

HOW DOES THE PAST INFLUENCE THE FUTURE IN S11?

The speculative fiction, Station Eleven, written by Emily St. John Mandel is based upon the social, environmental and philosophical consequences of an apocalypse. Through the series of flashbacks and galvanic story telling, Mandel uses the world of her text to depict how events within the past can consequentially influence the future. While past interactions inevitably acts as a catalyst to one's motives in the new world, memory of the former world elicits nostalgia, prompting survivors to grief upon what has been lost or grow appreciation for the things that still exist. Although memory plays a vital role in sculpturing the future, the endurance of art also has the capability of providing meaning and purpose to the people of the new world.

Mandel illustrates how past relationships can ultimately provide guidance and motivation for those in the new world. In the face of the pandemic that decimated the Earth and left only a few survivors, Tyler questions the reason as to why he is "spared". Thereby, this calamity induces him to turn towards faith which roots the idea that "everything happens for a reason". Elizabeth's post-collapse religious beliefs and in the need to "live a more spiritual life" alters Tyler perception of the world as his interactions and teachings by his mother positions his religious viewpoints to offer justification for the mass death and assuages the guilt of those who survived; you deserved to survive if you were "good" and not "weak". Along with Miranda's Dr. Eleven comics and Arthur's own womanising ways, Tyler is paved to become the Prophet in order to "spread the light". However, Mandel displays the dangers of his connections with other as his belief in catalyses his need for personal survival yet, in a society, a means for power and control. As a cult leader, Tyler's vision of reconfiguration, resetting and rebuilding a society unencumbered by the problems of the former world evokes him to abuse his power to take multiple wives for himself as they are "fated" to allow him to "repopulate the world". As such, he turns survival into revival as he means to create new narratives to try to explain the implications of the new world. Therefore, Mandel illustrates the how past interactions can merely cause more chaos and destruction in the future. Conversely, Jeevan's past dilemma of wanting to "do something that matters" sees him live a life of "truth and beauty" as a result of his interactions with Arthur. Jeevan's indecisive character amplifies his need to find a true goal in life. After his attempt of "compressing Arthur's unwilling heart" and the reflective comprehension of the actor "doing the thing he loved best in the world" during his final moments, Jeevan is inspired with the certainty that becoming a "paramedic was the right thing to do with his life". As such, it is demonstrated how significant human connection becomes in forming the stepping stones of the future. Jeevan's accomplishment of becoming "the closest thing to a doctor" sees him secure a career of his dream with a fragment of happiness. As a result, Mandel emphasises how past interactions, however strong, can have lasting impacts, ultimately, causing an influence in the future.

Further, Mandel demonstrates how nostalgia evokes survivors to take considerable admiration towards the objects which now preserve memories of the former world. Before the rise of the apocalypse, Mandel illustrates Clark administrating "360° assessment" interviews. It is here where his interview with Dahlia expresses humans to be "high-functioning sleepwalkers" to describe how individuals go through the motions of life, prioritising life and work without taking the time to admire the "splendours of the...world". With the aid of this memory, Clark comes to regard himself "as minimally as present in this world" as the "iPhone zombies" he previously chastised. Thereby, the "tears in his eyes" as he comes to realise the "beauty of flight" and beginning to establish a "current state of mind (where) all objects (are) beautiful" begins to make him realise how easily humans can take things for granted, something Mandel critiques of modern civilisation. This movement between time periods aims to build Clark's emotional depth as a character as he soon becomes the creator of the Museum of Civilisation to not only to persevere the evolution of humanity but also to serve as a reminder to remain hopeful with the thought that the world will begin to wake up again. As for Kirsten, Arthur is the "clearest memory" she retains from the old world. Although she cannot remember "her mother", depicting how something surreal is much more bearable in remembering than something so close to an individual, Arthur's "fleeting impression of kindness and grey hair" positions her to embark on a journey of collecting "tabloids" to keep her vision of the world alive. As Mandel highlights the desire of the survivors to look "for the former world, before all the traces of the former world are gone", she also illustrates the pain which arises with knowing what once

existed. Through Kirsten's belief that "the more you remember the more you've lost" Mandel illustrates how Tyler too had been suffering from the loss of luxuries and advancements as he "had the misfortune of remembering everything". Michael's little girl who comes home crying "because the teacher had let slip that life expectancies were much longer before the Georgia Flu" illustrates how the feeling of loss can make certain children emotional. Through this, Mandel showcases the misery memory of the past brings to the lives of the individuals, causing them to live a life in despair as they move forth into the evolving future. Yet, memory of the former world also serves comfort meaning as survivors hold on to hope, moving forward into the future.

Along with the endurance of art, the author portrays how individuals can be driven to establish a sense of meaning and hope. The "very driven, very together" Miranda is a woman "marooned in a strange planet" in which she is emotionally isolated from the rest of the world. The previous relationships with the controlling Pablo and heartless Arthur see her become attached to her comics which become her "constant". Through the Dr. Eleven comics, Mandel suggests the importance and primacy of imagination over remembrance in the wastelands of the future. The comics which run in parallel with the events of the pandemic ultimately affects the lives of both Tyler and Kirsten as they interpret Miranda's art in different concepts. To Tyler, Miranda's comics become an essential part of him as he becomes the Prophet under the motives of the world created within Station Eleven. For Kirsten, however, the comics merely provide her with a sense of hope and meaning to continue acting in the former world. Kirsten's firm response "in what other life would I get to perform Shakespeare" in response to maintaining a "steadier" life further articulates her passion for performance, emphasising the Travelling Symphony's motto that "survival is insufficient" without art. In performing Shakespeare to the survivors of the pandemic, Mandel presents how the result of the post collapse have driven the audience to endure a greater entertainment from plays based on Shakespeare as "people want what was best about the (former) world". Shakespearean plays also connect more effectively with the people of the post collapse world as both parties are living in a world where limited resources and chaos has made survival a difficult challenge. The relationship the Travelling Symphony forms with its audience where "the audience rose for a standing ovation" where "a man in the front row had tears in his eyes" demonstrates the significance of "trying to cast a spell" to bring some "elegance" to the lives of the survivors. It is the motif of Shakespeare throughout the non-linear structure of the novel that aids Mandel to depict to her readers how the past can effect the events of the future.

In the final analysis, Mandel illustrates the compelling manners in which the past can influence the future. Through the motif of memory and Shakespeare, the interactions survivors endure from their past prompt for the splintering of the beauty and immorality of humans in the new world. Although memory casts the people of the apocalypse to elicit grief and hope as they aim to discover oneself, survival of art is the mere stimulation in inspiring the outcomes of the future.