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*The Representation of the Societal Collapse in Jack
London's "The Scarlet Plague"*

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for a **Master's degree in Literature and
Civilization** at the University of Bejaia.

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The Researchers

Dedications

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Dedications

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Abstract:

This study examines the representation of societal collapse in a Dystopian novel written by American author, Jack London, by the title *The Scarlet Plague*. The research was conducted through the analysis of this novel, mainly the key concepts, themes, characters, and the literary and historical context. The main purpose of this study was to reveal the reflect of the core issues in the novel on nowadays concerns through highlighting the societal collapse in Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague*. In order to do so, three main theories were employed during the analysis; Dystopia, Ecocriticism, and psychoanalysis theories. The study highlights vulnerabilities and consequences of a highly contagious and lethal virus. Additionally, it emphasize the fragility of the interconnected world and the potential mental degradation, as well as the importance of preserving knowledge and values.

Keywords: Dystopia, Ecocriticism, London, Post-apocalyptic Literature, Psychoanalysis, Pandemic, Societal Collapse ,*The Scarlet Plague*, Utopia

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Definition of terms /key concepts:

- **Dystopia:** According to the definition given by Chris Baddick in the Oxford Dictionary of literary terms (ed.04) “A modern term invented as the opposite of utopia, and applied to any alarmingly unpleasant imaginary world, usually of the projected future. The term is also applied to fictional works depicting such worlds “
- **Ecocriticism:** It is an interdisciplinary study of literature, culture, and the environment that examines how literary texts depict the global climate change catastrophe and how nature is treated.
- **Utopia:** The literal meaning of utopia is “no place and nowhere”. A utopia is a group or civilization with very desirable or flawless characteristics, everything in it is perfect: the laws, politics, and morals. It is a popular literary topic, particularly in futuristic fiction and science fiction. In addition to this, it is the opposite of dystopia.
- **Post-apocalyptic literature:** Post-apocalyptic literature simply refers to a type of literature, in which an apocalypse happens. This is closely related to dystopia. An apocalypse is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as either a “destruction or end of the world” or “A very serious event resulting in great destruction and change”. However, apocalyptic literature focuses on life after a certain pandemic or cataclysm happened.
- **Psychoanalysis:** founded by Freud, this theory is defined as being a theory of personality organization and the way a person develops, meaning his/her dynamics. This theory is widely used to treat psychopathology.

- **Societal Collapse:** Like it is portrayed in the novel the scarlet plague by Jack London, it is when a society faces a downfall in every aspect. As defined by science daily “Societal collapse usually refers to the fall or disintegration of human societies often along with their life support systems”.
- **Pandemic:** according to *Merriam-Webster*, an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents) and typically affects a significant proportion of the population: pandemic outbreak of a disease, according to *Merriam-Webster* Thesaurus, an occurrence in which a disease spreads very quickly and affects a large number of people over a wide area or throughout the world.

**General Introduction: The Scarlet
Plague; Contemporary Reflections**

It was exactly as if the world has ceased, been blotted out, for sixty- years that world had no longer existed for me, knew there must be such places as New York, Europe, Asia, and Africa but not one word has been heard of them, with the coming of The Scarlet Plague, the world fell apart ,absolutely, irretrievably, ten thousand years of culture and civilization passed in a twinkle of an eye, lapsed like foam. (London Jack 90)

The fragility of civilization has been a recurring theme in human history, and this subject has been explored in many literary works. Dystopian literature, in particular, presents a bleak and catastrophic vision of the future, where the collapse of society is a common theme. Even if little importance is given to post-apocalyptic and dystopian literature because they are only fiction, they still carry a heavy message about the reality in which we live. Every action that a human makes has a direct impact on humanity including its civilization, the society, and the environment. This can be confirmed by the following passage “By situating their stories in the future, they have been drafting realistic images of the contemporary world and consequences that might eventuate from our past, present, or future actions” (ÖZTÜRK and Suljic, 2013).

The choice of the famous dystopian novel The Scarlet Plague by Jack London is of no coincidence. There is a frightening resemblance and similarity between the novel’s story with the current situation in which we are living and lived before. The Scarlet Plague is a perfect description, reflection, and somehow a prediction, of all of the Ebola Fever of 2013, the Spanish Flu of 1918- 1920, and the Corona virus of 2019. The pandemic left severe

consequences, especially, on the Chinese and American societies but also the likes of the Algerian, French, German, and Italian societies.

Jack London's portrayal of the collapse of society and even humanity with all its aspects relate to real-world social issues. The choice of the term "Societal" instead of "social" is purposeful as the former means "about large social groups or their activities, customs, etc." whereas social means relating to the life welfare and relations of human beings in the community" both definitions were suggested by *Webster's Dictionary*.

The novel's representation of societal breakdown/downfall, human nature, the struggle for survival, and the impact of disease on the environment and society reflects perfectly what is happening nowadays. According to Nelson, Covid-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities of society and how one can use that to make positive changes (2020). That is why, through the analysis of *The Scarlet Plague*, more exposure will be shed on the fragility of civilization can be reached, and how this latter can be threatened by various factors.

Our research will contribute by its thorough exploration of themes that is relevant to both the public and the academic community. The study of dystopian literature and societal collapse is becoming increasingly important as we continue to face global challenges such as climate change, political instability, and public health crises. Our research on Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague* contributes to this field, as it is a lesser-known work of dystopian fiction that has not received as much critical attention as other works in the genre. This research has the potential to deepen our understanding of dystopian literature and its relevance to contemporary issues and to inform broader discussions about the fragility of civilization. Additionally, our research has significant academic value, as it will contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation about dystopian literature and the representation of societal collapse. Our use of literary theory and analysis will provide a nuanced and in-depth examination of

The Scarlet Plague, making a valuable assistance to the field of literary studies. The research has the potential to engage both the public and the academic community, as it offers insights into a timely and pressing theme, as well as contributing to ongoing scholarly discussions. Through this research, a better understanding of the decline of civilization and how it can be threatened by various factors will be reached.

Focusing on Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague*, this research will aim at the following:

- Explore the representation of societal collapse in Jack London's novel and its relevance to contemporary society.
- Analyze how London portrays the collapse of society and how it relates to real-world societal issues.
- Examine the themes of societal breakdown, human nature, the struggle for survival, and the impact of disease and the environment on society.
- Provide insights into how this work of literature reflects and analyzes the concerns of its time, as well as how it speaks to our current global challenges.

As fundamental for driving our Exploration. Our research will reach its purpose importance resulting from this research will be to seek an accurate answer to the questions below

- How does *The Scarlet Plague* depict the collapse of civilization, and what are the main causes of this collapse according to the novel?
- How does the character of Professor James Howard Smith embody the theme of civilization decline in *The Scarlet Plague* and what is the significance of his role in the novel?

- How does *The Scarlet Plague* reflect or comment on contemporary concerns about civilization decline?

To focus on specific aspects of the text, such as its language, structure, themes, and cultural background, three literary theories significantly appropriate the content of the novel. Taking into account the fact that the novel is a post-Apocalyptic novel, the first theory that is highly relevant in *The Scarlet Plague* would be [Dystopia](#), as the novel exhibits several elements of the dystopian theory, including the loss of civilization, oppressive environment, regression of humanity. the novel portrays a post-apocalyptic world where civilization has collapsed and survival is a constant struggle as well as a scarcity of resources, and even though surveillance and control are not explicitly depicted in the novel the oppressive environment and power struggles hint at some forms of control, all of that and more serve as a cautionary tale about the fragility of human civilization and the potential dystopian outcomes that may arise. The theory of [Ecocriticism](#) also would be significantly applicable to *The Scarlet Plague*, in addition to the core theme in the novel (deadly virus) it also highlights the devastating impact of environmental degradation and the consequences of humanity's carelessness and recklessness towards nature. The Eco critical analysis would examine the novel's portrayal of the natural world, the role of human beings in shaping the environment, and the consequences of ecological destruction.

Last but not least, we will use the Psychoanalytic theory, as it could be applied to analyze the psychological effects of the post-apocalyptic world depicted in *The Scarlet Plague*. in which the main character, an elderly man named Granser, is one of the few survivors of that deadly disease. The psychoanalytic analysis could examine Granser's psychological state, including his trauma and grief, and how his experiences and emotions shaped his behavior and interactions with others in the post-apocalyptic world.

These theories provide different perspectives on the themes and motifs of *The Scarlet Plague*, and both could be used to offer insightful analysis and interpretation of the novel, reasons to include these Literary analyses has its significance as they can offer a new perspective on the text, revealing insights that may not be immediately apparent through a surface-level reading.

The study of societal collapse has become increasingly important in recent years, as we face global challenges such as climate change, political polarization, and economic inequality. Researchers studying societal collapse often use a variety of disciplines, including archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and political science. By examining past collapses, such as the fall of the Roman Empire or the Maya civilization, scholars can identify common patterns and factors that contribute to societal breakdown. They can also study current societies that are at risk of collapse, such as those facing environmental or economic crises, and develop strategies to mitigate those risks.

Dystopian and post-apocalyptic literature often explores the potential collapse of civilization, and several researchers have analyzed this theme in their studies. Jared Diamond, in his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, explores why some societies throughout history have collapsed while others have succeeded. He analyzes case studies of various civilizations, including the Viking settlements in Greenland, the Mayans, and the Easter Islanders, to identify the factors that contributed to their collapse. Diamond argues that environmental factors, such as deforestation and climate change, played a significant role in the downfall of these civilizations.

Joseph Tainter, in his book *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, argues that the collapse of civilizations is the result of increasing complexity leading to diminishing returns. As societies become more complex, "For this reason, the study of rising and falling

complexity serves as a monitor of the phenomenon termed civilization, a monitor that is at once measurable and specifiable, and so is subject to the biases and value judgments of other approaches." (Trailer 41).

For Joseph Trainer, they require more resources and energy to maintain, but eventually, the costs outweigh the benefits, leading to collapse. Tainter also notes that external factors such as environmental degradation and resource scarcity can worsen this process."1. Human societies are problem-solving organizations; 2. Sociopolitical systems require energy for their maintenance; 3. Increased complexity carries with it-increased costs per capita; and 4. Investment in sociopolitical complexity as a problem-solving response often reaches a point of declining marginal returns."(Trailer 93)

Furthermore, in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, a post-apocalyptic novel by Walter M. Miller Jr., the author explores the cyclical nature of civilization's collapse and rebirth. The novel is set in a future world devastated by nuclear war, where a group of monks preserves knowledge and technology from the past to help rebuild civilization. Miller suggests that the collapse of civilization is not inevitable but can be avoided through the preservation of knowledge and wisdom. The novel has a superficial message of 'Beware!' critics like Edward Ducharme (*English Journal*, November 1966) have claimed that "*Miller's* narrative continually returns to the conflicts between the scientist's search for truth and the state power "One of the key ideas Miller suggests is the concept of the "Memorabilia," a collection of documents and artifacts preserved by the Albertian Order. These documents range from scientific and technical texts to mundane records, such as shopping lists and blueprints. The Order's mission is to copy, translate, and store these items, ensuring that knowledge is preserved for future generations. Additionally, Miller emphasizes the tension between

knowledge and its potential misuse. He explores how scientific discoveries, especially those related to weapons and destructive technologies, can have disastrous consequences if placed in the wrong hands. The monks, therefore, take on the responsibility of controlling and regulating the dissemination of knowledge to prevent further devastation.

As a result, Miller's suggestion in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is that the preservation of knowledge is a crucial task for humanity. Through the Albertian Order and their dedication to safeguarding knowledge, he presents a hopeful vision of how humanity can learn from its past, and work towards a better future, despite the recurrent cycles of destruction, and rebuilding. Interestingly enough, George Orwell's *1984* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* are both important works of dystopian literature that explore themes related to civilization's decline. In *1984*, Orwell depicts a totalitarian regime that has completely taken over society and erased individuality, privacy, and freedom. The novel serves as a warning against the dangers of authoritarianism and the need for people to be vigilant in protecting their rights 'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.' Yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting" (Orwell 19)

George Orwell (1984) also conveys a warning against the abuses of power and the potential horrors that can arise when governments become all-encompassing and oppressive, ultimately eroding the fundamental dignity and humanity of individuals. As he mentioned in the third chapter "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever".

Similarly, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* portrays a society that has collapsed due to environmental disasters and widespread infertility. Atwood's novel portrays her worldview as she describes a society in which Women have been stripped of their rights and are forced into

sexual servitude to bear children for the ruling class. The novel explores themes related to power, oppression, and the dangers of a society that fails to protect individual liberties. Atwood developed a taste for dystopian literature by reading *1984* (George Orwell, 1949), *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley, 1932), and *Fahrenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury, 1953). *The Handmaid's Tale* shows the influences of these novels: the idea of surveillance from *1984*, the eradication of individuality and government-controlled procreation from *Brave New World*, and the power of language from *Fahrenheit 451*

Some more ink was spilled in *The Road*, a novel by Cormac McCarthy, the collapse of civilization is depicted as the result of an unspecified disaster, likely a nuclear war or environmental catastrophe. The novel follows a father and son as they travel through a desolate landscape, searching for a haven. McCarthy portrays the collapse of civilization as a gradual process that destroys humanity's morality and compassion, leaving only the most basic instincts for survival. «The world shrinks down about a raw core of parable entities. The names of things slowly follow those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its real” (McCarthy 75)

It speaks to the changes that have come over the world since it fell into disarray. “Complexity,” the narrator says, is now a luxury. The world is based and has been whittled down to its “raw core.” This refers to the fact that everyone who is still alive is fighting for survival, looking for the basic needs of life. The “wants,” things that used to be important, have fallen out of the world. The “concepts” of the old world have been easily lost.

Briefly, these studies and literary works suggest that the collapse of civilization is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can result from a range of factors, including

environmental degradation, resource depletion, increasing complexity, and moral decay. They also suggest that collapse is not inevitable and that societies can take steps to prevent it through careful planning, preservation of knowledge, and moral leadership.

Nevertheless, our research will provide a fresh perspective and analysis of *The Scarlet Plague* within the context of ecocriticism, utopian/dystopian theory, and other relevant literary frameworks. By applying these theoretical lenses to the novel, you can uncover new insights and interpretations regarding the portrayal of society, the impact of the pandemic, and the exploration of human nature. Our research can deepen the understanding of how the novel engages with these themes and contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding environmental literature, dystopian fiction, and post-apocalyptic narratives. Additionally, our analysis can offer further causation of dystopia, which was lacking in the works previewed above by examining the suggested themes in *The scarlet plague*, thereby enriching the understanding of dystopian authors' contributions to the genre.

This research paper will begin by reviewing the literature on our matter of study and will provide an overview of the key themes and motifs in dystopian literature, as well as a brief examination of the works of other dystopian authors the likes of Margaret Atwood and George Orwell. We will also discuss dystopian literature's historical and social context and explore its relevance to contemporary society.

Next, we will present a theoretical framework that will lay out the key concepts and theories that will inform our analysis. This will involve an examination of relevant literary theories and concepts, such as narrative structure, genre, and symbolism. We will also discuss the theoretical implications of our study, including its relevance to contemporary discussions on societal collapse and the future of civilization. Following this, we will present a practical analysis chapter that will apply our theoretical framework to London's novel. This chapter

will examine key scenes and characters in the novel, analyzing their symbolic significance and their relationship to the larger themes of societal collapse and human nature. We will also explore how the novel's portrayal of societal collapse relates to real-world issues such as environmental degradation, political instability, and pandemics.

The research project on the theme of civilization collapse in dystopian and post-apocalyptic literature will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter will be theoretical, after briefly introducing this chapter; we will provide a contextual background on the chosen novel, that is to say, *The Scarlet Plague*. In addition to this, the author Jack London's background and biography will be given, as the novel's significance, and the importance of studying the theme of civilization collapse in literature. The chapter will also define all key concepts that will be used throughout the research and outline the implications and scope of the work. Finally, the chapter will conclude by summarizing the key points and citing the works

The second chapter will be a practical and analytical chapter, which will begin with an introduction that sets the context for the analysis. This chapter will explore the key concepts highlighted in *The Scarlet Plague* and provide a critical analysis of the ways, in which the novel portrays civilization's collapse. The chapter will focus on the various literary approaches that can be used to analyze the theme of civilization collapse, including ecocriticism, dystopia and utopia theories, and psychoanalysis, the chapter will then conclude by summarizing the research findings and providing a works cited list.

The general conclusion will tie together the main findings from both chapters and highlight the research results, including the significance of the research, the key findings, and the limitations of the study. As well as discussing their implications for contemporary society. We will also highlight the limitations of our study and suggest avenues for future research

Finally, an annotated bibliography will be provided, which will include a list of sources used in the project with a brief description of each source and its relevance to the research topic, in the Annotated bibliography part. This research paper will contribute to the ongoing conversation on dystopian literature and the future of civilization, and provide insights into the fragility of civilization and the factors that can lead to its collapse.

Chapter 01: The Scarlet Plague; History and Context.

Theoretical frameworks are critical tools that we use to analyze and interpret literary works. This chapter serves as a theoretical introduction to our study of the theme of civilization decline in *The Scarlet Plague* by Jack London. We will use eco-criticism, dystopian and psychoanalytic theories to analyze this novel. In this chapter, we will provide an overview of the novel, the context in which it was written, and the significance of the chosen theoretical frameworks. Additionally, we will define important concepts and terms that are central to our analysis. Furthermore, this chapter will include biographical information about the author. By doing so, we hope to gain a better understanding of how the author's background and experiences influenced the novel. The implications and scope of our study will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the topics covered and an outline of what to expect in the research.

The Scarlet Plague's Context, Historical Background, and Importance.

John Griffith "Jack" London (born John Griffith Chaney, January 12, 1876 – November 22, 1916) was an American author, journalist, and social activist born in San Francisco, California, in 1876. He is considered one of the most influential writers of the early 20th century, known for his adventure stories set in the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush, as well as his social commentary on issues such as labor and socialism.

London's upbringing was difficult; Deserted by his father, a roving astrologer, he was raised in [Oakland](#), California, by his spiritualist mother and his stepfather, whose [surname](#), London, he took. At age 14 he quit school to escape poverty and gain adventure. He explored [San Francisco Bay](#) in his [sloop](#), alternately stealing [oysters](#) or working for the government fish patrol. He went to Japan as a sailor and saw much of the [United States](#) as a hobo riding freight trains and as a member of Charles T. Kelly's industrial army (one of the many protest armies of the unemployed, like [Coxey's Army](#), that was born of the financial panic of 1893). London saw depression conditions, was jailed for vagrancy,

London educated himself at public libraries with the writings of [Charles Darwin](#), [Karl Marx](#), and [Friedrich Nietzsche](#), usually in popularized forms. At 19 he crammed a four-year [high school](#) course into one year and entered the [University of California](#), Berkeley, but after a year he quit school to seek a fortune in the [Klondike gold rush](#). Returning the next year, still poor and unable to find work, he decided to earn a living as a writer.

London's literary career began in the late 1890s, and his first published work was a collection of stories called *The Son of the Wolf* (1900). He went on to write numerous novels and short stories, including the (1903)[The Call of the Wild](#), a novel that is often considered to be Jack London's masterpiece and is the most widely read of all his publications. He had also written "White Fang" (1906), and *Martin Eden* (1909), which are still widely read today. In addition to his literary career, London was also involved in socialist politics and was a vocal advocate for workers' rights and other social causes. Jack London passed away in 1916 at the age of 40, the death certificate was signed by Dr. William Porter, Jack London's doctor. It stated the cause of death was: uremia following renal colic. Dr. Porter had diagnosed that Jack suffered a kidney problem back in July of 1913. Jack London, wrote and published steadily, completing some 50 books of fiction and nonfiction in 17 years, and became the highest-paid

writer in the United States at that time. Leaving behind a legacy as one of America's most celebrated writers and a trailblazer in the field of adventure.

The Scarlet Plague was written by Jack London in 1912 and was first published in London Magazine in 1915. It was later included in a collection of London's short stories and was published in book form as *The Scarlet Plague and Other Stories* in 1916, the book was a collection of short stories, published in 1915. The collection includes "The Scarlet Plague," as well as several other post-apocalyptic stories such as *The Unparalleled Invasion*, *The Red One*, and *The Iron Heel*.

The stories in the collection share a common theme of societal collapse or upheaval, often brought about by natural disasters, war, or technological change. Many of the stories also explore the human response to such events, as characters are forced to confront their mortality, their relationships with others, and their place in the world offers a glimpse into Jack London's unique vision of the future and his exploration of the possibilities and pitfalls of human progress.

The book was written in 1912, during a time of great social and economic change in the United States. At the turn of the 20th century, the country was undergoing a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Cities like San Francisco were growing rapidly, fueled by the gold rush and the expansion of railroads and other transportation networks. Amidst this era of growth and prosperity, numerous social and economic challenges emerged. One of the prominent issues was the stark contrast between the wealthy elites and the impoverished working class. While industrialists and businessmen amassed great fortunes, a significant portion of the population struggled to make ends meet, living in cramped and unsanitary conditions. This socioeconomic disparity created a stark divide between the haves and the have-nots, contributing to social unrest and discontent.

Labor unrest was another significant consequence of industrialization the rise of factories and the increasing reliance on mechanization led to the exploitation of workers, with long hours, low wages, and unsafe working conditions being common. This sparked the formation of labor unions and the rise of organized labor movements, as workers fought for better rights, improved working conditions, and fairer treatment. Strikes, protests, and conflicts between workers and management became frequent occurrences, highlighting the tensions and struggles resulting from the rapid industrialization process. The new century also reminded observers around the world that California could no longer be regarded as an uncomplicated paradise of easy living. This lesson was brought home with terrible force on the morning of April 18, 1906, when an earthquake shook the proud city of San Francisco for two full minutes. The quake and the fires that followed for three days left 500 San Franciscans dead and destroyed more than 28,000 buildings--more than a third of the homes, offices, and stores in the entire city.

In addition, the early 20th century saw the rise of new scientific and technological innovations, including the development of germ theory and the discovery of radiation. These discoveries fueled fears of disease and contamination, which are themes that appear in “The Scarlet Plague”. Finally, it’s interesting the fact that the book was written just a few years before the outbreak of World War I, a conflict that would dramatically reshape the political and social landscape of the world. This context of upheaval and uncertainty undoubtedly influenced London’s vision of a future in which civilization has collapsed and humanity has been reduced to a primitive state.

The Literary Style and Symbolism:

When we first read *The Scarlet Plague*, it was notable that it’s written in a straightforward and very accessible style, which is typical of Jack London’s writing. The

language is clear and direct, with a focus on character and plot rather than intricate descriptions or poetic language.

The novel is told primarily through the first-person perspective of James Howard Smith, which allows the reader to experience the story through his eyes and to understand his thoughts and emotions. The use of the first-person perspective also creates a sense of immediacy and intimacy, drawing the reader into the story and allowing them to feel a strong connection to the characters.

In terms of literary techniques, London uses foreshadowing to create a sense of impending doom throughout the novel. From the opening pages, it is clear that something terrible has happened to the world, and the reader is left to piece together the details of the pandemic and its aftermath. London also employs symbolism to explore the themes of the novel. For example, the color red is used as a symbol of the disease and the violence that it has wrought on the world. The scarlet plague itself is described as a red mist that descends on its victims, and the red color is used to evoke a sense of danger and urgency throughout the story. There are several instances of symbolism that enrich the narrative. One prominent symbol is the scarlet plague itself, which represents the destructive force of nature and serves as a metaphor for the consequences of human actions. It highlights the fragility of civilization and the potential for its collapse in the face of a natural disaster. Additionally, another symbol is the abandoned city of San Francisco, overrun by nature and inhabited by wild animals. It symbolizes the reclaiming of the human-built world by the natural world, emphasizing the transience of human achievements.

The character of Granser, with his old books and knowledge of the past, symbolizes the fading memory of a bygone era and the importance of preserving knowledge and wisdom. His name change from James Smith to Granser signifies a loss of personal identity and

connection to his past life. As the plague decimated society and wiped out most of the population, the remnants of the old world, including personal identities, became less relevant. By adopting the name Granser, he distances himself from his previous life, emphasizing the transformative effect of the plague on individuals. While Granser represents the remnants of the old world and carries the weight of history, his grandchildren belong to a post-apocalyptic society that has no firsthand experience of the pre-plague era. The name Granser becomes a marker of their different perspectives and frames of reference. It signifies the struggle to bridge the gap between the past and the present, as the grandchildren try to understand the world that Granser remembers.

Further symbolism concerning the grandchildren, who were portrayed as rather feral and illiterate children, symbolizes the loss of knowledge and cultural heritage in a post-apocalyptic world. The fact that the grandchildren are unable to read or write reflects the devastating impact of the epidemic on education and the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Illiteracy becomes a metaphor for the broader decline of civilization and the erosion of intellectual and cultural foundations. It underscores the loss of human achievements, advancements, and the inability to preserve the wisdom of the past. The absence of literacy also highlights the challenges faced by future generations in rebuilding society and regaining the knowledge that was lost

The Plot:

The novel narrates the story of James Howard Smith, an elderly survivor of a global pandemic that has wiped out most of humanity. The story is set in the year 2073, sixty years after the pandemic, and takes place in San Francisco, which has been transformed into a wild and lawless wasteland. Smith, a former university professor, lives with a tribe of primitive humans who have adapted to the new world. He is the only one among them who remembers

the world before the plague and he recounts his memories to his grandchildren, who listen in awe and disbelief. The novel goes as follows

The novel introduces a boy and his grandfather, clad in animal skins, who are walking through deep woods. Having encountered a bear, they come to a fire on the beach, where several other boys sit watching their sheep. Their grandfather asks for a crab and they tease him with empty shells until he cries. Finally, they relent and ask him to tell his story about the past and the scarlet plague.

The grandfather tells them that had been a literature professor at The University of California-San Francisco. In the summer of 2013, rumors began that a new plague was killing people in New York. Those infected developed a scarlet rash, had a few convulsions, then settled into a sleep-like state in which they became numb and died, their bodies decomposing almost immediately. The entire process took at most an hour, but sometimes as little as ten minutes. Bacteriologists died even as they tried to find a vaccine. People began dying by the millions. The plague finally reached San Francisco and mayhem broke out. The wealthy tried to flee the city and the poor murdered them and looted in revenge for their long oppression.

The professor survived. He lived alone in the Grand Canyon for three years, then set out to see if anyone else was alive, finding a workingman and his woman slave. He met others and began a family which included the boys to whom he is telling his story. There is no means of communicating across the country or to other nations, since the fires set by looters consumed nearly every structure. Society has been set back to a nomad existence. The boys do not believe most of their grandfather's stories. They fight amongst one another and with him in a language that is only partly English. Finally, they rise, leaving the grandfather to struggle behind in the wilderness

The novel explores themes of survival, memory, and the human condition in the face of catastrophe. The characters in the novel are primarily members of Smith's tribe, including his grandsons Edwin, Hare -Lip and Hoo-Hoo, and his daughter-in-law, Mary. Each character represents a different aspect of human nature and their interactions highlight the complex social and emotional dynamics that arise in times of crisis.

Worth to note that, the grandfather "Granser" himself is a complex character, grappling with his mortality and the loss of everything he once knew especially in the sorrowful, pessimistic tone he told his grandchildren, in the final chapter, "All the world is topsy-turvy, and it has been topsy-turvy ever since the plague" this statement and plenty more portray his deep sadness. His memories of the past are both a source of comfort and a burden, as he struggles to reconcile the world he once knew with the brutal reality of the present.

Implications of the study

Based on the research findings and analysis, the implications of this study can be significant for the academic community, field of study, and people in general. The study provides an in-depth analysis of civilization decline and societal collapse in *The Scarlet Plague* by Jack London, using literary theories like psychoanalysis and ecocriticism

The study adds to the existing body of knowledge on post-apocalyptic literature, ecocriticism, and psychoanalytic literary theory. It provides a unique perspective on how literature can be used to explore and understand issues related to environmental degradation, societal collapse, and human psychology.

The study also has implications for the general public. By analyzing the portrayal of civilization decline in *The Scarlet Plague*, the study highlights the importance of environmental sustainability and the need to address issues related to climate change. It also sheds light on the potential psychological impact of societal collapse and the importance of

mental health in such scenarios. The Study implications concentrate generally on helping raise awareness and promoting critical thinking about important issues related to environmental sustainability, mental health, and societal collapse. It can also serve as a valuable resource for scholars and students interested in post-apocalyptic literature, eco-criticism, and psychoanalytic literary theory.

Chapter conclusion:

This chapter provided an introduction to the novel and discussed its historical background and literary style. Key concepts such as civilization decline, eco-criticism, and psychoanalytic theory were defined and explored. The chapter also highlighted the implications and scope of the work for the academic community, field of study, and readers in general.

**Chapter 02: Highlighting the
Key concepts within *The
Scarlet Plague***

This chapter of the research paper is the practical/ analytical part of the study. It will cover a detailed analysis, starting by selecting the key concepts and terms defined in the first chapter with a critical analysis and commentary for each concept. This part of the study aims to identify and explore the various themes and motifs that are embodied in *The Scarlet Plague* and how they relate to the broader research question, as well as reflecting the content to modern day societal issues. The chapter concludes by summarizing the findings and providing an overview of the research results. Finally, citing the works involved and an all-encompassing bibliography to support the analysis and provide a comprehensive list of references for further reading.

Highlighting key concepts within the novel:

This section embodies the key concepts of our research and where are they situated, represented and implied in the novel, and by depicting each concept with actual quoted pieces from the novel as well as critically commenting on each quotation. This part is crucial to the research as it helps to establish a clear connection between the theoretical framework and the practical analysis of the novel. By identifying and analyzing these key concepts, we can provide a deeper understanding of the themes and messages conveyed in the novel.

Dystopia:

The concept of dystopia is a central theme in *The Scarlet Plague*, as it serves to emphasize the consequences of human hubris and the dangers of unchecked technological progress. The novel presents a cautionary tale about the perils of overreliance on science and technology, and the importance of preserving the natural world as the novel is basically a dystopian text, “The forest on either side swelled up the slopes of the embankment and

crested across it in a green wave of trees and bushes. The trail was as narrow as a man's body, and was no more than a wild-animal runway. Occasionally, a piece of rusty iron, showing through the forest – mold, advertised that the rail and the ties” (London 11)

The dystopian aspect takes part from the first pages of the novel. The narrator, which is from a third-person perspective, describes the area ever since the disaster hit, the presence of the overgrown forest and the absence of human activity suggest a world that has undergone a significant collapse or decline. On the same page, there is further emphasis on nature degradation “The tie had evidently followed the rail, held to it by the spike long enough for its bed to be filled with gravel and rotten leaves”. The features of Dystopia continue to appear as the narrative switches to “Granser “, the protagonist of the story while starting to tell his past life to Edwin, one of his grandchildren. “They get thicker every day’, he complained in a thin, undependable falsetto. ‘Who’d have thought I’d live to see the time when a man would be afraid of his life on the way to the Cliff House” (London 17-18).

The passage highlights the dramatic shift in the post-apocalyptic world of *The Scarlet Plague*. The Cliff House, once a popular destination for leisure and enjoyment, has now become a place of danger and fear. The remark signifies the profound transformation of society and the loss of safety and security that the characters, including the speaker, have experienced. It reflects the dystopian nature of the novel, where familiar and once-secure spaces have become fraught with peril, emphasizing the harsh reality of the changed world and the constant threat to human existence. In the following page, London implies that the world has drastically changed, with the scarcity and value of certain aspects of nature being replaced by a desolate landscape where nature and wildlife have reclaimed their dominance. This serves as a reminder of the degradation and loss experienced in the dystopian world depicted in the novel, London wrote “When I was a boy, Edwin, men and women and little babies used to come out here from San Francisco by tens of thousands on a nice day. And

there weren't any bears then. No, sir. They used to pay money to look at them in cages, they were that rare. (18)

Societal collapses:

In *The Scarlet Plague*, societal collapse is portrayed through the complete breakdown of social institutions and the loss of human values. Examples of this can be seen in the Loss of language, Loss of knowledge, violence, and desperation, and extinction of humans.

Loss of Language/culture:

The protagonist, Professor James Howard Smith, is shocked to hear his own grandchildren using a primitive form of language and communicating through grunts and gestures. In the first chapter, page 06, we find answers such as "what is money?" and "Why do you say so much that isn't got no sense?" After hearing rather simple discourse of the old man, Edwin seemed to not understand a lot of what the elderly was saying, it shows how backward society has become, losing basic terms of the English language. In this passage, lies clear evidence of how confused the boys were with Granser's language. "Think of it! And all because of the Scarlet Death- The adjective had caught Hare - Lip's ear. "He's always saying that, "he said to Edwin. "What is scarlet?"

"It's red, "Edwin answered the question. "And you don't know it because you come from the Chauffeur Tribe. They never did know anything, none of them. Scarlet is red I know that. «Red is red, ain't it? "Hare – Lip grumbled. "Then what's the good of getting 'cocky and calling it scarlet? "Granser, what for do you always say so much what nobody knows?"

"Red is not the right word, "was the reply. "The plague was scarlet. The whole face and body turned scarlet in an hour's time. Don't I know? Didn't I see enough of it?(London 35) This passage from *The Scarlet Plague* shows the lack of knowledge and understanding of language and culture among the grandchildren, who are unable to comprehend the meaning of

the word “scarlet.” They are dismissive of Granser’s use of language, with Hare-Lip even questioning the importance of using the word “scarlet” instead of “red.” This passage is an example of how language and cultural knowledge can be lost in a post-apocalyptic society, leading to a decline in understanding and communication among people.

Decline of Manners:

“He cleared his throat and began ___Twenty or thirty Years ago my story was in great demand. But these days, nobody seems interested “There you go!” Hare-Lip cried hotly indicating a moment of frustration and impatience in the conversation. Hare-Lip is expressing annoyance with Granser who is, to him, using unfamiliar or confusing language. Hare-Lip wants the other person to communicate in a straightforward and understandable manner, without any unnecessary or unclear language. The use of the phrase “talk like a baby that does not know how” suggests that Hare-Lip finds the other person’s speech childish or unintelligible. Hare-Lip expresses his impatience with his grandpa’s storytelling style. This suggests a lack of respect. “Let him alone,” Edwin urged, “or he’ll get mad and won’t talk at all.” (London 45)

“Granser” was noticeably displeased about the manners of his grandchildren, notably, Hare-lip, as they showed little to no respect for the man, “as he began to eat. Of this the boys took little notice, for it was an accustomed spectacle. Nor did they notice his occasional exclamations and utterances of phrases which meant nothing to them” (London 8) the kid seemingly having no idea about what the men saying, and paying little to no interest:

“And don’t work all that funny lingo on us,” Hare-Lip went on Granser to Speak sensibly, in a manner befitting a resident of Santa Rosa.(41) The quote demonstrates that the Grandchildren, this time Harelip, have adopted a new language and cultural norms that are different from those of their ancestors. They see Granser’s way of speaking as outdated and

out of touch with their current reality. This is an indication of the loss of language and cultural heritage as a result of societal collapse. The Grandchildren's attitudes towards Granser's language and way of thinking highlight the shift in values and priorities in their society. It also shows how oddly disrespectful children are being, as far as treating and talking to an elderly.

One example of the grandchildren's rudeness towards Granser is shown when they interrupt him while he is telling them a story about the time before the plague. Granser is trying to share important knowledge and wisdom with them, but they show little respect and patience, cutting him off and making fun of him. This can be seen in the following quote from the novel. "When I was a boy, we did not laugh at our elders; we respected them. "(London 26). The boys took no notice, and Granser continued to babble an incoherent flow of complaint and censure. This passage illustrates how the grandchildren show a lack of interest and respect towards the old man and his stories, despite the fact that he is one of the few remaining people who can remember what life was like before the plague. They have become jaded and indifferent to the past, and are more concerned with their immediate survival than with learning from the past.

Violence and Desperation:

As Granser tells his story and takes it to American society before and after the pandemic. He mentions some serious problems occurring at the time, among that violence and desperation Granser, mentions violence and desperation during the mid-pandemic society when he talks about the last days of the old world. According to him, people became savage, and lawlessness reigned as they desperately tried to survive the pandemic. He recounts how people resorted to killing each other for food, and the wealthy locked themselves up in their mansions, leaving the poor, portrayal can be read throughout chapter 3.

“Murder and robbery and drunkenness were everywhere. Already the people had fled from the city by millions—at first the rich, in their private motor-cars and Dirigibles, and then the great mass of the population, on foot, carrying the plague with them, themselves starving and pillaging the farmers and all the towns and villages on the way” (London 86). The passage describes the chaos and violence that erupted in the pre-pandemic society as people tried to flee the city. It shows how the wealthy were able to use their resources to escape first, leaving the rest of the population to fend for themselves. As a result, there was widespread murder, robbery, and drunkenness, as well as the spread of the plague to other areas. This passage highlights the breakdown of social order and the descent into desperation and violence in the face of a catastrophic event.

The gunpowder will come .Nothing can stop it —the same old story over and over. Man will increase, and men will fight. The gunpowder will enable men to kill millions of men, and in this way only, by fire and blood, will a new civilization, in some remote day, be evolved. And of what profit will it be 1 Just as the old civilization, passed so will the new.(London 178)

This is an eye-opening passage as Jack London, expresses a grim outlook on the cyclical nature of human civilization. The statement suggests that despite the destructive power of gunpowder and the potential for mass killings, it will not lead to any significant progress or advantage for humanity. The phrase "the same old story over and over" implies a pattern of human behavior repeating itself throughout history. London implies that the cycle of civilization rising and falling will continue with each civilization ultimately meeting its demise. He implicitly referred to the greed/ hunger for power and position that will lead people to kill one another mercilessly.

Human extinction:

The protagonist described the pandemic in *The Scarlet Plague* as a gruesome and quick death, where people would bleed from their noses and mouths before collapsing and dying within hours. He also described how people would be found dead in the streets or in their homes, with no one left to bury them. The imagery is bleak and disturbing, emphasizing the severity of the pandemic and the chaos that ensued. He described the full process of how the plague makes appearance on the human body and how symptoms were an initial chill, followed by a fever, with a temperature of 103 or 104, which lasted from three to five days before subsiding. Then, when it seemed that the victim was going to recover, the temperature would soar again to 106 or 107, and the unfortunate sufferer would pass away, usually within hours and how sufferers” _ would turn scarlet, particularly on the face, and become numb in their lower extremities. Victims usually died within 30 minutes of first seeing symptoms. Despite the public’s trust in doctors and scientists, no cure is found, and those who attempted to do so were also killed by the disease” he detailed the symptoms to the ignorant Grandchildren even more in the third chapter, as they impatiently wanted to get the point of *The Scarlet Plague* he said From the moment of the first signs of it, a man would be dead in an hour. Some lasted for several hours. Many died within ten or fifteen minutes of the appearance of the first signs. “The heart began to beat faster and the heat of the body to increase. Then came the scarlet rash, spreading like wildfire over the face and body.” (London 77).

Granser earlier informed the boys about their families, “women were scarce at after the plague, she was the only wife I could find” (London 11), In this passage, Granser is referring to the scarcity of women after the pandemic. He is saying that there were so few women left alive that he could only find one to be his wife. This highlights the devastating impact of the pandemic on the human population and how it led to the near-extinction of the

human race. The fact that Granser had to settle for the only available wife indicates how desperate the situation was, and how much society had been disrupted and destroyed by the pandemic.

Ecocriticism:

In *The Scarlet Plague*, the application of ecocriticism theory reveals a poignant exploration of the consequences of environmental degradation and the human-nature relationship. London's vivid descriptions of the pre-apocalyptic world create a stark contrast with the post-apocalyptic setting, emphasizing the destructive impact of human actions on the natural world. "I saw smoke of a camp fire rising through the trees "(London 141-142). In the quote, there is a clear depiction of nature, specifically the presence of a campfire and the rising smoke amidst the trees. From an eco-critical perspective, this description can be analyzed in terms of its implications for the relationship between humans and the natural world.

Ecocriticism emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans and nature, and the quote reflects this relationship by portraying the human presence in the natural environment. The campfire represents human activity and intervention within the natural landscape. It signifies both the utilization of natural resources, such as wood for fuel, and the impact of human presence on the ecosystem.

The rising smoke through the trees can be seen as a symbol of the interaction between humans and the environment. Smoke is a visible result of human action, and it carries both positive and negative connotations. On one hand, it signifies warmth, sustenance, and a means of survival for the individuals at the campfire. On the other hand, it can also represent the environmental consequences of human activity, such as air pollution and the alteration of natural eco-systems. This description prompts us to consider the complex relationship

between humans and nature. It raises questions about the sustainability of human actions, the balance between human needs and environmental preservation, and the potential conflicts that arise when human activity impacts natural systems.

The quote highlights the presence of human beings in nature and their impact on the environment. Through an eco-critical lens, it invites us to critically reflect on the relationship between humans and the natural world, the consequences of our actions, and the potential for sustainable co-existence. London's detailed descriptions of the natural world before its decline evoke a sense of longing and nostalgia. The lush landscapes, vibrant wildlife, and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature underscore the value of a balanced relationship. This portrayal highlights the importance of appreciating and preserving the natural world, emphasizing the need for environmental responsibility.

“Here the building stood apart, in the midst and grassy lawns, and here the fires had played freaks, burning whole blocks, skipping blocks and often skipping a single house in a block”(London 120). Prior to this, Granser mentioned who was behind the burning fires he described as “The miscreant” who was a drunk man who was having bottles of whiskey were sticking out of his coat pockets.

Additionally, the novel explores the consequences of ecological destruction. The post-apocalyptic setting presents a desolate and barren landscape, stripped of its former beauty and vitality. The scarcity of resources, including food and clean water, demonstrates the devastating impacts of unsustainable practices and serves as a cautionary tale.

Symbolism also plays a significant role in *The Scarlet Plague*. The decimated natural world serves as a metaphor for the decline of civilization and the loss of harmony between humanity and nature. The absence of wildlife and the absence of sounds and scents that once defined the environment further reinforce the ecological imbalance caused by human actions.

Through its critique of humanity's exploitation of the environment, *The Scarlet Plague* underscores the urgent need for ecological consciousness. The novel implies that the collapse of civilization is a direct consequence of neglecting the delicate balance of nature. It encourages readers to reflect on the potential long-term effects of unsustainable practices and the importance of sustainable living.

It is worth noting how, in page 134; Granser narrated the fate of animals. "The chickens and ducks were the first to be destroyed, while the pigs were the first to go wild, followed by the cats. Nor where the dogs long in adapting themselves to the changed conditions ". It presents an interesting dynamic between different animal species and their responses to the changing environment. From an eco-critical perspective, this quote invites us to analyze the relationships between humans, animals, and the natural world.

Ecocriticism emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living beings within ecosystems. In this context, the quote suggests the vulnerability and adaptability of different animal species in the face of environmental changes. The destruction of chickens and ducks indicates their susceptibility to the altered conditions, which could be attributed to factors such as a lack of natural defenses or dependence on specific habitats. On the other hand, the pigs going wild and the cats following suit highlight their ability to adapt to the changing environment. This adaptation might be driven by their innate instincts, resourcefulness, or flexibility in adjusting to new circumstances. The quote implies that these animals are better equipped to survive and thrive in the transformed ecosystem.

Furthermore, the dogs' quick adaptation also suggests their resilience and capacity to adjust to the changed conditions. Dogs, known for their ability to form social bonds with humans, might possess behavioral traits that facilitate their ability to adapt and align themselves with human activities or new environmental circumstances.

Eco-critically, it prompts us to consider the complex interactions between humans, animals, and nature. It raises questions about the effects of human actions on animal populations and the varied responses of different species to ecological disruptions. It also invites reflection on the role of humans in shaping ecosystems and the potential consequences for both human and non-human beings.

Finally, applying ecocriticism to *The Scarlet Plague* enables a deeper understanding of the novel's ecological themes. London's portrayal of the natural world, the consequences of ecological destruction, and the critique of humanity's relationship with nature provide a thought-provoking examination of the fragility of the environment and its impact on civilization.

Psychoanalysis:

The theory is applied essentially on the protagonist James Smith (Granser) and by analyzing his character through a psychoanalytic lens; we gain insights into his psychological state and motivations. It helps us understand how he copes with the aftermath of the scarlet plague, the conflicts he grapples with, and the underlying desires that shape his behavior and relationships in the story.

Granser's storytelling and his obsession with the past can be seen as defense mechanisms to protect himself from the harshness of the present reality. By engaging in these activities, he may be utilizing denial or displacement to avoid confronting the trauma and loss he has experienced, his sadness was early shown in the first chapter, throughout his first conversation with Edwin and as they found a coin with "2012" engraved on it, it was the first time in the novel that Granser brings up about the Disaster, "it must have been one of the last coins minted, for the scarlet death came in 2013. Lord! Lord! -- think of it? Sixty years ago, and I am the only person alive today that lived in those times" (London 19)

Granser, as an elderly survivor of the scarlet plague, looks back on the year 2012 with a sense of nostalgia. It represents a time when the world was different, and society existed in a state of relative stability. By reminiscing about this period, Granser mourns the loss of a gone era, highlighting the stark contrast between the pre-plague world and the bleak post-apocalyptic reality.

In the same chapter, as they were hunting, Granser was reminiscing about his preference for crab over rabbit for food choice “rabbit is good, very good, but when it comes to toothsome delicacy, I prefer crab.” (22) This statement reflects Granser’s longing for the pleasures and luxuries of the pre-plague world. By expressing his preference for crab, he reveals a nostalgic need for a time where he could enjoy more diverse and abundant diet, as it showcases his desire for the pleasures and desires that have been taken away by the devastating effects of the plague, additionally, it reflects his feelings of loss and his attachment to the memories of a more prosperous and civilized past.

Psychoanalytically, we can analyze his state of preferring crab over rabbit as a manifestation of his unconscious desires and unresolved conflicts. The statement above reflects the pleasure principle, a concept from psychoanalysis, he expresses a preference for a “toothsome delicacy” (crab) over a more practical choice (rabbit) suggesting a desire for immediate gratification and indulgence incensory pleasure. It can be seen as a way for Granser to momentarily escape the harsh reality of the post-apocalyptic world. The inconvenience of food was further shown in page 24, as the group were cooking (mussels), “...he caught the morsel and carried it to his mouth but it was too hot, and the next moment was violently ejected. The old man spluttered with the pain and tears ran out of his eyes and down his cheeks” (London 24-25).

Food preference in this case can be seen as a form of mourning and grief, the contrast between past and present food choices highlights the loss of a familiar and secure world leading to feelings of sadness and longing. Besides food, the old man was also missing the civilized lifetime of hygiene and cleanliness. "I know I am a filthy old man but times have changed, nobody washes these days and there are no conveniences, it is sixty years since I have seen a piece of soap" (London 55). The character acknowledges himself as a "filthy old man," indicating a negative self-image or self-judgment. This could stem from feelings of guilt or shame related to his current unclean state, which contrasts with the hygiene and cleanliness he was accustomed to before the scarlet plague. This self-perception may reflect a sense of deterioration or decline, both physically and possibly emotionally.

In psychoanalysis, cleanliness and hygiene can symbolize purification, order, and control. The character's lament about the absence of washing and soap could signify a deeper desire for a sense of order or purity in his life. The lack of cleanliness may also represent a loss of control or a feeling of being overwhelmed by the chaotic and unclean post-apocalyptic world. The character's statement about the lack of hygiene in the present implies a regression from the societal norms and standards that were prevalent before the scarlet plague. This regression may be indicative of a disruption in the character's sense of identity, as well as loss of social structure and cultural norms. It could also reflect a general decay or deterioration of civilization and the character's struggle to adapt to the new reality.

Pandemic:

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was a growing understanding of infectious diseases and the role of bacteria in causing epidemics. The discoveries made by scientists and the prevailing medical knowledge of the time may have influenced London's

portrayal of the pandemic in the novel. It is possible that he drew upon scientific advancements and contemporary discussions on contagious diseases to create a plausible and compelling narrative.

Additionally, London was known for his interest in social issues and his exploration of the human condition. *The Scarlet Plague* can be seen as a cautionary tale, reflecting concerns about the vulnerability of civilization and the potential consequences of societal collapse. While the exact extent of London's scientific research or motivations remains speculative, it is evident that he used his imagination and knowledge of the world around him to craft a dystopian vision of a pandemic-stricken society.

While there is no direct evidence linking Jack London's study of bacteria to his motivation for writing *The Scarlet Plague*, it is plausible that his awareness of scientific developments and societal concerns surrounding infectious diseases influenced his depiction of the pandemic in the novel. It is described as the Red Death, a highly contagious and deadly disease that spreads rapidly, causing mass deaths and societal disintegration. The novel vividly depicts the devastating impact of the pandemic, emphasizing the suddenness and brutality of its effects, protagonist Smith describes the stages of the outrage and the symptoms recess on the human body. «It looked serious, but we in California, like everywhere else, were not alarmed. We were sure that the bacteriologists would find a way to overcome this new germ”.

Granser describes the early news about the disease as something that appeared serious but did not initially cause alarm among the people in California. The mention of "we in California, like everywhere else" suggests that this perception of not being alarmed was a widespread sentiment during that time. Granser confidence in the abilities of bacteriologists to find a quick cure reflects a sense of optimism and trust in scientific advancements to mitigate

the threat posed by the disease. However, as the story unfolds, it becomes evident that the situation escalates and the confidence in the ability to control the outbreak diminishes, leading to a more dystopian and chaotic reality.

The physical symptoms experienced by people during the outbreak of the disease in the novel were then described as the heartbeat quickened, and the body's temperature rose as the Scarlet rash emerged, rapidly spreading across the face and body. Many individuals remained oblivious to the heightened heartbeat until the sudden appearance of the scarlet rash. Typically, convulsions accompanied the rash, although the subsequent convulsions were brief and relatively mild. (London 74)

It mentions that most individuals did not notice the increase in heat and heart rate, and their first indication of the illness was when the scarlet rash appeared. The mention of convulsions suggests that some individuals experienced seizures or fits around the time the rash appeared. However, the convulsions were described as short-lived and not particularly severe. This portrayal of the symptoms provides a glimpse into the initial stages of the pandemic and highlights the gradual progression of the disease among the affected individuals.

Granser further tells the progression of the disease's symptoms in individuals, specifically focusing on the gradual numbness that spreads throughout the body. It highlights the eerie calmness and absence of panic observed in those affected. The description of the numbness creeping up from the feet to the heart adds to the sense of impending doom and captures the fatal nature of the disease.

“No sooner was a person dead than his body seemed to fall to pieces to fly apart , to melt away even as you looked at it” (75).This highlights the rapid and alarming decomposition of bodies affected by the disease in the novel. The author emphasizes the swift

disintegration and dissolution of corpses, attributing it as one of the reasons for the rapid spread of the plague. The imagery of bodies falling apart and melting away adds a sense of horror and emphasizes the virulence and potency of the disease. The depiction of rapid decomposition serves as a symbol of the destructive power of the pandemic. It underscores the devastating consequences of the disease, both in terms of human lives lost and the breakdown of societal structures. The immediate release of billions of germs from a single corpse reinforces the contagious nature of the disease that even bacteriologists had no chance to fight the fatal disease as they were “killed in their laboratories“

Conclusion of the Chapter:

In sum, we have tackled various aspects of the novel *The Scarlet Plague* through different lenses, including ecocriticism, dystopian theory, and psychoanalysis. We examined the themes of nature, symbolism, character analysis, and the portrayal of the pandemic. The novel presents a dystopian vision of a post-apocalyptic world, where civilization has collapsed, and humanity faces the dire consequences of a devastating disease. Symbolism is

prevalent throughout the narrative, reflecting the characters' struggles, societal decay, and the loss of human connection. The names of the grandchildren, such as Hare-Lip and Edwin, carry symbolic meaning that represents their roles and characteristics. The illiteracy of the grandchildren symbolizes the loss of knowledge and cultural heritage. Granser's name change from Smith signifies a transformation from a world of science and progress to one of forgotten knowledge and oral tradition. The pandemic is portrayed through vivid descriptions of its symptoms and effects, emphasizing the rapid decay of bodies and the swift spread of the disease. Overall, *The Scarlet Plague* presents a haunting depiction of a dystopian world, exploring themes of loss, resilience, and the fragility of civilization.

Highlighting the Research Results

Summarizing our research findings, we examined *The Scarlet Plague* with a thorough analysis to the various themes portrayed in it, mainly, to understand how it depicted the collapse of civilization and identifies its principle causes. To briefly recapitulate, The novel portrayed that; the rapid spread of the disease and the subsequent disintegration of communication, transportation, and governance systems are identified as the primary causes of this collapse. Furthermore, we explored the character of Professor James Howard Smith, also known as Granser, who embodies the theme of civilization decline. As a survivor from

the pre-pandemic world, we touched upon Granser's representation of the loss of knowledge, wisdom, and cultural heritage. His role as a storyteller, imparting insights about the past to his grandsons, highlights the contrast between the present primitive state and the lost civilization. Additionally, we found that *The Scarlet Plague* reflects contemporary concerns about civilization decline, warning about the consequences of societal and environment. This resonates with the global pandemic we experienced COVID-19, highlighting the vulnerabilities and consequences of a highly contagious and lethal virus. The collapse of civilization depicted in the novel serves as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the fragility of our interconnected world and the potential consequences of a widespread outbreak and mental degradation. The novel raises questions about the sustainability of human progress, the vulnerability of civilization to unforeseen catastrophes, and the importance of preserving knowledge and values for future generations, worth to mention that the novel serves as a reminder of the importance of collective action, empathy, and the pursuit of sustainable solutions to navigate and mitigate the impacts of such crises.

In our analytical chapter we delved into various key concepts within the novel. We applied eco-critical, dystopic, and psychoanalytic examination to shed light on different aspects of the story. Through an eco-critical lens, we examined how the novel portrays the consequences of civilization collapse on the natural world and the need for a harmonious human-nature relationship. In terms of dystopic analysis, we explored themes of societal collapse, moral decay, and the ruin of social structures, emphasizing the cautionary nature of the narrative. Lastly, through psychoanalytic analysis, we delved into the characters' psychological states, their struggle with loss, and the regression to primal instincts, uncovering deeper insights into human nature and resilience our analysis has successfully answered the research questions providing a comprehensive understanding of the novel's

depiction of civilization collapse, the significance of Granser's character, and its commentary on contemporary concerns

General Conclusion

The fundamental goal of our research was to raise awareness on the fragility of civilization, and how quickly society can collapse. Our choice of *The Scarlet Plague* was purposeful as it matches contemporary issues that the world has gone through, like COVID-19. This work by Jack London matched perfectly social issues, besides the outbreak of the virus, such as political instability, violence and greed, and oppression were depicted in the novel. Our thesis was divided into three parts, an all-encompassing introduction at the beginning; it included a literature review and the aims of the research as well as the questions of the research interest. After the general conclusion, we divided two chapters, the first was theoretical and it included

the theories applied in our research i.e., Dystopia, Psychoanalysis, and ecocriticism, the author's biography, background as well as the context and literary style of the novel, we finished this section by defining our key concepts. In the second chapter, our Practical chapter is based on Analyzing and applying the key concepts and highlighting them in the novel, and applying the theories we chose to match the novel content. This part included an in-depth exploration of the themes related to civilization decline, societal collapse, and the impact of the pandemic on humanity as a whole. The chapter also examined the novel to contemporary concerns. Our research findings offered a thought-provoking depiction of civilization's decline Highlighting violence human extinction, and societal degradation, and through the lenses of Dystopia, Psychoanalysis, and Ecocriticism, we reflected the core messages and themes of the novels on our modern-day life.

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