

Global Pandemics in Literature: Voices from the Edge in *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel 2014¹

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Abstract

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* provides a profound examination of a post-pandemic reality, in which the disintegration of civilization caused by the Georgia Flu serves as both a tangible and metaphorical framework. This article analyzes the novel's thematic exploration of global pandemics, emphasizing the survival, memory, and resilience of human groups following these devastating occurrences. This perspective focuses on the significance of art, especially through the Traveling Symphony, which maintains cultural continuity during societal disintegration. The narrative's broken form, alternating among several perspectives, mirrors the disordered essence of post-pandemic existence and highlights distinct experiences of trauma and hope. The novel also examines existential inquiries on human connection, the significance of life, and the essence of civilization during catastrophe. *Station Eleven*, through its complex depiction of survival, examines the potential for individual and communal transformation after a worldwide catastrophe, so enriching the discourse on how pandemics alter society and human identity in literature.

Keywords: John Mandel, Pandemic, Station Eleven, Ubiquity, Dark Perspectives.

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1. Introduction

Several authors have articulated, either explicitly or implicitly, the ubiquity of pandemics in imaginative fiction. A novel narrates the plight of a small cohort of survivors of a global influenza pandemic as they endeavor to preserve their humanity in a new dark age, amidst the deterioration of both planned and organic relics of pre-pandemic society. The work has garnered much acclaim and was notably relevant, having been published several years before to the onset of worldwide societal collapse in early 2020. In the five years preceding the COVID-19 epidemic, some literary critics observed an abundance of pandemic-themed literature emerging after major events, and it would be intriguing to interpret the poem as a reflection on contemporary grievances. However, protagonist Kirsten prefers to avoid contemplating it, if feasible. The authors of these additional texts are also archaeologists, however their objectives and methodologies diverge.

Subsequently, effective social network analysis approaches will be employed to examine the novel. Numerous important fictional works and noteworthy writings on major events contribute, for better or worse, to the extensive literature regarding numerous apocalyptic scenarios. Nonetheless, textual evidence indicates an abnormally extensive network of people and scenes in the initial pages of the novel relative to comparable apocalyptic works. Moreover, an exceptionally elevated mean character centrality score signifies a profound dedication to what is termed "radial development," wherein texts delineate the "psychological centers" of their characters rather than the linear progression of the story. The twenty-page introduction employs characters and situations to create a sequence of "radial rings," ranging from modest to epic in scale, utilizing the novelistic form to narrate the story of civilization's demise.

2. Literature Review

Many studies have primarily concentrated on particular writers and texts, lacking comparative research. This paper employs diverse methods and methodologies to shape its approach to narrative, critical literary, and thematic analysis of pandemic literature. It also circumvents the theoretical discussions regarding counsel to fervent enthusiasts and medical humanists. The recurrence of similar themes and motifs across diverse works suggests the possibility for more comprehensive comparative investigation. The essay promotes the importance of analyzing contemporary works in relation to COVID-19 and persistent global health emergencies; while acknowledging the intricacies of the current era, academic inquiry must foster a sense of historicism.

Many pandemics have been recounted in literature. Sigurd Bergmann and Martin Lindström Argue that “In his book, Nakstad describes how in the pandemic’s initial phase many countries in Europe acted hesitantly and slowly in comparison to Asian countries that acted rapidly implementing well-planned measures”. (Bergmann and Lindström, 2023, para 2) Historical realist fiction depicts fear and spread, positing that the plague serves as a metaphor for the apprehension of the "other." While acknowledging the allure of disaster fiction, characterized by its "atmosphere of general catastrophe," it is also observed that these hypothetical and broader contagions frequently lack medical, scientific, and sociological precision. Although the appeal of the apocalyptic is recognized, there is a discernible lack of narratives that focus on more mundane and plausible occurrences. These critical perspectives reflect significant doubt in academia regarding the literary value of unexamined calamity. Concerns identical to those in the novel are reflected in pandemic fictions that were published prior. A rebuttal to the utilitarian perspective posits that narrative is vital, scrutinizing the unique significance of traumas. A comprehensive collection of pandemic tales is sought, reflecting cultural shifts, including the proliferation of medications and the global impact of pandemic-related disabilities. This study specifically concentrates on 'isolated outbreak narratives' from the 1970s and 1980s that directly anticipated a significant work, while excluding individual works with a global perspective.

2.1. The Depiction of Global Pandemics in Literature:

Historical records confirm the existence of literary works created to examine life in the context of contagious ailments, a tradition that was formally established by The Decameron.” For example, the description of plague in the Decameron by Italian writer Boccaccio makes us find that literature actually records those major diseases or plagues in the historical process in its unique way, and the influence of diseases on human society and collective mind cannot be underestimated.” (Qing Ye,2023,p405). Rather than detailing the chronological progression of a pandemic agent, the authors recount a few representative experiences interspersed with pauses and silences, within the context of a collectively experienced catastrophe. Disease narratives encompass intricate and conflicting emotions, including compassion from physicians, as well as rage and resentment, while recounting common experiences of terror, survival, longing, and community. Two emotions frequently influence these representations: thanatophobia, the fear of one's mortality, and nosophobia, the fear of illness. Nevertheless, this is frequently mitigated by accounts of compassion, healing, and benevolence.

Historical records indicate that literary output experiences a significant transformation during pandemics. Literature concerning disease has transitioned from cumulative pandemic

narratives to those centered on a solitary pathogenic agent. In *The Plague*, allegory is utilized to expound upon 'the pure cruelty and gratuitous malevolence of Nature' through literary imagination. Disease in the humanistic tradition serves as an allegory for human 'vulgarity, all too eager to impose shame onto natural bodies,' and also as a symbolic monstrosity that encapsulates human anxieties around mortality. In this setting, pandemic literature conveys the experiences of lives lost, survivors, and the potential for catastrophic societal collapse. The paper will demonstrate that this intricacy necessitates a concentrated examination of the representation of global pandemics in literary texts and their ramifications. Considering the ramifications of this literature on the general public, it is crucial to examine the representation of global pandemics and their survivors. These pandemics are linked to current academic study, representing 'the top of an iceberg that is terror management research, a culmination of much inquiry into the profound fear of mortality and the frequently unarticulated yet compelling wish to survive.' Beyond several practical applications, disease narratives may theoretically serve as 'a means to investigate the intricacies of culture.' Seçmen Emre Ahmet argues that "By demonstrating how animated narratives can serve as fertile grounds for philosophical and psychological inquiry, this exploration affirms the intellectual and cultural significance of the animated medium ". (Emre Ahmet, 2024 p240). Literature can serve us a significant guidance to survival methods and the outcomes of human resilience.

2.2. Principle Themes and Motifs in Pandemic Literature:

The literature on pandemics and new study regarding the COVID-19 pandemic examines scholars' simultaneous fascination and discomfort with contemporary narratives about disease in the writer's imagination. Regardless of their fictional nature, these narratives echo the pervasive emotions of fear, loneliness, and novel realities encountered by millions over the previous year, even among those who did not personally suffer disease. Writing concerning global catastrophes signifies a profound societal apprehension regarding emerging realities and pandemics. Indeed, the dominant short story and novel following an outbreak of an infectious disease depict the personal experiences of ordinary characters and, ironically, the so-called 'voiceless' from whom popular media derives scientific insights, rather than the anxieties and uncertainties of those enduring the crisis. It is not worthy to examine the themes in post-COVID-19 academic discourse around this fiction, which has been crucial in fostering discussions on survivorship and societal frameworks.

Examining the plethora of novels centered on pandemics reveals significant motifs that define the collection. However, Roni Reiter-Palmon, along with other writers, argues that "creativity as a communal act of resilience remains largely under-explored. The observable nature of COVID-

19 as a cultural phenomenon that inspired creative action led to an expanded view of how cultural resources interact with creativity at the communal and individual level". (Reiter-Palmon et.al,2022,p417). Themes have arisen in literature addressing crises that mirror the personal experiences of the protagonists. Motifs facilitate the establishment of a relationship with the reader. Diverse authors emphasize some topics more than others and have crafted their narratives in reaction to distinct personal experiences with the illness. Certain works embody the terror, tyranny, and brutality of a dystopian perspective, presenting a bleak reflection of contemporary society. Others endeavor to elicit compassion and hope, with their optimistic premises generally centered on the challenges and accomplishments following civilization's collapse. Novels characterized by both pessimism and optimism have received significant attention following their release. In contrast to academic discourse, the readers of these novels get invested in the characters' communal experiences, emotions, and narratives.

3. Examining *Station Eleven*:

Analyzing *Station Eleven* In the post-apocalyptic story, humanity's planet is fragmented, with all traces of its former existence obliterated. Terra nullius refers to the desolate world that remains after an event, such as nuclear warfare, meteorite impact, or a plague outbreak, with a focus solely on the consequences." She must make of everything she sees during that journey an alien thing; she must make the world she enters a desolate one , so that what she begs for seems so much less valuable than it really is." (Marle, 2013,p85) *Station Eleven* chronicles the near-total annihilation of humanity due to the Georgia Flu, a lethal global virus that manifests symptoms similar to those of the Spanish influenza epidemic. The narrative shifts from the day of profound awareness to the staging of King Lear in Elgin, Illinois, fifty days before to the onset of the virus's lethality. The protagonists' apprehensions are evident as catastrophe approaches, until the narrative leaps forward twenty years to the Year Twenty, introducing a very disparate world. One of the most intriguing patterns in the text is the interconnections established between different epochs, traversing parallel moments in time. The strength of *Station Eleven* is in its exploration of connections: how humanity is both symbolically and practically constructed via personal relationships during tumultuous periods.

The narrative complexity in *Station Eleven* resembles shell rings: constructs developed gradually that embody interconnected existence. Sections diverge significantly from the main narrative to explore the actions of eight characters, forming a complex web interwoven with associative connections. The narrative commences with Arthur Leander, a renowned individual who would perish among the stark contrast of devotees before they too fall victim to the disease,

leaving only chaos in its wake. Each reverberation, as these brief segments are designated, is driven into debate by the actions and personalities that before and succeed it. The poem traverses time and space, seemingly satisfied with the experiences of life, leaving the narrator with memories that must be revisited often. These reverberations underscore the concept of a complex terramemory, positing that tragedy will interlink characters through a profound communal bond.

3.1. The Obscurity and the Dark Side of the Novel:

Station Eleven begins on a bleak night in Toronto, when the Georgian Flu Spearfishing Orchestra performs before a packed audience. By the subsequent Tuesday, passengers on flights departing for global destinations were afflicted with fever. The members of the Traveling Symphony observed thirty planes stationary on the tarmac. Despite newscasters suggesting impending issues, a state of emergency was not declared until the sixth day of the epidemic, by which time accessing the news helicopters had become more difficult. The Georgian Flu eradicated twenty-six thousand individuals before the week's conclusion, approximately ninety-nine percent of the global human population. This narrative chronicles many individuals interconnected by the day the world transformed, detailing how their lives progressed and evolved over the subsequent twenty years. "Through the post-apocalyptic, Mandel knows that she is wading into trendy territories". (Suumaries, 2018, para2).

Arthur Leander, a film actor from Toronto, was playing in the play *King Lear* when he died on stage during the night of the outbreak. The flight attendant, the man who attempted to save him, and the girl who initiated the performance are all linked to Arthur in some manner, but initially, they are unaware of this connection. Throughout the narrative, the flight attendant, Kirsten Raymonde, becomes a member of a newly established Traveling Symphony, an ensemble of performers and musicians who conduct concerts in the scattered villages across the terrain. Embraced by the performers and musicians of the Symphony, she recognizes that she has discovered a sense of belonging in this unfamiliar realm. The chapter presents shifting views through the testimonies of many characters, revealing Kirsten as a member of the Symphony and as a previous acquaintance of Clark Thompson, the guy who amassed wealth during the Internet boom and offers the Leandersphere necklace as a means of restitution. Tyler, now a religious figure known as the Prophet, governs a substantial area of Michigan and asserts that their presence serves a greater purpose, promising that adherence to righteous living will ensure divine preservation. As the narrative unfolds, we are afforded a perspective on this new world in juxtaposition to the old, revealing both its differences and similarities.

3.2. Sublime Journeys into the Uncertain Future:

In the wake of a global pandemic, *Station Eleven* chronicles a specific group of characters as they navigate perilous yet transformative travels through an uncertain future in America. The characters include a disillusioned actor who perishes the morning prior to the pandemic's onset and a physician-turned-nomadic prophet who navigates the pandemic for fifteen years as a quasi-messianic leader for a small post-infection community. While numerous characters in *Station Eleven* may find it challenging to recognize the interconnectedness within the expansive narrative, they share a singular, significant trait: the aspiration to endure beyond the collapse of civilization, epitomized in the exaggerated manner characteristic of post-apocalyptic fiction.

Station Eleven predominantly explores survivalist themes, particularly the endeavor to preserve both physical and spiritual well-being amidst a disintegrating environment." The novel haunts beautifully and seems the end of the world is here due to the deadly Georgia flu that wipes 99% of the world's population in just a few days." (Suumaries,2018, para1). All characters with frequent or recurring prominence in the text experience substantial modifications. *Station Eleven* primarily explores the disintegration of former ties and the individuals' reformation into new interconnected networks. These individuals frequently contend with the fluctuations of memory—employing many strategies and coping mechanisms to adapt to their significant losses. Considering one character's role as a paparazzo and a retail and television salesman post-pandemic, alongside another character's position as a primary caregiver at the time of his demise, numerous flashbacks featuring this character are structured around advertising strategies: they are rapid, vivid, and interspersed with abbreviated segments resembling exposition. This mediatized portrayal of historical events conveys information about the character's life and perspective, while primarily emphasizing their commitment to creating media constructs through acts rooted in authenticity. Although this character is not an artist, their preoccupation with the art world's transcendent commodities is a sentiment echoed by the novel's artists. Through these monological space-clearings, the author allocates each of *Station Eleven's* pivotal characters a solid position on the court—suggesting, through extensive analysis, the weight of their specific importance. They are not merely representatives of topics but individual embodiments of them, and the distinctive portrayal produced is imbued with tragedy and potential.

3.3. Narrative Strategies and Nostalgic Sentiments for the Past:

Mandel's narrative method parallels her modernist aesthetic values, characterized by unpredictability, inventiveness, and thematic depth. The narrative structure of *Station Eleven* is

nonlinear, intertwining the post-apocalyptic present with the characters' pasts. Debra J. Rosenthal argues that, "Solastalgia forms an emotional community within the novel, and it exerts a dangerous appeal by anchoring the characters to their lost past, ultimately bringing the apparently disparate narrative threads together in a conclusion that shows the surviving characters looking straight ahead into the future, not longing for what has been lost." (Rosenthal, 2024, para 2). Mandel's objective in downplaying the tragic incident is to enable readers to observe the characters' lives before to it. The storytelling method amplifies nostalgia for the past and intensifies tension inside the story. Mandel used flashback as a literary technique, incorporating "parallel strands" to connect the pre-apocalyptic narratives of each character. Mandel dismisses the plot-driven noir detective tale through two narrative layers, presenting a more intricate and diffuse overarching plot that explores the interconnections within the story, layered atop a superficial plot. The intertextual instances are not directly linked to the pre-apocalyptic event but establish a "trail of connections" that thematically expresses the interdependence of everybody inside the fabric of civilization.

This multifocalization undermines the validity and credibility of a first-person story. Mandel intricately weaves multiple perspectives to narrate the story, shifting areas of focus and experience. While this may restrict readers' ability to engage with only a few characters, it deepens our connection to their portrayals and the essential broader human community, creating a "tessellation of time and place." Mandel mimetically conveys the experienced feeling of tragedy inside this story structure. The narrative tempo is consistent, interspersed with instances of intensity and climax when the three narrative threads are intricately intertwined, tightened, and subsequently severed. In a story exploring community and societal boundaries, the repercussions of these worlds compel readers to visualize the hyperrealist cover of her book: a train halted and abandoned in the winter snow at the periphery of Lake Michigan. Mandel effectively crafts a narrative that mirrors the outer "ripples" of a pandemic.

4. The Endurance of Art and Its Contemplation on the Essence of Memory:

Station Eleven contemplates the past in a disintegrated world, although the narrative unfolds in the future—approximately twenty years subsequent to a global influenza pandemic that has obliterated the former, recognizable world. We encounter multiple characters with ties to the pre-pandemic era. On one hand, characters are marooned at the airport, while their insular society suffers from illness and dwindling food supplies. The novel chronicles the survivors over the subsequent twenty years as they endeavor to endure and establish significance in a transformed world. The epidemic unites passengers and actors both physically and thematically, since it represents a disconnection rather than a connection.

Station Eleven is a novel that explores the ubiquity of nostalgia and examines the essence of memory. "It may be that in times of adversity, such as a global pandemic, this facet of gratitude could play an important role in maintaining a good affective experience." (Jiyang et al., 2022, p. 53) The communities' presumed solace. They refer to an era perceived as superior to the current conditions faced by inhabitants of post-apocalyptic territories, which, despite being scarcely recognized as our own, increasingly diverge from that former epoch. Almost two centuries after Romanticism was initially proclaimed defunct as merely a mental state, we, the realist descendants of those Romantics, can clearly acknowledge its necessity as a fundamental aspect of existence. The relationship among survival, nostalgia, and pop culture texts from the era of abundance is essential to the genre fiction of the television age. Art constitutes a matter of belief. It is not solely valued by a select few. The preservation of art is a collective responsibility, making its creation a duty for everybody. The capacity to mend the frayed fabric of human relationships and restore community is seen in the sincerity that drives individuals with resources and opportunities to venture forth independently and innovate. The journey transforms from a simple commercial expedition across the continent into a prophetic return to its origins: the now-defunct English departments of yore. Amidst suffering and mortality, the individuals who establish Station Eleven forge new friendships, subsequently inquiring, 'What was your major?' Ultimately, they are complete.

4.1. Endurance and Fortitude:

The lethal influenza aboard *Station Eleven* eradicates over 99% of the human populace within weeks, resulting in widespread disorder. The new world of *Station Eleven* is populated by the 1% who survived the influenza epidemic and their progeny, necessitating drastic modifications in global operations and emotional reactions. Post-pandemic existence is characterized by transitions from the global to the personal, presenting a harsh reality governed by evasion, endurance, and savagery. The characters encountered in *Station Eleven* are primarily descendants of those who initially survived and resisted the virulent flu strain through isolation, as well as the descendants of individuals who departed from their communities and adopted a less communal mode of existence. The existence of these personalities underscores the significant role of diverse forms of adaptability and their relationship with survivability in a post-global pandemic context.

Station Eleven is a story that explores both survival in a post-global pandemic and the many methods individuals employ to navigate such a society. *Station Eleven* emphasizes the significance of establishing a connection to the past to effectively navigate the present. James R. Siemon States; "Mandel seems relatively uninterested in using apocalyptic scenario to critique modern society or warn readers about the dangerous path we're heading down." (Siemon and Henderson, 2024, p

228).For numerous characters, enduring the global pandemic is, in reality, less challenging than reconciling with post-pandemic existence. The novel illustrates how characters grapple with personal and societal pain in the context of post-global pandemic existence.

4.2. Remembrance and Sentimentality:

Although *Station Eleven* is classified as a science fiction novel due to its emphasis on an apocalyptic event—the Georgian Flu that rapidly evolves into a global pandemic—it equally serves as a narrative about memory and the implications for ethical theories when we endeavor to narrate humanity's "story" from the vantage point of an unspoken holocaust. The protagonists in this work engage with recollections of a contemporary past that they have forfeited, a past briefly observed before global events were irrevocably altered by influenza and cataclysm, influenza and cataclysm - in many variants, both actual and imagined. Jeevan and Kirsten are intricately connected to this history in distinct yet equally emotionally charged manners, as was Arthur. The characters inhabit a space-time continuum through recollection, as established in the novel's beginning. Initially, we discover that Jeevan has a penchant for gossip columns and film heroines, both of which stimulate his fabricated recollections of the "Before" world, even prior to his rescue of the actor during the King Lear performance.

As the narrative progresses, characters frequently yearn for the past, a period preceding a catastrophic event, resulting in a fractured and post-apocalyptic present devoid of the comforts and technological advancements that characterized life "Before." Similar to the aforementioned scene, these narrative voices intricately blend thoughts on the protagonists' nostalgia, which occasionally manifests in emotional outbursts, for the world that once was. "Like all good stories, post-apocalyptic narratives must have some kind of motivation for their driving action, perceptively obtainable goals that give the beleaguered characters hope for a better future." (Bishop,2015,p99).In these sections, characters fluctuate between yearning for the reassuring comfort of a sacrificed past and fervently desiring to surpass the prolonged nature of their existence. In this work, nostalgia for the past functions as a surrogate when the present, characterized by "fabulous" dislocation, becomes unbearable.

4.3. Artistry and Innovation :

In *Station Eleven*, art and creativity serve as vital forces capable of restoring the characters to the completeness of their lives. The characters have adopted creativity as their profession; it is a matter of survival. Station Eleven situates art and expression within the pain of the present, while indicating a connection to the voices at the periphery of such realms. The epidemic is unavoidable

in the universe of *Station Eleven*. It serves, akin to several phenomena, as both a precursor to future events and a reflection of recent catastrophes.

Some characters recount ancient tales while consistently progressing in their journey. Storytelling and performance, despite their harsh realities, provide listeners the opportunity to transcend time through connection. For instance, "After the Georgia Flu pandemic outbreak in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2015), Taylor Leander's radical religiosity combined with his fatherless childhood drives him to commit crimes in a lawless world that is detrimental to his male identity." (Can, 2023, p4). The foundation of the new narrative is established in the recounting of the old - the possibility resides with the audience. The past resembles a future, the ancient narratives constrain us, and ultimately, we envision numerous dreams, rendering us oblivious to the realization of our positive aspirations. The reader inevitably foresees that St. Deborah by the Water represents the future of the new world - the seed has been sown in the Shepherd.

The need for beauty is intrinsic to human nature; it sustains the spirit and drives the characters in the story. Clark discovers optimism in the concept of coexisting "with" rather than being "under" circumstances. This insistence was not wholly unjustified as the Orchestra successfully traversed the snow-covered terrain. Ultimately, the world may conclude with a cataclysmic event or not, yet it is preserved from overwhelming destruction by the creativity and artistry of the Traveling Symphony. Thus, this is the response to Clark's original inquiry: art and creativity serve as the mechanisms by which the world might be salvaged from catastrophe. These elements cultivate the spirit and our bond with others. Art and creativity sustain mankind, enabling it to thrive rather than merely survive amidst the most challenging circumstances. This is not unusual but characteristic of the post-apocalyptic novel.

6. Conclusion:

The voices in *Station Eleven* urge readers to listen, to remember as an act of resistance, and to reflect. These voices loudly proclaim and whisper the name of each individual. The ongoing pandemic diminishes or extinguishes the life of certain individuals affected. A multitude of persons experience apprehension and anxiety, susceptible to societal transformations. The popularity of *Station Eleven* demonstrates that exploring such possibilities through fiction can provide significant insight into the cultural life of a society and its inhabitants. The insights highlight the importance of the humanities in a worldwide society, despite rudimentary international rankings. A study of global pandemics in literature investigates the issues of voice, memory, and resilience. The traveling symphony's preoccupation with voices and sound illustrates the imperative of

listening to others as a remedy for isolation and despair. The interwoven narratives in the novel articulate a collective human memory, asserting that integrating the portrayal of a pandemic into both local and global contexts might be dissonant. The globe lacks sufficient individuals to represent a kaleidoscope of millennia of collective memories. The literary perspective, as understood by literary communities, indicates that our fervent involvement with literature may transcend simple socioeconomic mobility and stagnation. Interacting with another person's story may entail experiencing a tragedy. The flashback set in an airport corridor is imbued with themes of mortality and leaving.

A classic work ultimately embodies initial loves and connections with departed loved ones. Bibliophiles become into transcendental readers while reflecting on the emptiness of a neo-modernist dystopia. Readers must disregard the plethora of research that is insignificant in comparison to the lasting importance of studies that have endured a pandemic. This indicates that society is actively shaping the definitions and connections between art and survival. This essay does a thorough analysis of the text, exploring the trauma and humiliation linked to pandemics through the protagonist, while emphasizing the importance of memory, culture, art, and history. The study underscored the dangers of being mired in pain and the tendency to suppress memories for solace, while concurrently emphasizing the vital role of mourning and the necessity of converting memory into hope, clarity, and logic.

The essay contrasted the narratives of the principal characters with that of the protagonist, revealing a domain beyond pandemics, where memory, nostalgia, and curiosity serve as validating forces that foster community, togetherness, compassion, and resilience. Comparative analyses with other works offered valuable insights on the topics, although underscored the writings' lack of a fundamental desire for survival and flourishing. Our rigorous research demonstrated that the necessity to memorialize and enable recollection through ritualization, the establishment of secure environments, and the adverse effects of unchecked repetition significantly impact our subjects. We identified subtle signs regarding the relationship between sublimity and pandemics, based on socio-historical contexts of disregard for victims, assessment and interpretation, and the sublime in racialized manifestations of terror. Survivors and future generations averse to pandemics sometimes downplay, overlook, or reinterpret the pandemic in conversations with others. Conversely, individuals who concentrate on or interrogate the epidemic frequently either reaffirm the occurrences or fail to comprehend their genuine meaning. Both may harbor perilous intentions. As the possibility of a future pandemic resurfaces as researchers from both the humanities and social sciences examine the events of the early 21st century, this investigation illuminates facets of the text and pandemics that more generalized analyses might overlook.

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