

The Mechanism of Survival in Post-Apocalyptic Pandemic Narratives: A Comparative Study

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Abstract—Post-Apocalyptic Fiction is a subgenre of science fiction in which a global crisis takes its toll on the human population, leaving only a few with the luck of surviving the scene. However, survival slowly develops into a determining power as the remaining people try to reconstruct a new civilization with the use of different strategies and mechanisms of survival. This study is then based on post-apocalyptic texts, particularly ones that are concerned with pandemics, and carefully examines and compares two ground-breaking narratives of post-apocalyptic fiction: Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978) and Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014). It attempts to explore the two narratives in terms of the strategies and mechanisms of survival as the two novelists recapture the survivors' experiences and their struggle to survive the ongoing post-apocalyptic setting.

Index Terms—pandemic, survival, Post-Apocalypse, Station Eleven, The Free Zone

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most distinctive and modern genres that literature withholds today is the genre of Post-Apocalyptic Fiction. This type of fiction, which makes use of elements from different narratives and artistic forms, includes a selection of different genres: science-fiction, futuristic, horror, utopian, and dystopian fiction. Typically identified by content, plot, and setting, Post-Apocalyptic Fiction depicts the collapse of a civilization and the demise of humanity as the aftermath of an apocalyptic event such as an environmental disaster, nuclear holocaust, pandemic, zombie outbreak, or alien invasion (Reddish, 1990).

The Post-Apocalyptic genre can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, yet it gained popularity in the twentieth century, particularly after the destruction caused by World War II and the atomic bombs against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, only to reach its peak of popularity during the Cold War tensions. All this promoted great fear that the next human holocaust would lead to the extinction of the human race (Stifflemire, 2017). A renewed interest in Post-Apocalyptic narratives started around the beginning of the twenty-first century, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the following global threats of terrorism, nuclear annihilation, and the growing calamities that surrounded the economy. Heather J. Hicks (2016), in her book *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity Beyond Salvage*, points out that the pressure of society and the loss of modernity led to the evolution of contemporary 'the end of the world' narratives that have become part of the cultural imagination and social consciousness.

The Post-Apocalyptic genre is characterised by a variety of themes, but one of its central themes is survival. Relatively, most narratives of this genre envision a depopulated world in a post-cataclysmic wasteland whereby a group of survivors is exposed to harsh, arduous circumstances in the midst of chaos, destruction, and suffering as each one of the survivors tries to break away from a malevolent and corrupted society and retain social order. Together, they try to begin a new life "after the end of life on earth" (Curtis, 2010, p. 5). The protagonists of these narratives embrace self-sustaining survival strategies, beginning with storing food and weapons, and face different challenges in a more primitive and savage mode of existence. They form a community in an organised system and slowly find other small and similar communities with which they can link and from which humanity can rise once again (Curtis, 2010).

This paper tends to shed light on the mechanisms of survival that are evident in the fictional worlds of Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978) and Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), where both writers give a dual focus on the virus and human survival through the surviving parties involved in the pandemic and subsequent post-apocalyptic world.

The Stand is an interwoven narrative that starts with the outbreak of a deadly virus killing approximately 99.4% of the Earth's population. The virus's creators unintentionally released it after starting it in a top-secret laboratory in the United States. Spreading quickly from one state to another and eventually the whole planet, only 0.6% of the population was lucky enough to survive. The survivors had distinctive immune systems that disabled the deadly effects of the virus. They wandered the streets with fear, and all life supplies started to expire or were quickly consumed. However, the survivors crossed each other's paths, leading to a meeting where they could discuss their plans for collective survival.

Little did they know that another nightmare was awaiting them. A fierce battle between good and evil was initiated between Mother Abigail and Randall Flagg, and the survivors were set to fight for what they believed would finally lead them to a safe community. Representing good and evil, respectively, both characters try to reconstruct life by convincing the survivors to take their side. While Stuart Redman, Frances Goldsmith, Nick Andros, Glen Bateman, Ralph Bretner, Susan Stern, and Larry Underwood sided with the good side, Harold Lauder and Nadine Cross were mostly involved with the bad side. When Randall Flagg was on the verge of winning the conflict by detonating an atomic bomb, the two sides eventually engaged in combat in Las Vegas, where Trashcan Man ultimately prevailed. All of Flagg's followers evaporated within seconds, with Flagg miraculously surviving the blast. The survivors start thinking again about different strategies for a peaceful and healthy beginning.

Station Eleven also reflects upon a setting before and after the world is hit with the deadly 'Georgia Flu, causing a near-human extinction within days. The world shuts down quickly; technology stops, and cities turn dark and silent. Jeevan Chaudhary manages to survive amidst the crises, withholding many strategies to bear the pressure of survival. He eventually heads South and marries, signalling a new hope for life. Kirsten Raymonde also manages to survive the post-apocalyptic scene with the help of her brother and wanders around the city with a group of musicians, performing Shakespeare's plays among survivors. Years later, she shows how she has preserved several books that a fellow actor gave her during her childhood twenty years ago, one of which is entitled *Dr. Eleven*. The group finally arrives at a city named St. Deborah by the Water that was controlled by a religious man known as "The Prophet," who was in fact Tyler, Arthur, and Elizabeth's son. As the group was trying to leave the city, a girl named Eleanor, who was promised to become the Prophet's wife. A battle arises between the musical group and the Prophet, ending with the killing of the Prophet by one of his own followers. It is at this moment that new life can start.

Each novel is analysed individually, and the strategies of survival are identified through the lenses of several necessary steps that have to be taken to survive the virus. The strategies selected for analysis in this paper are isolation and solitude, community formation, cultural survival, and reinvention.

II. THE FIRST STRATEGY: ISOLATION AND SOLITUDE

A. *Isolation and Solitude in Stephen King's The Stand*

Isolation is an evident strategy of survival in *The Stand*. With the outbreak of the Super Flu, where 99.4% of the population is wiped away, isolation constitutes a natural response survivors depend on, trying to protect themselves from the reality of the ongoing mass extinction. The first factor of isolation is the setting, which mostly includes the desert. Survivors flee towards such areas, viewing them as an option where survival would be more promising, as they may be used as a hiding place far away from the dangers of the city. Departing the cities to survive is then the initial step in order to recollect the energy and resurrect the sustainability of life in the healthiest ways possible (Wampler, 2020). Among the characters who managed to escape were Frances Goldsmith and Harold Lauder. They realised that isolation would be the safest strategy for survival. They started travelling from one place to another carefully, where they would coincidentally meet others along the way, like Stuart Redman. It was difficult for Harold to trust anyone to join them, especially since most of the civilization's norms had perished with the nearly complete disappearance of humankind. Harold decides to preserve his isolated state and joins the opposing team rather than following the norms of his surroundings and his fellow survivors. This choice has led him towards unfortunate consequences and ultimately his demise. He is convinced that hate and pride are nobler than other features like love and community. On a wider scale, the zone in Las Vegas, which is under the control of Randall Flagg, is completely isolated from other parts and communities (Cassuto, 1992). Isolation also led to an increase in murder, suicide, and death because of the simplest health issues among survivors, leading to an even more diminishing number of the planet's population. No doctors were available in the Free Zone, a phase King refers to with the term 'aftershock', which included "people like Mark Braddock with his burst appendix, but also the accidents, the suicides, yes, and murder, too. That takes us down to 1.8 million" (King, 2020, p. 689). The missing role of a healthy community then forced the isolation of survivors and resulted in mental breakdowns, fear, and overthinking, causing a change in both appearance and behaviour. Larry Underwood is portrayed as having gotten a lot slimmer and skinnier than before. While he had once recorded a hit record, now he was "poised on some metaphoric (or metabolic) fence between scrawniness and emaciation. He had grown a beard and it was actually rather striking, a tawny red-gold two shades lighter than his hair. His eyes were sunken deep in his face; they glittered out of their sockets like small, desperate animals that had been trapped in twin pit-snares" (King, 2020, p. 469). Their isolation also led to a change in behaviour. Survivors had access to everything now, and they could simply "break the glass, walk in, and take it. Everything, that was, expect the companionship of your fellows" (King, 2020, p. 475). Surviving such a post-apocalyptic scene for pregnant women was even harder. The babies would not necessarily survive, even if their mothers were immune and isolated. Isolation might therefore be an option to protect survivors from any sort of danger, but it does not necessarily save the upcoming generation. On the other hand, the lifecycle of animals will most likely leave the world with an opportunity to be overpopulated with wild animals like deer since they will not be hunted as much as before. Isolation also made it difficult to keep track of time, as they were not sure which timing would be the correct one since the clocks read different times. Lucy states that the only correct one is found in a certain state that has the accurate time down to the smallest particle of seconds. She complains that her thousand-dollar Pulsar watch is useless now since it does not have the right timing. However,

Mother Abigail is the most significant character who lives in isolation. She lives alone on a farm, far away from the American society because of concepts like race, sect, and age. Although she is seen as some divine spirit who calls for the foundation of a new community, she also insists on being alone and even takes her distance when the community in The Free Zone needs her advice the most (Pharr, 1992).

B. Isolation and Solitude in Station Eleven

Isolation is also a natural response to the pandemic that Mandel's characters experienced, given the fact that the Georgia Flu brought an end to life as the characters knew it through contact with others, thus indicating a need for containment. However, it is a theme in the book, and therefore a strategy for survival, that is framed in negative terms. For instance, Kirsten becomes separated from the travelling Symphony and, along with her sole companion August, must employ strategies of survival until she can find them again. Isolation is therefore a valid approach given how dangerous the landscape is for those who do not have safety in numbers, although it is not presented as a desirable one. Indeed, Kirsten appears to lose touch with her sense of morality in order to embrace a more savage need to survive, which colours her thoughts and approach to life: "She had once met an old man up near Kincardine who'd sworn that the murdered follow their killers to the grave, and she was thinking of this as they walked, the idea of dragging souls across the landscape like cans on a string" (Mandel, 2015, p. 297). This return to a primitive mode of survival therefore raises the question of how much isolation or solitude actually takes out of a person in terms of their behaviour and attitude, where survival becomes paramount and trumps everything else. Kirsten's experience is indicative of what Philip Smith refers to as the seeds of civilization, the shift from a society returned to primitivism that found the first shoots of modernity returning to redefine the collective (Mandel, 2015). These shoots provide a reminder that there is a need to remain civilised and nurture the values that are associated with civilization, despite the fact that little of it remains. Indeed, Bergeron refers to it as a battle against the profound dehumanisation that survivors face when they are forced to approach life alone as opposed to within structured societies that retain the social and cultural values that civilization held dear (Mandel, 2015). Such dehumanisation is visible in Kirsten's behaviour, if only in brief flashes, but that should not detract from the fact that isolation is a very visible strategy of survival in the novel.

Frank Chaudhary is another character who experiences isolation as a survival strategy, but, like Kirsten, it is a temporary one. This is largely because he recognises that such an approach is unsustainable in a new, unknown, and far harsher world where surviving favours both the brave and the able. Frank is disabled and uses a wheelchair, having been shot while working for Reuters in a war zone, but recognises the need to isolate in order to protect himself and his brother, Jeevan, from the dangers that await them outside their apartment as a consequence of the collapse of civilization. Frank is fully aware of his limitations and his dependence on others, but he is also aware of the incompatibility of his personal situation and the fall of the world as he knew it, as is made clear when he responds to Jeevan's naive expectation that they will return to normal with a simple yet pertinent question: "What makes you think the lights will come back on?" (Mandel, 2015, p. 179). Isolation is therefore the only possible choice for Frank to live, and even though he chooses suicide over the impossibility of post-apocalyptic life, it still remains a key strategy when the world around them collapses. Somewhat ironically, this choice leaves Jeevan alone to traverse the country in order to escape Toronto. The brothers are therefore victims of circumstance, much like Kirsten. As such, although isolation is a strategy for survival, it is not one that should be deemed desirable but rather borne out of necessity where community formation either fails or is not possible in the first instance.

III. THE SECOND STRATEGY: COMMUNITY FORMATION

A. Community Formation in The Stand

In *The Stand*, forming a community is the next step of survival. Psychologically proven, one of the major existential human instincts to survive is to be part of a community, a place where individuals find their value: "In other words, the instinct does not come from the need of an association with people in general, but from specific groups without which no individual has ever survived. The individual...brings to the group a predisposition to identify himself with it, and its influence on him arises from his own nature" (Miller, 1921, pp. 336-337). The formation of communities in this novel has two major concepts: communities based on good and others based on evil. Mother Abigail represents the individual with good values. She served as a surrogate mother for the good people, who took the eastern areas of the United States as their new starting point and Boulder as its centre (Magistrale, 2006). She was considered a "theocratic symbol" or "an earthly symbol of a covenant made with God" (King, 2020, p. 777).

On the other hand, Randall Flagg took Nevada, Las Vegas as his own new territory of evil. Communication was a much more difficult process now to help in the formation of both of the new communities. No possibility of long-distance communication was possible now, with only dreams, radio, and road signs providing a chance for these two communities to be reinvented. The earliest form of communication in this post-apocalyptic setting was when Harold marked the road signs to get survivors to Boulder, Colorado, which later came to be known as the 'Free Zone.' He also dated the signs so survivors would realise that they had been marked by a living human not too long before (Ratto, 2017). Mother Abigail also managed to call on survivors to head to Boulder, Colorado. Here, all the good citizens may stay safe, and Stuart Redman quickly suggests the necessity of establishing a government since they are currently only a few in number. A committee of seven people was selected temporarily to supervise the creation of this community.

They included Stuart Redman, Frances Goldsmith, Nick Andros, Glen Bateman, Ralph Bretner, Susan Stern, and Larry Underwood, stating that “We’re politicians here. The first politicians of the new age” (King, 2020, p. 756). They immediately started planning meetings, as the community was in need of restoration and organisation. The more meetings that were held, the more populated the community became. It was necessary to be notified of who exactly was present and who left, as they felt there might be some intruders present. That is why the people were counted. There were 814 people in the meeting, and their names were to be listed in alphabetical order the next time there was another meeting. During the meetings, they started noticing that Nadine and Harold had developed some strange attitudes. It was their isolation from this community that led them to join the community of darkness. Harold and Nadine were set up to destroy one of the private meetings that the seven main committee members were having by implanting a bomb before the meeting would start. Nadine felt uncomfortable with the fact that she was going to cause the deaths of people, but Randall Flagg never resisted to beckon her into bombing the place that claimed the lives of Nick Andros, Sue Stern, and Chad Norris when the bomb went off in their headquarter. Randall Flagg declared that their mission was over and that it was now time for her to head West with Harold to join his evil community. Their isolation had finally come to an end. The Free Zone community insisted on surviving the horrors of this post-apocalyptic world, and they made an effort to determine whether they could trust Mother Abigail with this newly formed committee and whether she would in turn approve of them. The meetings also suggested that the Free Zone should become a republic. They also wanted to have a new police system to get some of the peace restored with what they would call ‘The Law Committee.’ There was also ‘The Burial Committee,’ organised with Chad Norris as the head of the committee. The deceased were buried in masses and were put down into their graves with the help of Harold’s truck like “a grotesque human rain” (King, 2020, p. 845). They were even called “units” rather than people (King, 2020, p. 846). The bodies were removed from the houses and marked with an ‘X’: “In another month that mark would be all over Boulder, signifying the end of an age” (King, 2020, p. 879). Restoring the power was also taken seriously. They had several tests done on a day they named “Power Day”, when all the TVs and other electrical supplies started working. This overuse of power led to explosions and the destruction of many supplies in town. The next step was for them to turn off all devices and then try again. It was a successful plan that led to the restoration of power. They were also after legal order to prevent any disorder as much as possible, as everything was getting out of hand. All this proves that community offers greater chances of surviving the post-apocalyptic scene. More group work was done to reach an acceptable and healthy society. The Free Zone became a more stable place where it “had been transformed from a loose group of refugees into potential voters” (King, 2020, p. 730). In the meetings, the terror Flagg was causing was also deeply discussed. Protection must be offered in a community, and evil should be prepared to be deflected, especially when it was rumoured that Flagg would crucify anyone who went out of order in the areas he controlled: “The penalty for disobedience was crucifixion” (King, 2020, p. 987). They also discussed the possibility of him using nuclear weapons. Glenn says that he cannot read the future, yet he can assume what has been going on. Their existence was not due to being on a death trip, as human beings were never far from being on one. Rather, they were survivors because their visions had led them towards the idea of a new existence. That would be the real purpose—the start of a new life, or what Glen calls ‘irrationalism.’ Moments before Mother Abigail dies, she asks for all the remaining members to gather around her. She declares that God did not allow them to survive to create communities or committees, but to destroy Flagg first. She then points her finger to the remaining four members: Stu, Larry, Glen, and Ralph. They were to go West to fulfil this obligation. She has no knowledge of whether they will win the standoff, but she assures them that God will help them fight this supernatural being. Although many of them had doubts, Abigail assured them they should have faith in God and trust Him.

B. Community Formation in *Station Eleven*

In a close analysis of *Station Eleven*, Murat Kabak notes that Mandel does not use the more well-trodden tropes of post-apocalyptic literature, one of which is the ragged bands of survivors that roam the landscape, engaging in violence with their fellow survivors (2021). Instead, she reworks and reframes the collective, constructing communities of survivors. Community formation occurs in two notable cases in *Station Eleven*. The first case is that of the Travelling Symphony, whose motto is “survival is insufficient”, thus indicating that merely surviving is not enough even in the unfamiliar post-apocalyptic world they are traversing. Indeed, their movement links the colonies that are surviving together and provides a point of attachment to their shared cultural and social heritage (Bergeron, 2019). This taps directly into the fact that the group are essentially strolling players who are brought together by their need to survive and their desire to take culture to the masses in order to give them something to live for rather than simply surviving from day to day. Movement, Susan Watkins contends, lends the community flexibility and the opportunity to adapt and thrive in their new environment, fostering inclusivity and the potential for transformation (Bergeron, 2019). In this sense, belonging is necessary for the survival of humanity insofar as maintaining specific and highly desirable behaviours, skills, and values is concerned.

The desirability of community formation is not framed as wholly positive by Mandel in *Station Eleven*. Instead, she frames it as a survival strategy that nurtures the mind and increases the chances that individual members of the collective stay alive. This is particularly pertinent in passages where she directly contrasts these two elements:

There were moments around campfires when someone would say something invigorating about the importance of art, and everyone would find it easier to sleep that night. At other times it seemed a difficult and dangerous way to survive and hardly worth it, especially at times when they had to camp between towns, when they were

turned away at gunpoint from hostile places, when they were traveling in snow or rain through dangerous territory, actors and musicians carrying guns and crossbows... (Mandel, 2001, p. 119)

This particular passage exemplifies the multifaceted nature of survival strategies that are grounded in community formation and taps into the need for meaningful cultural expression as much as human interaction and the safety in numbers that it induces. The latter point is actually vital when communities protect themselves against outsiders in a post-apocalyptic scenario. Therefore, it is not just cultural expression that is a necessity to overcome struggle (Feldner, 2018), but the collectivity it thrives on and underpins.

The second example of community formation is related to religion. Along with being a significant thematic concern of the novel, faith is a significant source of community formation in *Station Eleven* and therefore also manifests as a survival strategy. Faith is, after all, one of the major tenets of human culture that is worth preserving, according to Mandel (Abdullah, 2021). However, Tyler Leander's view of faith is funnelled through the religious fundamentalism of the cult he leads, based upon the belief that everything happens for a reason (Mandel 59). His "apocalyptic determinism" (De Cristofaro, 2019, p. 33) enables Tyler to justify the establishment of a violently misogynistic cult built on hegemonic masculine power and a doctrine that effectively blames humanity for its corruption and sin. This does, however, not justify Tyler's singular worldview and its exclusionary conservative evangelicalism, but it does set it against the spirit of the Travelling Symphony. The Prophet's strategy for survival and procreation is indicative of what Pieter Vermeulen refers to as "the fundamental contingency of all human forms of life" (9) in that the situation enables him to appeal to the worst instincts of those around him to obtain power via the exploitation of a community-based strategy of survival.

The worst instincts are clearly borne out by the actions of Tyler and his followers, who considered themselves "the only rightful interpreters and agents of the apocalyptic goal of history, the utopian renewal of the post-pandemic world" (De Cristofaro, 2019, p. 34). Kirsten interprets their actions of killing, enslaving, assaulting, and raping as indicative of the fact that there is nothing they cannot justify (Mandel, 2001), and this attitude is conducive to achieving the overriding goal of obtaining power through the creation of an exclusionary community. This is a strategy for survival because it sets the Prophet up as an arbiter of order and justice, enabling him to govern his community "[a]ll the time smiling, so peaceful like they've done nothing wrong" (Mandel, 2001, p. 273). Their actions are wrong, and the direct contrast with the community of the Travelling Symphony highlights how damaging faith can be when it is a source of manipulation, but that should not detract from the fact that both communities are mechanisms through which survival is possible. Mandel consistently promotes the idea that community can help to redraw the traditional lines and boundaries of society (Leggatt, 2018), and the communities referred to in the narrative demonstrate that in a highly effective way. However, all of them remain connected via a cultural network that appears to be preserved via a different strategy for survival.

It can be seen that individuals are capable of living in isolation for a while. For a period of time after surviving the flu, the characters are portrayed as being detached from being part of society. The reason is because they have been able to "see the skull beneath the skin," thereby activating the Gothic side of the Dark Romantics. It was the core reason characters had the desire to avoid the means of society and all that was related to it. They had a chance to either save what was left of the world or to destroy it (Magistrale, 2006).

IV. THE THIRD STRATEGY: CULTURAL SURVIVAL

A. *Cultural Survival in The Stand*

Cultural devastation is noticeable as one of the aftermaths of the Super Flu. The reinvention of communities calls for an urgent resurrection of a culture with common principles that match the moral codes of a healthy community. It is a clear battle between science and the divine. Science and people's curiosity are clearly backstabbing their own creators. While Project Blue was designed to fulfil certain scientific purposes, science was not able to save people from the virus. Because of the government, America has really become a nuclear-age American society with an interest in starting germ warfare (Morris, 2001). On the other hand, religion plays a crucial role in the reinvention of the post-apocalyptic scene in Boulder. Since evil did not have any key role during the creation of the world, Satan forced himself into the world, interfering with all that is good. A similar situation can be found after the flu has ended, leaving only a few to endure the aftermath. However, for some, it may have been considered a good start. Stuart, for instance, was not religious at all in the pre-apocalyptic phase of his life. His father had died when he was just seven, and he was forced to work to support his family at nine. He also lost a scholarship and membership in his school's football club because his mother was diagnosed with cancer. His brother, however, was able to maintain a scholarship and left home, while he became an employee at a calculator factory. Later, his wife suffered a miscarriage and died of cancer. It was a lifetime filled with hardships. However, the post-apocalypse was an opportunity to reinvent himself. He got together with the woman of his dreams, Frannie Goldsmith. He then became involved in the quest to fight against evil and was sent out into the desert to fight Randall Flagg. His faith was tested, and he showed his belief in God's process by taking full responsibility to continue the task God had assigned him in order to survive and start a new chapter of his life (Morris, 2001). In the meantime, survivors sing "The Star Spangled Banner," a song that shows devotion to the U.S. government, the ones who were responsible for the foundation of this virus. Despite such a fact, it symbolises order, and it contains

the original purpose of wanting to unify the different states together within one peaceful nation. They also read the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

Cultural survival is also evident in Las Vegas, which looks more like Hitler's Germany. However, organisation and cultural reinvention were their mottos too:

From 8 A.M. to 5 P.M., everybody was working, either at Indian Springs or on the maintenance crews here in town. And school had started again. There were about twenty kids in Vegas, ages ranging from four (that was Daniel McCarthy, the pet of everyone in town, known as Dinny) up to fifteen. They had found two people with teaching certificates, and classes went on five days a week. Lloyd, who had quit school after repeating his junior year for the third time, was very proud of the educational opportunities that were being provided. The pharmacies were open and unguarded. (King, 2020, p. 1047)

Technology resumed its importance in the post-apocalyptic scene, just like before. But negative things were also inherited, as the desire to take down people of diverse nature seems to remain a priority, evidently seen in the last scene of the novel, where a nuclear bomb is set off in Las Vegas, the zone Randall Flagg controlled.

B. Cultural Survival in Station Eleven

Community formation and cultural survival may be deemed two distinct forms of survival strategy, but in *Station Eleven*, they feed into each other. This is particularly prominent in the case of Kirsten. As a part of the Travelling Symphony, she actively spreads human cultural heritage through those communities that have formed in the wake of the impact of the Georgia flu via the plays of William Shakespeare. However, she also clings to any semblance of culture she can find. For example, she and August find magazines in a house that they are looting, and she is delighted to find that "at least the celebrity gossip survived" (Mandel, 2015, p. 201). At one point, Dieter also admits that the Travelling Symphony's motto "...would be way more profound if we hadn't lifted it from *Star Trek*" (Mandel, 2015, p. 119). This taps into popular culture and the fact that many of the characters in the novel are unwilling to forget the impact that creativity had on their lives prior to the Georgia flu pandemic, but also outlines the case for cultural survival being an important survival strategy in terms of making sense of who they are as individuals and as a collective with a shared cultural background (Leggatt, 2018). There is no apparent categorization or hierarchy of culture in the new landscape, but rather an appreciation of culture for culture's sake, and this manifests in a survival strategy that extends beyond simply existing.

There is also a particular pattern of survival present in the cultural release provided by Dr. Eleven, the comic book that Tyler uses almost as a manual containing a message that drives his decision-making, almost as if it were doctrine, and that fuels Kirsten's "escapist dreams" (Leggatt, 2018, p. 12). The comic itself provides a strategy for cultural survival by its very nature, according to Hilary Chute, who argues that the comic's spatial syntax can be harnessed to challenge notions of causality, linearity, and chronology to open up historical discourses and malleable spaces that give way to creativity without succumbing to the damaging potential of nostalgia (4). In effect, it is a form that allows individuals to make sense of narratives and events in their own way, thus nurturing individuality through the collective medium.

The survival of Dr. Eleven is indicative of cultural survival despite the way of life present before the flu outbreak ended. Indeed, Mandel makes it clear that many of the cultural elements of life succumb to the pandemic as human life itself struggles to survive:

No more Internet. No more social media, no more scrolling through litanies of dreams and nervous hopes, and photographs of lunches, cries for help and expressions of contentment and relationship status updates with heart icons whole or broken, plans to meet up later, pleas, complaints, desires, pictures of babies dressed as bears or peppers for Halloween. No more reading and commenting on the lives of others, and in so doing, feeling slightly less alone in the room. No more avatars. (Mandel, 2015, p. 32)

This list is just a snippet of the sixth chapter, which effectively accounts for what was lost as a result of the spread of the flu, but it also serves as a reminder of exactly what it is we take for granted and would soon miss should the worst happen (Bergeron, 2019). The minutiae of the culture that abruptly ended with the spread of the flu provides an insight into what was lost in the post-apocalyptic world depicted in Mandel's novel, but the graphic novel itself provides a record of that culture as a direct consequence of the recognition of events that occurred prior to Arthur Leander's death. It preserves the substance of life and society that was pervasive before the reset and therefore provides a means of ensuring cultural survival. It is interesting, however, that Mandel mentions connectivity, which makes the individual feel less alone, thus juxtaposing those who choose a solitary survival strategy with those who seek community. This is reflected in the analysis by Hannah Bellwoar, Daniel Dries, and Donna Weimer, who note how welded we are to technology and how the oral culture embraced by the community in *Station Eleven* is effectively a return to life before technology (Bellwoar et al., 2021). They note that oral culture is a feature of communal living, but it is also a means of ensuring that there is cultural survival via memory and the process of remembering.

The Museum of Civilization is indicative of the strategy to promote cultural survival via memory. The institutional preservation of culture stems from the belief that "survival without culture is insufficient" (Bellwoar et al., 2021, p. 20). This is a play on the motto Kirsten lives by when with the Travelling Symphony, but it also taps into the process of making sense of culture and the role it plays in community and indeed society formation. As librarian Francois Diallo puts it, "[t]he more we know about the former world, the better we'll understand what happened when it fell" (Mandel,

2015, p. 114). The collection of artefacts for display introduces a sense of nostalgia that is not present in other strategies for survival but may actively provide a reminder of what is lost and, beyond that, the need to adapt to a new world.

Many died in the post-apocalyptic scene, even if they were blessed with being immune. The loss of the social framework created defects in the security and health systems and an absence of authority, making it harder for people to survive. Technology, a human-based invention, grew out of control, and with this, the King wanted to highlight the role of the divine to decide the upcoming faith for survivors. The disease was not a natural one; it was a pure technological invention developed in labs that eventually managed to overpower its creators.

V. FOURTH STRATEGY: REINVENTION

There is a fourth strategy for survival present in both *The Stand* and *Station Eleven* that is somewhat ignored within academic analysis because it is not built upon the premise of physical removal from community or belonging to a collective. Instead, it is a more personal and individualised survival strategy, taking the form of reinvention.

A. *Reinvention in The Stand*

Reinvention is also a powerful factor found in *The Stand*. The nuclear bomb, which is normally considered a global threat, had a different impact in the concluding scene of this novel. Trashcan man enters Las Vegas with the bomb in front of Randall Flagg himself. The one with the dark and evil features once had “a pale face” as he knew that the bomb would mean the demise of him and his entire territory of Las Vegas. It was not too long after that the bomb was set off, and the entire population there was reduced to nothingness. It truly had destroyed a city, but it had also cleansed the evil project of Flagg (Collings, 2006). God’s interference saved Boulder from danger in the end. This parallels the incident of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham remained faithful despite the pressure, and God eventually honoured his patience by sparing Isaac’s life. *The Stand* also reflects the loyalty of its characters, and even Larry, Ralph, Whitney, and Trash had some compassion at certain moments, and that is why God saved Boulder from the dangers of Randall Flagg. This might be a reminder of how Abraham asked God to save the cities from destruction. God gave the condition that there should be at least ten “righteous within the city” (Gen 18:24.32) in order to have the city saved. With the fulfilment of this condition, God indeed bestowed His mercy upon this city, which may reflect the way God saved Boulder from the destruction of a nuclear weapon since there are good people in the different cities of the United States. With this idea, King wants to restate the idea of God’s existence, which almost perished after the American Revolution and America’s independence (Morris, 2001).

The novel also reflects the reinvention of humanity’s lust for power. Even after the crucial phase of the post-apocalyptic scene appears to have ended, the desire for control still exists. It seems Flagg has survived the nuclear bomb and reinvented himself in a different form, already recruiting a new army to retain darkness. King concludes the narrative with hope and inspiration as well. Stu and Fran are portrayed to be overlooking a scene with playing children while deciding for their future and relocating themselves to a place they find more fitting. Although justice has prevailed for the time being, evil will always be around the corner to devastate the communities once more. That is why preparation and protection are the keys to a successful community in terms of survival. King creates a chain in the novel, opening it with the flu and closing it with the possibility of the reappearance of evil and the destruction of communities once more. This reflects the cycle of existence, where the two contrasting concepts are always destined to construct the essence of this cycle (Magistrale, 2006).

B. *Reinvention in Station Eleven*

Initially a paparazzo, Jeevan Chaudhary reinvents himself by becoming an entertainment journalist and then an EMT. His paraplegic brother, Frank, becomes a ghost writer after his job as a combat reporter is cut short. Miranda Carroll was initially an artist and the obsessed author of her graphic novel, *Dr. Eleven*, before becoming a highly successful businesswoman. Clark Thompson embarks upon a career as an actor before becoming a businessman and then a curator of obsolete objects for the Museum of Civilization in the post-pandemic world. Finally, Tyler Leander reinvents himself as the Prophet, the leader of the religious cult that is itself a form of survival strategy. This demonstrates a clear pattern simply by outlining the narrative arcs of several major characters in the novel, but it is also embedded within the premise of the novel from the start. For instance, Arthur Leander’s final lines from his performance of *King Lear* prior to collapsing are broadly unspoken in the text, with a single refrain being uttered: “I remember thine eyes well enough” (Mandel, 2015, p. 1). Those that precede this line in the play’s text reflect on what is to come in Mandel’s novel, though: “O ruin’d piece of nature! This great world / Shall so wear out to naught” (Shakespeare 19.129–130). These lines outline the need for reinvention on a much larger scale than simply changing jobs in order to survive. This particular strategy therefore crystallises the adaptability that all characters display in their determination to survive and truly live.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the main strategies of survival presented in the post-apocalyptic worlds constructed in Mandel’s novel, *Station Eleven*, and King’s novel *The Stand*. The strategies of isolation, community formation, cultural survival, and finally reinvention are not all mutually exclusive and pursued by different characters; rather, they highlight the multi-layered nature of survival in the post-pandemic era. Community formation and cultural survival

heavily overlap and repeatedly reinforce the notion that simply surviving is not enough for the human race to thrive after the spread of a deadly flu. There is an overt need to get humanity back to the essence and promote the flexibility of reinvention, the importance of the collective, and the vitality of cultural expression. Although isolation and solitude do not immediately appear to be suited to this endeavour, the characters who engage in such strategies of survival ultimately prioritise the collective over their own individual approaches. However, despite the intersecting strategies of survival, the merits of each one must also be acknowledged individually. For instance, reinvention is a necessity based on the disjunction between pre- and post-apocalyptic life, but it keenly illustrates the will to survive on the part of those who also survived the virus initially. This pattern of behaviour is therefore naturally replicated in multiple ways and is a key strategy for survival. The same can be said of community formation, despite the fact that its representation moves slightly away from well-established post-apocalyptic literary tropes. Community solidarity is important in maintaining elements of social interaction that are not present when individuals become isolated, whether by choice or by accident. In contrast, cultural strategies for survival remind us of what has been lost and enable societies to rebuild without abandoning any semblance of cultural heritage. As such, each of the four strategies for survival that have been identified and discussed in this report produces different outcomes and contributes to the overall survival of the human race in both Mandel and King's novels.

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