becomes unnatural and Jimmy feels it.

To sum up, Shelley and Atwood involved the female characters with different social positions to highlight the inequality and injustices of the future world. Their view of the role of women and men in the next centuries is followed by the rules of the patriarchal society where they still do not have a voice and power.

4. Nature in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*.

The Last Man written by Mary Shelley in 1826 was one of the first novels about the end of the world and all mankind. By the publication of this novel, Shelley was already recognizable in the literary community due to her early science fiction work *Frankenstein* in 1818.

The Last Man, appreciated only in the 20th century, was received rather coolly by the contemporaries of the writer. Mary was reproached for a sick imagination and bad taste. Critics found the novel full of stupid cruelties and called it another scary tale. This prejudice was large since the plot of epidemics and terrible cataclysms that lead to the death of mankind in 1826 was already well known to critics and the reading public.

In romantic art, the motive of the catastrophe was firmly intertwined with the motives of Nature and revolutionary changes. Previously, Nature was perceived as a benevolent ally of the revolution, in need of a general renewal, after which a new happy era would begin. Then in the days of Mary Shelley, this optimistic view of Nature was no longer so popular among writers. The connection between Nature and revolutionary transformations became

less obvious and moved into the realm of metaphors. Pictures of social utopias gave way to apocalyptic pictures of the collapse of empires, and the dying of civilizations. Nature has ceased to be a haven for man and has become hostile to them. The motive of the catastrophe took on special significance.

Also, due to the gothic motive of the disaster, a parallel between the personal life of the writer at the time of the publication of the novel can be drawn. *The Last Man* was written after the death of her beloved husband Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1822 and children, and also a close friend Lord Byron in 1824. This aspect greatly influenced the development of the storyline of the novel.

Margaret Atwood, one of the greatest contemporary writers in North America, is concerned about the future of the world. Reflections on the future fate of mankind according to the development of negative trends in the socio-technological life of the country and in the world in general.

The novel by *Oryx and Crake* depicts the distant future of the United States, in which a tough totalitarian regime is established. The power belongs to large financial corporations engaged in genetic experiments on animals and people, destroying Nature for the sake of super-profits and distributing food and medicine harmful to people. The brilliant scientist Crake invents a new breed of the harmonious natural man and a virus that destroys the population of modern people. Thus, he makes a huge negative contribution to Nature with the help of new technology. The novel has dystopian features and is built as a story about the events of the only surviving person - Crake's friend Jimmy, to whom Crake entrusted the care of new people and their adaptation to the world. The narrative is a lyrical story about a person's life in a destroyed world after a technological disaster.

In this chapter, the natural elements in both novels, *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*, will be analysed. Both novels will be compared according to the natural aspects such as Sublime, Plague and Technology, and the natural world after the catastrophes. According to Drakshayini and Farook, Sublime is

high quality and causes great admiration, it also has great beauty and excellence. The literary concept of sublime came into the limelight during the Eighteenth Century. This idea was taken up by Immanuel Kant and the Romantic Poets including especially William Wordsworth. In the aspect of aesthetic notion, sublime is a striking of thought and emotion. The writers like Longinus, Boileau and Edmund Burke used sublime in their works. (1)

Sublime became one of the main elements of Nature in novels by Shelley and Atwood. As Rodríguez mentioned in her work "a transition from the beautiful to the sublime becomes obvious" (24) This quote could be applied for both dystopian novels. Both novels share the use of the sublime in Nature.

Mary Shelley deeply appreciated Nature, so in her novel all the characters respect and revere it. Before the catastrophe, in the form of the plague, struck the world, the description of Nature was positive. Nature was a source of solace, solitude and inspiration for the characters: "Assuredly a most benignant power built up the majestic fabric we inhabit ... Why should our dwelling place be so lovely, and why should the instincts of nature minister pleasurable sensations?" (Shelley, 151)

"the season had decked the forest trees with leaves, and its paths with a thousand flowers."(Shelley, 294)

Also, Nature, in this case, plays the role of a house, a temple for people. It became a place where they could be saved from the plague. "gathered around like the labyrinthine columns of a vast temple; it was impossible not to receive pleasure from the sight of these things." (Shelley, 324) Since a terrible catastrophe, Lionel and his family had to run away from different places, all the natural elements surrounding him seemed unusual. For example, he described the Alps and the beauty of the Alps. "And, as if the world's wonders were never to be exhausted, their vast immensities, their jagged crags, and roseate painting, appeared again in the lake below. (Atwood, 236)

While the existence of the plague in the world became clear to the whole society, the characters and description of Nature began to change. "Nature, our mother, and our friend, had turned on us a brow of menace." (Shelley, 148) Nature is no longer on the side of humanity. The main element of the sublime in Shelley's novel is the plague and the apocalypse. The plague that killed all life on Earth has become the enemy of mankind and betrays death through work. As Rodríguez said "the Earth in the story has become a purely sublime setting: it is no longer a safe place to live, but an insecure land full of uncertainties that invalidate the human capacity of reasoning" (Rodríguez, 25)

It also could be mentioned that Mary Shelley follows the existing tradition. One of the varieties of the catastrophe motive in the era of Romanticism is precisely the motive of illness and an epidemic that threatens humanity. It should be noted that supporters of revolutionary changes (for example, Mary Wollstonecraft) often compared the revolution

with a disease of society caused by its wrong structure. This disease, dangerous but inevitable, had to be overcome in order for renewal to be possible. The authors of the era of Romanticism are losing optimism - for them, epidemics become part of catastrophes and cataclysms that threaten doomed humanity. Thus, the plague or any other disease brings fear, death, and uncertainty to the world. Nature is no longer a safe place to exist and does not protect people from death.

In the novel *The Last Man*, the plague is the main element of Nature, including sublime. In the second novel, *Oryx and Crake*, sublime is a new technology that has destroyed all humanity. As Bhalla, Bhangu and Singh stated "Crakes utopian fantasies will no doubt be temporarily beneficial for mankind in providing it more comfort and faster development, but ironically the natural world ultimately becomes more and more unpredictable" (Bhalla, Bhangu, Singh, 27)

Also, if we draw a parallel between the two novels, we can see that in Shelley's novel there is a transition from describing Nature as important and meaningful to unsafe and wild space. However, this transition is not part of Atwood's novel. There is no representation of Nature as beauty, but the unbelief of Nature is the reality in *Oryx and Crake*. Here Nature is not directly connected with people and their life. It doesn't have philosophical meaning for them. Nature becomes just the source of the development of technology.

Margaret Atwood carefully traces the formation of the hero's personality, recreating the world of the future in which he lives. Several coastal towns were swept off the face of the earth as a result of a sharp rise in the seabed and a tsunami that occurred due to a volcanic eruption in the Canary Islands. The climate has changed dramatically - during the day it is very hot, and every day in the afternoon - strong thunderstorms. Dry vineyards, dry lakes, and scorched Everglades have been the result of climate change. Meat has long been artificially modified. New York has become New New York. Boston, along with Harvard, sank, and went underwater. The country is rocked by wars over a new modified coffee that can be harvested by machines, which has bankrupted the old coffee growers. These wars include several states, the peasants are fighting against government troops. Surveillance system. People cannot move freely around the country. A new type of execution has appeared - a person is infected with a virus, and it simply dissolves. This characteristic of the world is part of the protagonist's past before the main catastrophe of mankind occurred.

But everyone's parents moaned on about stuff like that. Remember when you could drive anywhere? Remember when everyone lived in the pleeblands? Remember when you could fly anywhere in the world,

without fear? Remember hamburger chains, always real beef, remember hot-dog stands? Remember before New York was New New York? Remember when voting mattered? It was all standard lunchtime hand-puppet stuff. Oh it was all so great once. Boohoo. Now I'm going into the Twinkies package. No sex tonight! (Atwood, 36)

According to the introduction of the external world of the characters from their childhood, the association between Nature and man is found. Nature is negatively affected by man. Nature is no longer an emotional source for man, but rather it has become the subject of exploitation for the new industry of science. There is no longer a respect for Nature, for example in *The Last Man*, where Nature has a strong influence on the inner world of man. In the same way, Nature is considered the beginning of all living things on Earth, therefore man owes everything to Nature.

Philosophers have called man a microcosm of nature, and find a reflection in the internal mind for all this machinery visibly at work around us (...) What a sea is the tide of passion, whose fountains are in our own nature! Our virtues are the quick-sands, which shew themselves at calm and low water; but let the waves arise and the winds buffet them, and the poor devil whose hope was in their durability, finds them sink from under him. The fashions of the world, its exigencies, educations and pursuits, are winds to drive our wills, like clouds all one way; but let a thunderstorm arise in the shape of love, hate, or ambition, and the rack goes backward, stemming the opposing air in triumph. (Shelley, 151)

In Shelley's novel, the natural elements surrounding the main characters carry a certain meaning in their lives and they are completely dependent on them. In *Oryx and Crake*, the beginning of all life is a technology that displaces Nature from human life. Showing such a special relationship with Nature, Atwood raises the issue of climate, pollution, and urbanisation.

However, after the catastrophic event in *Oryx and Crake*, Nature becomes more powerful and gradually takes control over man. The beginning of the novel is a future where Jimmy is left all alone and is the only survivor on Earth. At this stage, Nature becomes a danger to Jimmy, from the glare of the sun to insects and germs.

Noon is the worst, with its glare and humidity. At about eleven o'clock Snowman retreats back into the forest, out of sight of the sea altogether, because the evil rays bounce off the water and get at him even if he's protected from the sky, and then he reddens and blisters. What he could really use is a tube of heavy-duty sunblock, supposing he could ever find one. (Atwood,21)

"All around him are noises: the slurping of the waves, insect chirpings and whirrings, bird whistles, amphibious croaks, the rustling of leaves." (Atwood,61)

However, if in *The Last Man* the end of all human beings was destroyed by "ecological apocalypse" (González Rodríguez, 37) represented as plague, in the case of *Oryx and Crake*, the danger of all living beings and Nature on Earth is completely related with the new technology industry and revolutionary progress. Bhalla, Bhangu and Singh stated "The consequence of the natural world's transformation and the perilous environmental anomalies resulting from Crakes utopian biotechnological experiments is extremely disastrous." (26)

In this case, the evolution of technology and science can be compared to the plague from *The Last Man*. Technology and science play an important role in the destruction of the world in both novels.

After a technological disaster, Nature takes over and sets its own rules in abandoned cities and houses. Plants hide traces of human presence in cities and dwellings. "The whole world is now one vast uncontrolled experiment – the way it always was, Crake would have said – and the doctrine of unintended consequences is in full spate." (Atwood,136)

The Last Man contains the sublime element such as plague and in the case of the novel by Atwood, this aspect is represented by technology. The function of these elements is to represent Nature's superiority toward humans in the case of Shelley's novels while Atwood's main point is "ecological contamination" (Bhalla, Bhangu, Singh, 28) provoked by science and industry that affect and transform Nature.

One more difference could be found between the two novels which is the role of Nature represented in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*. In the first novel, before the global catastrophe, Nature plays a meaningful role for the characters. Nature is a safe place that is emotionally connected with people. Even during the apocalypse, the characters fully associate themselves with Nature as a temple that can no longer protect and eventually become wild and free. As for Atwood's novel, Nature has nothing to do with people. She lost her power and influence over them. Allison Dunlap stated the term for the relation between Nature and man for the novel *Oryx and Crake* and called it "human-over-nature hierarchy" (Dunlap, 2) This term is referred to the domination of man over Nature and "a world where hierarchical distinctions have been erased by technologies that present all forms of life—human or otherwise—as equally viable entertainment options."(Dunlap, 5). The society is less spiritual and emotionally connected to Nature but has a strong belief in science. "I thought you didn't believe in God," said Jimmy. "I don't believe in Nature either," said Crake. "Or not with a capital N." (Atwood, 123)

5. Politics in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*

"We were all equal now; but near at hand was equality still more leveling, a state where beauty and strength, and wisdom, would be as vain as riches and birth." (Shelley, 252)

The novel *The Last Man*, like the novel *Oryx and Crake*, is a Romantic novel in its essence. It contains severe criticism of many motives and concepts such as politics and revolutions. This controversy is an important feature of these novels and occurs at many levels of the text.

The novel by Shelley, *The Last Man*, takes place in England in the twenty-first century. This period is characterized by the collapse of the Monarchy and the transition of England to the Republic but also has aristocratic and hierarchical characteristics. The reason for this transaction was the working class who wanted to get their share of power and started uprisings. This novel is full of power, criticism, and conflicts between different political parties.

The political and historical context of *The Last Man* is closely linked to Shelley's biography. The military and political conflicts of the nineteenth century are present in the fictional twenty-first century. In the novel, political and revolutionary changes can be seen such as the liberation of Greece, Constantinople being under siege by Christian armies, and Ottoman rule coming to an end in Europe. Instead of depicting the new political and social structures of society, Shelley uses contemporary political troubles of England that are shown extremely.

Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* was written in the twenty-first century which is characterized as a century of advancement in science and technology. The field of electronic innovation has seen consequences such as the decline in the importance of the humanities. Atwood is not only a writer but also an eco-activist fighting for the protection of the environment and the arts as well. She expresses her opinion on the future risks associated with technology and the declining importance of the humanities. This theme is one of the

most important not only in *Oryx and Crake* but also in her other works. *Oryx and Crake* represent where Corporations can lead and their impact on politics and society as well as the scientific research that has created an environment in which commodification is increasing.

In the novel of the Canadian writer, the opposition of tops and bottoms was arranged according to the criteria. In a privileged position, it turns out to be employees of corporations, and scientists living in comfort and relative safety in protected settlements, interconnected by sterile corridors to avoid any connection with the outside world. The latter is represented by cities whose population vegetates in filth and poverty.

The Last Man presents various options for a social structure: the hereditary monarchy represented by Adrian, the republican rule of Raymond who is running for election as Lord Protector with massive citizen support but ultimately losing, the democratic rule of Ryland, anarchy which is embodied by marauders from America and Ireland. The democracy renounces aristocratic legal privileges but remains with an ideology of higher orders. Through the character of Raylan, you can see all the shortcomings and negative sides of democracy. He directed all his strength to the solution of the problem in Greece, while the other problems of England were not visible to him. Although when the island became ruined and remote after the plague, his idea of the strength of England and its superiority subsided and he retired. In such a difficult situation for the country, Ryland did not show himself as a leader.

"Death and disease level all men. I neither pretend to protect nor govern an hospital - such will England quickly become. " (Shelley, 174)

"Every man for himself! the devil take the protectorship, say I, if it expose me to danger"(Shelley, 173)

When the Plague reached different parts of the world and England filled up with immigrants and foreigners trying to escape from the virus, Ryland showed his true leadership.

The monarchy is represented through the aristocracy where ambition, pride, and concerns for the lower level of the population are the main factors. The leader of the English monarchy is Adrian whose principles are social equality and anti-violence. His army is mixed with Irish, Scots, and Americans who are colonised. Also, He can see and recognize

foreigners as other humans that are equal to us. It makes him different from democracy and its leader, Ryland. Adrian recognizes the Turks as human.

"The Turks are men; each fibre, each limb is as feeling as our own, and every spasm, be it mental or bodily, is as truly felt in a Turk's heart or brain, as in a Greek's." (Shelley, 347)

However, this Republican government is failing. The reasons were the inconsistency of the parliament and the passion for power and ambitions of the rules. Moreover, England considers itself an isolated nation that is safe from the plague.

In *The Last Man*, the motive of the catastrophe is firmly intertwined with the motives of Nature and revolutionary changes. The causes of the pandemic are not directly indicated. However, it can be assumed that the main cause is external. It is symbolic revenge East for the desire of the West to finally subjugate it. As Banerjee noted: "Originating in the East and gradually destroying the world, wrecking families, cities, and nations, it is a symbolic nemesis visited upon the colonising West, which socio-politically defines itself by annexing and dominating its racial/geopolitical "Others""(Banerjee, 9) All the political parties and their leaders have the idea of superiority and safe of England "safe because superior" (Banerjee, 49) They see England as a safe place from the Plague and also with "well-governed metropolis" in the case of London.

We talked of ravages made last year by pestilence in every quarter of the world; and of the dreadful consequences of a second visitation. We discussed the best means of preventing infection, and of preserving health and activity in a large city thus afflicted - London, for instance..."We are all dreaming this morning,"said Ryland, "it is as wise to discuss the probability of a visitation of the plague in our well-governed metropolis, as to calculate the centuries which must escape before we can grow pine-apples here in the open air" (Shelley, 341)

Also, it shows the motifs of "political egotism" (Gagliardi, 108) with a single leader. An ironic rethinking of this concept is embodied in the motif of a deadly disease, equalizing all people in catastrophe. The plague is a version of the desire to spread equality throughout the world. Also, it could be seen as a "symbolic revenge"(Banerjee, 9) in the case of conflict between East and West and political ambitions. The spread of the Plague started when the army of England started to conquer the Turks in Greece. England, in the face of Raymond, imagines this conquest as the most important and powerful event all around the world.

Raymond was inspired by the intense sensation of recovered health; he felt that in being general of the Athenians, he filled a post worthy of his ambition; and, in his hope of Constantinople, he counted on an event

which would be as a landmark in the waste of ages, an exploit unequalled in the annals of man; when a city of grand historic association, the beauty of whose site was the wonder of the world, which for many hundred years had been the stronghold of the Moslems, should be rescued from slavery and barbarism, and restored to a people illustrious for genius, civilisation, and a spirit of liberty (Shelley, 128)

However, the Plague suspends the plans of the English political leaders. "The Plague is much more powerful and stronger than personal will or national leadership." (Gagliardi, 71)

Oryx and Crake, the novel by Atwood, characterises a possible future world where huge corporations have control over the citizens. The state takes control of an organisation whose name is CorpSeCorps leaving the people with little protection and assistance. As this political form of rule is not recognizable yet by the society and it doesn't have any name, Appleton names this political regime as a "Corp(Se)ocracy." (Appleton, 64)

As she mentioned in her work levelling society, the Plague shows Atwood's conviction that the only way to deconstruct social and national differences is by universal destruction. "Their job is not only to protect the corporations and compounds from sabotage from "other companies, other countries, various factions and plotters" but to also maintain their unfair share of the marketplace" (Appleton, 69)

The situation of absolute concentration of power in the hands of corporations, concerned only with making a profit, finds its extreme embodiment in the image of CorpSeCorps. Without coming into conflict with other corporations and not establishing the obvious totalitarian rule, wanting to look clean, the power structures of the CorpSeCorp use non-democratic methods to ensure commercial efficiency. Genetically modified foods, medicines, and beauty services, as well as the death market, are helping corporate capital grow.

"The best diseases, from a business point of view," said Crake, "would be those that cause lingering illnesses. Ideally – that is, for maximum profit – the patient should either get well or die just before all of his or her money runs out. It's a fine calculation." (Atwood, 126)

Society is divided into two strata of the population where the Compounds occupy the highest rung while the pleeblands belong to the lowest stratum of the society. "The wealthy people in the heavily monitored company towns called Compounds are contrasted with the people living in the dilapidated, allegedly dangerous pleeblands" (Venäläinen, 9)

The people of the second layer live with an abundance of illegal Compound products but without medicines and healthy livelihoods. They are usually shunned by Compounds who are given a distorted impression of them. The purpose of corporations is to preserve their interests and medical innovations. They fear that the pleeblands will inflict external damage on them or commit bioterrorism against them:

Despite the fingerprint identity cards now carried by everyone, public security in the pleeblands was leaky: people were cruising around in those places who could forge anything and who might be anybody, not to mention the loose change – the addicts, the muggers, the paupers, the crazies. (Atwood, 17)

This is how Jimmy describes the visual features and differences of the people from the Pleeblands:

The pleebland inhabitants didn't look like the mental deficient the Compounders were fond of depicting, or most of them didn't. After a while Jimmy began to relax, enjoy the experience. There was so much to see – so much being hawked, so much being offered. Neon slogans, billboards, ads everywhere. And there were real tramps, real beggar women, just as in old DVD musicals: Jimmy kept expecting them to kick up their battered bootsoles, break into song. Real musicians on the street corners, real bands of street urchins. Asymmetries, deformities: the faces here were a far cry from the regularity of the Compounds. There were even bad teeth. He was gawking. (Atwood, 169)

However, Jimmy and Crake, after visiting outside the complex, realise that these ideas about the education and the life of pleebland are completely distorted.

An important socio-economic difference between Compounds and Pleeblands is education. The upper-class study at colleges where financial and profitable business ideas are considered and discussed. These skills help people sell their products to companies like HelthWyzer, RejoovenEsense, and OrganInc Farms. Their products make consumers thinner, balder, hairier, blacker or lighter, and so on.

Cosmetic creams, workout equipment, Joltbars to build your muscle-scape into a breathtaking marvel of sculpted granite. Pills to make you fatter, thinner, hairier, balder, whiter, browner, blacker, yellower, sexier, and happier. It was his task to describe and extol, to present the vision of what – oh, so easily! – could come to be. (Atwood, 147)

The main character, Jimmy or Snowman was born and grew up in Compounds. In his memoirs before the disaster, life appears outwardly prosperous and protected, its integrity is guarded by a fence with searchlights and roadblocks. The character's family lives in a frame house with antique furniture, a swimming pool, and a gym. The streets are peaceful, controlled by night patrols and curfews, protecting them from the invasion of violence and

drugs in his childhood. This life is the Compounds reminds little Jimmy the life of aristocrats such as dukes and kings of the Middle Ages :

Long ago, in the days of knights and dragons, the kings and dukes had lived in castles, with high walls and drawbridges and slots on the ramparts so you could pour hot pitch on your enemies, said Jimmy's father, and the Compounds were the same idea. Castles were for keeping you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and for keeping everybody else outside. (Atwood, 18)

However, as Jimmy grows up, he realises that this privileged existence is a kind of prison, only comfortably furnished:

According to Jimmy's mother their phones and e-mail were bugged, and the sturdy, laconic HelthWyzer housecleaners that came twice a week – always in pairs – were spies. Jimmy's father said she was getting paranoid, and anyway they had nothing to hide, so why worry about it? (Atwood, 30)

This seemingly unsophisticated description of the events of private life, seen through the eyes of a child, reflects the extreme inhumanity of a dystopian society that destroys the destinies of individuals.

Propaganda, ideological processing of the consciousness of the individual, aimed at his compulsion, in Atwood's novel at times becomes relatively mild, but no less dangerous, moving closer to advertising and PR technologies to ensure the financial benefits of corporations. In particular, the artificially cultivated interest in health and beauty leads to the fact that people become victims of medicines and preparations containing viruses of those incurable diseases from which the pills are supposedly designed to help.

In their arsenal, rigged unfortunate cases for those who intend to go against the authority of the CorpSeCorps, and the forcible collection of debts, up to the actual transformation of people into slaves, and the concealment of corpses. For total control over all members of society without exception, the most high-tech methods are used. For example, corporations encourage the registration of people's biometric data for their tracking, and developments in the field of nanotechnology are widely attracted. As Venäläinen stated in the work:

"However, The CorpSeCorps subjugating the people to their control by appealing to the fear of blatant and extreme violence implies that this poweris predominant in the modern society of Oryx and Crake" (Venäläinen, 10)

Another important element of the society in Atwood's novel is freedom. Freedom is granted to citizens through restrictions and rigid laws. Every time law limitation and control

over people is improved due to innovations in technology. Under his control, CorpSeCorp represents an invasion of privacy. They keep records about people from physical and emotional states to locations. In *Oryx and Crake*, only one character felt herself "like a prisoner " who was able to escape from this political regime. This was the mother of Jimmy, Sharon. "Jimmy's mother demonstrates bravery by disregarding the worldview imposed by the government, which eventually leads to her execution, and it suggests that in a society where life is highly valued, it can become prone to extortion. Therefore, dying for one's values is the ultimate act of resistance." according to Appleton (Venäläinen, 12)

To conclude, both writers use the topic of politics to criticise contemporary political regimes. In the case of *The Last Man*, the government is divided into different parties with their leaders. *Oryx and Crake* have only one power of controlling society. There is no one example of election rather than in Shelley's work, citizens are free to select the Lord-Protector. The point of similarity is the symbol of the division of society. *The Last Man* represents the division between West and East while in *Oryx and Crake* the society is divided between Compounds and Pleeblands. The last difference is the plague and the function of this virus around politics. The spread of the virus, in the case of *The Last Man*, could be associated with the beginning of the West's domination over the East. In *Oryx and Crake*, the plague is "human engineered" virus which destroyed the human being during the time of the top of technological innovation.(Banerjee, 49)

6. Conclusion

As in the aim and introduction was mentioned, throughout this work , the comparative analysis will be provided between two dystopian novels written by female writers, nineteenth-century novel *The Last Man* by Mary Shelley and twenty-first-century novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. The differences and similarities in terms of Gender, Nature and Politics were founded.

The first element that was analysed in both novels is Gender. The concept of women's rights and their role in society has been an important social topic. This element played an important role in writing both novels. The similarities that were found in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake* according to gender are patriarchal division of societies and the lifestyle of women from the middle class. The differences are motherhood and low class women. Shelley and Atwood created the worlds with the patriarchal division of society. While the

role of women is concentrated on the family, children and their happiness, men control and govern the world. According to these social rules, men feel superior to women.

The next similarity is the middle and high class women, the Countess of Windsor, Evadne from *The Last Man* and Ramona from *Oryx and Crake*. Evadne is a stereotypical girl with beautiful appearance that suffers the problems with men. However, the main point of her life becomes love. Love also is the reason of Evadnes death. The next female character is the Countess of Windsor whose ambitions concentrate on the future marriage of her daughter, Idris. Finally, Ramona, female character in *Oryx and Crake*, represents female sexuality, attractiveness and femininity. She is a standard of women that everybody of us should attempt to be. Through these characters, Shelle and Atwood show the inequality between the gender roles. If the Countess of Windsor and Evadne occupy themselves thinking about marriage and love, so Perdita's goal is to be beautiful and attractive.

According to the lower class, Perdita and Oryx were analysed. Two women have one thing in common, they belong to the poor and lower class of society. Perdita was grown up on the street while Oryx was sold by her mother. However, their role in society and their characters are different. If the meaning of Perdita's life is love, family and husband, then Oryx, despite all her difficult relationships with men, does not put intimate and personal life at the centre. Perdita follows the traditional gender role and accepts the patriarchal society that surrounds her. Oryx is far away from the standard role of women. She is independent in the case of mind and free. Oryx doesn't associate herself with family, love and man. That is the main difference between Perdita and Oryx.

The next difference is motherhood. In the case of Idris and Sharon, characters representing motherhood have different roles in society. Idris, wife of Lionel, represents the traditional role of motherhood in the family and society. Trying to be a good wife and mother, she goes through the physical and mental problems related to the loss of her child. Her main concern in life is to think, look after and serve her family while inflicting harm on herself. While Sharon, just like Idris is a mother, plays a very different role in society. She is not an example of a good mother and society does not approve of her and her action which she consulted in relation to her family. In the end, Sharon chose herself and her beliefs over her family and husband.

The second section is related to Nature. This element plays an important role in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake* and could be considered as one of the main characters. The differences that were found between two novels are the representation and the meaning of Nature, and the description of it. The similarities were not found according to Nature.

First of all, due to different historical context, Nature was represented in different ways. Shelley's characters associate life, art and human destiny to the natural elements that are surrounding them. They closely associated themselves with Nature. It could be said that Nature has not only physical meaning but also philosophical. This is the only place where they find themselves, peace, and the meaning of life. Nature is the unique place where they could be safe. While, Atwoods world has lost its meaning and no longer sees their importance in it. They find no inspiration and solitude there. The characters have replaced the importance of Nature with the importance of developing technology. Most of the time they spend at home, in work or in the laboratories. The characters don't have a direct connection with landscape and Nature at all. Nature and natural elements become a source of energy and element for the future development of science. It is important to mention the power of Nature. If at the beginning of Atwood's novel, Nature doesn't have control and respect over society, after the catastrophe, Nature gets it and shows its true power over humanity. Whereas in Shelley's novel, Nature remains a strong source even when people lose faith in it and its safety. Also, *The Last Man* is full of descriptions of different landscapes while *Oryx and Crake* contains few of them.

The third section is talking about Politics. The similarities that were found are the aim of using this topic, the leaders of political parties, and the division of society. The differences are the political regimes. The first similarity that was found is the importance of using the topic of politics. Both writers, Shelley and Atwood, paid a lot of attention to the actual regimes of their centuries. They introduced and described this topic due to the willingness to criticise and show the negative impact on society. Also, it is important to mention the leaders of each political party. The leaders are men in *The Last Man* and *Oryx and Crake*. It was impossible to find any women related to power and Politics. However, this characteristic is related to the section of Gender, we thought that it is to mention it here too due to the lack of women representation of power. In the first section, we have mentioned the Countess of Windsor who is a Royal woman and occupies the position of future Queen of England. However, it is incomparable to her power and the power of male leaders.

The next point is the division of society. The representation of West and East was found in *The Last Man* such a segregation of people to Compounds or Pleeblands in *Oryx and Crake*. In each novel, there is a division of people according to high and low social class. This division is based on the characteristics such as money, education, attractiveness and power. The difference between Shelley's and Atwood's novel is political regimes. The society of *The Last Man* is divided into two parties, while the control over society in the *Oryx and Crake* is in the hands of the only one organisation. Shelley's novel represents political rules as the hereditary monarchy, the republican rule, the democratic rule, anarchy. Atwood's novel belongs to the unique way of ruling which is committed by CorpSeCorps.

Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood wrote dystopian novels set in the twenty-first century. Two writers touched on such important topics as gender, nature and politics. In Shelley's case, due to her courage and frankness at the time of writing, her novels gained immense popularity with readers and critics. Compared to Atwood, Shelley was one of the first to bring the topic of gender into literature. Thus, she became one of the pioneers in this field, of course, after her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft and her revolutionary works.

In Atwood's case, her novel, set in the near future, was written in the twenty-first century. That is, prior to the writing of *Oryx and Crake*, other dystopian novels had already been published. However, Atwood's contribution to world literature is very valuable. For example, the novel *Oryx and Crake* is important because it not only discourses various topics of society, but also the fact that the near future is very similar to what our present is moving towards. It is possible to draw a parallel between the recent world event, the virus that took over the whole world and the virus invented by Atwood, which destroyed a huge number of people in the novel.

The Last Man and *Oryx and Crake* impress readers so much that you start to wonder about the likely future that awaits us. The most important thought that comes to mind when reading these dystopian novels is that everything is in the hands of people. Our future depends on ourselves and our interactions with nature and new technologies.

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