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## "Station Eleven" and "Frankenstein": How Technology Affect Human Relationships

In western society, technology has become so entrenched into our lives that we are seemingly unable to perform daily tasks without it. Technology is ubiquitous, rapidly evolving, and provides many benefits to society. From smartphones, to digital tablets, and aircrafts, technology is able to connect us with each other from any corner of the globe through travel and communication. However, despite these advances, technology has also come with many negative impacts as well. Although technology brings us together, it has created a hiatus in our society causing individuals to have fewer face-to-face interactions with each other. Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* and Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* both utilize character development to portray technology's role in the isolation of individuals through the destruction of their current and future relationships with friends and family.

In the novel *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley portrays technology's influence on isolating individuals from their relationships through the example of Victor Frankenstein. The use of constant technology has changed the relationship dynamic of society today. Individuals who spend more than six hours per day on their phones or watching televisions tend to become tech addicts, and they neglect important aspects of their life like their relationships (Hodis and Brunner 840). Moreover, Victor Frankenstein dedicated every hour of every day to technology, and neglected his relationship with the love of his life. In the beginning of the novel, Victor falls in love with his adopted sister Elizabeth. However, as the novel progresses Victor's obsession with creating the creature, causes him to neglect her. In chapter 5, when Elizabeth writes a letter to Victor, she confesses her love for him, saying "I love you and that in my airy dreams of futurity you have been my constant friend and companion" (Shelley 130). Conversely, In Victor's letter to Elizabeth, he dedicates only one sentence to describe his love for her, because he is fully engrossed with discussing his own "secret" (Shelley 131).

All of his attention is focused on creating the monster and he disregards his relationship with Elizabeth. Another example of Victor's seclusion from his relationships due to technology is shown during the process of creating the monster. In the novel, Victor expresses his withdrawal from his friend Henry to the readers by quoting, "I saw plainly that he was surprised, but he never attempted to draw my secret from me; and although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to confide to him that event which was so often present to my recollection but which I feared the detail to another would impress more deeply"(Shelley 66). Withholding the secret of the monster he created, Victor reinforces his isolation from Henry. The seclusion described in the quote is more mental

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than physical. Technology addicts usually display symptoms such as loneliness and depression, from family and friends because of their unhealthy obsession. They create a self-absorbed world in which they ignore the care for others as they are too invested in their own digital lives (Hodis and Brunner 842). After the creating the creature, Victor becomes paranoid and is unable to express his feelings to anyone. His over obsession with the monster traps Victor inside his own thoughts, and further separates him from his loved ones.

Moreover, Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* reflects a decline in emotional connections, and relationships due to the overuse of technology. Throughout the novel, Mandel describes technological advancement before the collapse as problematic and toxic. In today's golden age of technology the author labels humans as "zombies," who sleepwalk through life. In chapter 26, as Clark Thompson interviews a young woman named Dahlia, she criticizes her boss Dan for his obsession with technology and corporate life. Dahlia explains how Dan is senselessly wandering through life as a "high functioning sleep walker" (Mandel 161), and is living in a "corporate world full of ghosts" (Mandel 161). The "high functioning sleep walker", as described by Dahlia is a clear criticism of the use of technology in modern society, as it blinds individuals to their surroundings.

Technology has allowed individuals to become independent as it can now handle multiple different complex tasks that once used to be done by people. Jobs such as mail carrier, weatherman, news anchor; have all been replaced by apps, further limiting interactions, as a majority of information can be accessed directly through a mobile device. The rise of individualism has resulted in a decline in relationship values, since technology is immersed in people's daily routines more than ever before (Hodis and Brunner 840). When Dahlia refers to this world as one full of ghosts, she complains that people (like Dan) who preoccupy themselves with technology, and lead their lives on their own have lost their ability to connect with others. Technology grants individuals independence, but this excessive self-reliance leads to ignorance towards society and others (Hodis and Brunner 841).

After the collapse of civilization many characters in the novel reflect upon their isolation in past relationships, and the regrets they may have. An example of this is shown through Garrett, one of the few survivors of the Georgian flu. When Garrett talks to Clark about his past, author Emily Mandel quotes, "Garrett had a wife and four-year-old twins in Halifax, but the last call he'd made was to his boss. The last words he'd spoken into a telephone were a bouquet of corporate clichés, seared horribly into memory" (Mandel 49). This quote reflects the emptiness he experienced with technology and his corporate life before the collapse of civilization; and compares it to the more connected nature of existence that replaced it. Before the collapse, advanced technology and fast paced societal development had undermined family values and relationships. After the outbreak of the Georgian flu, the first person Garrett called was his boss, rather than immediately checking on his family.

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The obsession with the technological and corporate world has forced individuals to detach themselves from their own family, without realizing it. Research itself has shown that technology-facilitated communication and work leads to miscommunications and detachment (Murray and Campbell 125). A study conducted in Netherland described the negative impact of the overuse of technology in work related environments on relationships. The results of the study showed that Individuals who worked more than 9 hours a day at a computer, have an increased risk of physiological problems in which they become completely aloof from their surroundings (Murray and Campbell 125).

These individuals tend to feel cognitive and emotional symptoms such as loneliness, which diverts them from their relationships (Murray and Campbell 126). After the collapse, where the period of modern technological world has come to an end, Garrett realizes and criticizes the grasp his old life had over him. His overuse of technology and corporate life distanced him from his family. However, the loss of technology allows him to reconnect with his family, but in a different way. The novels Station Eleven and Frankenstein contrast in their abundance of technology; however, both novels use character development to convey the idea that excessive use of technology destroys human connections. In Frankenstein, the author believes seclusion between individuals is due to the overuse of technology, and uses Frankenstein's monster as a symbol for technology, to better explain it.

He (Frankenstein's monster) becomes the product of Victor's character development, and ultimately separates him from the love of his life. Victor's decision to be consumed by technology is seen when the very representation of technology, directly causes the death of his beloved Elizabeth. Station Eleven presents the idea of redemption through Garett's character. A man who was formerly immersed in technology, which resulted in neglect towards his family, was able to reflect upon his previous actions and build new relationships with the people living in Severn city. Both novels share the common theme that "technology destroys an individual's relationships with their friends or family," although they go about it in different ways.

Technology today is growing exponentially, almost out of our control. Research supports the idea, that although technology in today's modern society is a necessity, obsessive use can cause isolation between individuals and their friends or family. It can cause a disconnect with things that truly matter in life, without the individual even knowing. In novels such as Station Eleven and Frankenstein, technology acts as an acid, eating way personal relationships, until nothing is left and individuals are immersed in their obsession. The characters in the novels become so engrossed in the technology they're working with that they fail to realize the consequences they may face in the future for their actions. Through their own creative uses of storytelling, both authors are able to emphasize the extreme impact of technology on society in their own way. The authors collectively suggest that technology should not be excessively used in our day-to-day lives; rather it should only be used to enhance our relationships with others.

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