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English 181

Due December 15, 2015

Final Portfolio

Cover Letter

Outcome 1:

Throughout this class, I enjoyed writing in a variety of genres. From informal blog posts to interpretive assignments to formal researched arguments, I experienced the differences in the writing processes. Different genres, while addressing similar themes, must be phrased differently in order to address separate audiences, satisfy different formatting constraints, and accomplish individual purposes. Unfamiliar with tackling the same idea from different angles, I was excited for the opportunity. My common theme throughout the semester was based on Gary Shteyngart's novel *Super Sad True Love Story*, published by Random House in 2010. My first experience writing about this novel was my second blog post. I chose to analyze the effect of social media on privacy after isolating a passage regarding a similar topic:

In our present world, social media has almost completely destroyed privacy. Obviously our financial statistics and credit scores aren't written on our Facebook pages, but anyone can see our pictures, our friends and family members, and things we like and don't like, such as actors, movies, music, etc. Through programs like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, it is possible to monitor individuals regularly, and obtain information about them in the blink of an eye. The technology available in this day and age eliminates privacy from our daily vocabulary, and most of our society is unaware of the degree to which they can be monitored. (Shulman Blog Post 2)

This informal assignment allowed me to relate the excerpt from *Super Sad True Love Story* to my personal opinions. My first formal assignment for this semester was the Literary Analysis Letter. I chose a section on page 44-45 of Shteyngart's novel to analyze. This excerpt depicted an email that protagonist Eunice Park sent to a friend of hers. I translated this email into a diary entry, the medium through which co-protagonist, Lenny Abramov, tells his story. In Eunice's email, she says,

But all of a sudden I would tell him like for no reason that his feet smelled or that he was cross-eyed or his hair was receding (which was a total LIE), and he would get all into on me, turn down the community access on his äppärät so that I wouldn't know where his mind was, and then just stare off into space. (Shteyngart 44)

When this excerpt was translated into diary entry form, it read a little differently.

I couldn't help myself from suddenly taking jabs at him, saying his feet smelled, he was cross-eyed, and his hair was receding. NONE OF THESE THINGS ARE TRUE!!! WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?!?! Whenever I said shit like that he zoned out, and just stared off into space for a while. He wasn't too thrilled with me after that...but who would be? (Shulman Literary Analysis Letter)

This shows how different genres can phrase the same text and be read by separate audiences.

Diary entries are for self reflection, and aren't meant to be read by anyone other than the writer.

Emails are meant to be read by someone else, so they need to tell the story and get to the point.

Here is another portion of *Super Sad True Love Story* that part of an email.

It's not like we didn't do it. We did. And it was all right. But right afterwards I started having this major bawling panic attack and he tried to comfort me, told me I looked slutty and that my Fuckability was 800+ (which it's so NOT, because I can't find anyone in Rome who can do Asian hair) but he couldn't). (Shteyngart 44)

This excerpt is action based with one commentary addition. When it was interpreted as a diary entry, there were more emotions involved than hard facts.

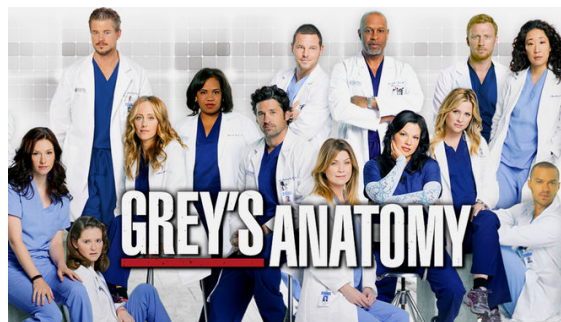
That's not to say we didn't do it...because we did...and it was all right. Nobody raves about "all right" sex, but it was good. I'd do it again sober. The problem was what happened after...I may or may not have had a major bawling panic attack...why am I trying to make myself sound better to some paper in a notebook? Yes I freaked out. I was ashamed and felt guilty and undeserving and just terrible, and I couldn't pinpoint why. Ben was super taken aback by it and tried to

comfort me; he said I looked slutty and my fuckability was an 800, which I seriously doubt. It's ridiculously hard to find a hairdresser in Rome who can tackle Asian hair. But I appreciated him trying. (Shulman Literary Analysis Letter)

In the middle of the diary entry, I decided that Eunice would have a moment of uncertainty about how to continue writing in a diary, and she addressed "herself" in the entry. This shows both wording differences and formatting differences between the two genres.

Outcome 2:

In this course, I learned that the world of literature is a discussion. When you join the conversation, you have to summarize what has been previously said before introducing your own argument. This is the "They Say, I Say" model. This process of writing was particularly helpful to me while I was crafting my Pecha Kucha argument and presentation. My third blog post of the semester involved choosing an artifact and drafting some initial arguments. I wasn't sure how I wanted to make an argument about my chosen artifact, a *Grey's Anatomy* ad, so my blog post resulted in disconnected thoughts.



The purpose of this ad is not to attract new viewers of the show, but to keep previous viewers engaged. No information is given in this ad about what *Grey's Anatomy* actually is, only that it most likely involves doctors. This advertisement appeals to both ethos and pathos. Ethos involves the credibility of Shonda Rhimes and *Grey's Anatomy*, because the show is well known enough

that simply the name is enough to attract the attention of those viewing the ad. Pathos appeals to emotion, and in this case, attraction. (Shulman Blog Post 3)

Before drafting my Pecha Kucha, I had to make some vital decisions regarding my choice of artifact. My classmates' chosen artifacts were advertisements with a message, intended to make you think or feel a certain way. The elements of logos, ethos, and pathos were obviously implemented, and not much interpretation was necessary to obtain the main purpose of the artifact. I chose an artifact with an unclear message, next to no text, and limitless potential for argumentation. This enhanced my skills as a critical thinker because I had to develop an argument from scratch. The process began when I chose the ad and continued as I wrote my presentation script. As I came to a roadblock while introducing my argument, I realized that using the "They Say, I Say" model would be an effective way to proceed. I chose to do this by summarizing a series of counterarguments before introducing the position that I intended to argue. This resulted in consecutive counter-argument and thesis statement slides.

However, if you don't know what Grey's Anatomy is, you may argue that this is an ineffective ad, as it provides no information as to what the ad is for (a show, a movie, a play), who the mysterious "Grey" is, and does nothing to attract new viewers. This idea may have some merit, since if I had no idea what Grey's Anatomy was, I'd only be able to draw from this ad that it probably has something to do with doctors. (Shulman Pecha Kucha, Slide 3)

I would like to argue that the risk taken by the writers of this advertisement was a smart and effective one, as it relies on the ethos of Grey's Anatomy as a popular and credible TV show, keeps current viewers enticed by keeping the attractive doctors in the limelight and on the ads, and intrigues curiosity from the uninformed population who is unfamiliar with Greys Anatomy, therefore promoting new viewership. (Shulman Pecha Kucha, Slide 4)

I considered my Pecha Kucha presentation a successful application of the “They Say, I Say” model. It made me realize that one has to be well versed in the literary discussion they wish to join before they can contribute. Understanding and considering others’ arguments while crafting your own is crucial to providing worthwhile input.

Outcome 3:

As I previously mentioned, this semester was my first attempt at picking a theme and following it throughout the course. My chosen has been present in my work throughout this course. In my second blog post, I initially addressed the lack of privacy in Shteyngart’s fictional dystopia as a result of the overwhelming amount of technology present.

In the dystopian setting of Gary Shteyngart’s Super Sad True Love Story, privacy is nonexistent. A wide variety of information is available about any individual at the press of a button. People are monitored throughout daily life, from flashing credit scores above streetlamps as you walk down the street to answering personal questions from a stranger in order to board a ferry from Staten Island to Manhattan... The technology available in this day and age eliminates privacy from our daily vocabulary, and most of our society is unaware of the degree to which they can be monitored. (Shulman Blog Post 2)

My next blog post regarding *Super Sad True Love Story* was my fourth blog post of the semester. This assignment continued the trend of drawing parallels between the *Super Sad True Love Story* society and the real world.

...Lenny is fleeing Staten Island with Eunice, Noah, and Amy, after receiving orders from Joshie to return to Manhattan as soon as possible. There are two ferries departing Staten Island, and Noah and Amy board a different ferry than Lenny and Eunice. While Lenny is communicating to his “American Mama” Nettie Fine that he is on a ferry to Manhattan and his friend Noah is on a different ferry but they are both safe, she asks Lenny which ferry he is on. This should alert him to an incoming problem, but he doesn’t see the red flag. Almost

immediately after Lenny tells Nettie Fine which ferry he is on, the opposing ferry is blown up in the water. (Shulman Blog Post 4)

I related this event in the novel to 9/11 in New York City, a tragedy that I hold close to my heart as a native New Yorker. This event in *Super Sad True Love Story* kept me intrigued, as I wasn't sure how society would progress from this occurrence. The next blog post that concerned Shteyngart's novel was blog post number seven, when I chose to analyze this text for my researched argument. I was also tasked with finding a source to use in my paper, and I came across an article by Ulla Krieberegg. This author references a New York Times article that compares the *Super Sad True Love Story* society to our own, as I had previously done.

In the introduction, Krieberegg uses an argument from a New York Times article written by M. Kakutani, "every toxic development already at large in America to farcical extremes" to extend her own arguments about the dystopia in which *Super Sad True Love Story* takes place.

(Shulman Blog Post 7)

These blog posts were informal assignments, but they weren't the only kinds of informal writing to sneak into my composition process. I talked out my paper with friends who were unfamiliar with the text in order to get the opinions of unbiased, uninformed audience members. This helped me figure out how to tackle the part of the paper regarding technology's influence on social interaction in society. I considered all of my blog posts, not just those quoted above, while drafting my researched argument. Maintaining a similar theme allowed for the repetition of ideas that I'd previously mentioned. My researched argument underwent an extensive editing process, from proposal to rough draft to final. My proposal was an outline before it was a rough draft. It was strong, and contained the bare minimum to begin writing my paper: a thesis, a supporting argument, and a so what statement.

Lenny and Eunice appear to have a relationship that exists *despite* technology's far and wide reach, but in truth the relationship between Lenny and Eunice in *Super Sad True Love Story* is simply a product of the dystopic society's technology. The shortcomings of this dystopic universe, as far as technology is concerned, are not imagined, but emphasized issues that are present in today's society. (Shulman Paper Proposal)

One paragraph in particular discusses the age gap between Lenny and Eunice, and how their technological preferences differ. This will help me analyze how Lenny and Eunice were never on the same page, even when they were together, and how much blame for that divide between them can be put on technology. (Shulman Annotated Bibliography)

I kept the same thesis statement from my paper proposal to my rough draft, and included the argument to support it in my rationale to conclude my introduction. It was a bit unclear for a first time reader, but it made sense to me at the moment.

While Lenny and Eunice appear to have a relationship that exists *despite* technology's far and wide reach, in truth the relationship between Lenny and Eunice in *Super Sad True Love Story* is simply a product of the dystopic society's technology. The relationship's failure was the fault of Shteyngart's fictional dystopia's reliance on technology, how social interactions in general are impacted by technological advances, and how although Lenny and Eunice may have truly fallen in love, their generational differences were rooted in their dependence on technology and ultimately that killed them. (Shulman Researched Argument Rough Draft)

Revising my rough draft to create my final paper wasn't easy. My main problem was organization, and I used the reverse outlining technique to correct this issue as best I could. This tool was extremely helpful. When I compose rough drafts, my paragraphs tend to run on until they run out of directions to go in, rather than ending and starting new paragraphs every time I switch directions. This was pointed out to me by a classmate during peer editing and my professor's comments. Both of them pointed out places in my long paragraphs where I could

begin new topics. They also told me where I needed to remove unimportant information. After rephrasing my thesis rationale, reorganizing my paper at least a dozen times to support it, and rewriting topic sentences until they made sense, I created a paper that I was proud of with a thesis statement that I'd initially intended to argue.

While Lenny and Eunice appear to have a relationship that exists *despite* technology's far and wide reach, in truth the relationship between Lenny and Eunice in *Super Sad True Love Story* is simply a product of the dystopic society's technology. This was the fault of technology's overwhelming presence in this dystopia, both as a fault of the government and the society's citizens, and Lenny and Eunice's generational differences. (Shulman Researched Argument Final Paper)

This final paper was the result of the most extensive writing process I have ever undergone. From reading the various drafts of my final paper, one can see how my writing has progressed from stage one, an informal blog post, to my final product, a complete researched argument.

Literary Response Letter

Text: pg. 44-45 email from EUNI-TARD ABROAD to GRILLBITCH

Dear Diary (is that how I'm supposed to start this?),

How do I write to future Eunice? "Guess what I did today?" You already know what I did. Am I addressing this to a "you"? Because "you" is "me." And "I" is "me" and "you." Here's hoping that this all makes sense, and that this diary won't be found and analyzed when I die. I'll leave all my possessions to Sally and give her specific instructions to destroy it. Yeah, that's a good plan. Okay, now I can vent.

Ben took me to Lucca (oh I guess I have to say who Ben is...I met him in Rome, he works in Credit. Basically he has lots of money, and he's so crazy nice and would make the perfect boyfriend. Okay back to my story). In Lucca he paid for the meals, hotel room, even expensive 200 euro wine (he ordered 200 euro wine on his own. And paid for it on his own. Isn't that the kind of guy you want to keep around?). All I could think about this whole time was how great he was, how perfect for ME he was, but something just wasn't right. Whenever I walked down the street with Ben, I kept picturing him with beautiful supermodels or smart, sexy Mediawhores, rather small, skinny, Asian me. I was uncomfortable with myself for the first time in a long time, and I didn't like that feeling. I couldn't help myself from suddenly taking jabs at him, saying his feet smelled, he was cross-eyed, and his hair was receding. NONE OF THESE THINGS ARE TRUE!!! WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?!?! Whenever I said shit like that he zoned out, and just stared off into space for a while. He wasn't too thrilled with me after that...but who would be? That's not to say we didn't do it...because we did...and it was all right. Nobody raves about "all right" sex, but it was good. I'd do it again sober. The problem was what

happened after...I may or may not have had a major bawling panic attack...why am I trying to make myself sound better to some paper in a notebook? Yes I freaked out. I was ashamed and felt guilty and undeserving and just terrible, and I couldn't pinpoint why. Ben was super taken aback by it and tried to comfort me; he said I looked slutty and my fuckability was an 800, which I seriously doubt. It's ridiculously hard to find a hairdresser in Rome who can tackle Asian hair. But I appreciated him trying. Part of me is really falling in love with Ben-he's truly great, and does so many wonderful things. But whenever he does wonderful things, I think about all the good things my dad has done in the past, and I miss him. I hate being reminded that there is a part of me insisting that my father is the only man for me, and this is a part of me that is brought out by Ben. But I can't help wanting to be around Ben, and I constantly remember the good person my dad used to be and the kind things he used to do, like when he has his practice in California (he used to have a practice in California...pretty sure I haven't said that yet), and he would help out poor Mexicans when they didn't have insurance (and they really never had insurance), and did their feet for free. Diary am I a bad daughter for leaving him and going all the way to Europe? I know you're a fucking diary and not going to respond to me or help me figure that out in any way. But am I? He's become a wreck since I left. Sally told me the other day that dad was at it again...he came home drunk (again) and tried to climb the stairs but couldn't (again), so Sally slept in the guest room and Mom slept in the basement. I tried to find out why this happened but Sally wouldn't tell me straight up. She kept making excuses, like Mom spoiled the tofu or Dad's practice has been empty. Basically, Sally made it anyone's fault but Dad's. In any case, I've been looking at cheap air tickets home. I love Rome, and as much as I love spending my father's money here, I need to be home. Sally and Mom are my responsibility (as Mom so consistently reminds me...), and I need to look out for them.

I just had a sudden flashback of being at long beach with Joy Lee (hopefully I'll come to mention her enough in the future to not have to formally say "Joy Lee" every time, but that's how I'll start now). Mom would wake us up at 7am, yelling, "Iiireo-na! Iiireo-na! Early bird gets the worm!" Damn I miss Joy. Seeing her may be another draw to come home soon.

Thanks for letting me vent Diary. I'm sure we'll meet again soon. Am I supposed to leave a signature or something at the end? What if I forgot something and need to add? You know it's Eunice. But the only person reading this should be me anyway.

Reflection

When I started writing this assignment, I read through my chosen passage until I felt comfortable transcribing it into a list of events. After I had the events, I added emotions and personable comments to the events as best I could, trying to add a personality to the list that would be present in a diary entry. I tried to put myself in Eunice's shoes as best I could to make it realistic. Translating the list into a diary entry was the last step. I think this letter strongly shows the chronology of Eunice's life and the events that occur, and how she felt at each stage of the diary entry. However, what may be lacking is the motivation behind the sequencing as seen by Eunice, as I can only suggest what would have been my own motivations.

I was genuinely excited to start writing this paper. I knew right away I wanted to translate one of Eunice's emails into a diary entry. I kept a journal for a summer two years ago, and it was hard! I tried to write everything I could, but I'd always manage to forget something important. So I'd realize after I finished writing the story that half of it didn't make sense. I enjoyed attempting to show that even the technologically advanced adolescents who could dominate a planet with the time they save from abbreviations and misspellings can have a heart to heart with a physical piece of paper. Also, to illustrate the differences between how adolescents talk to one another and what's really going on in their minds.

Pecha Kucha



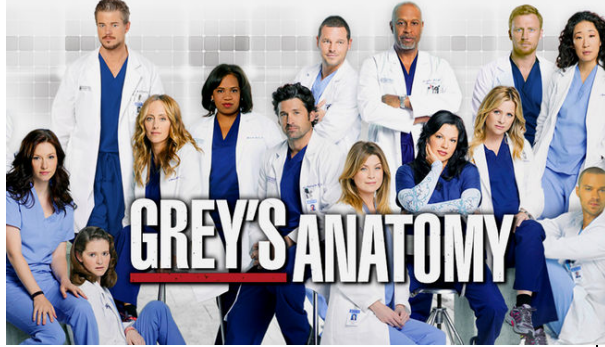

Hi I'm Sydney Shulman and my Pecha Kucha is on this Grey's Anatomy ad. How many people know or at least have a little bit of an idea what Grey's anatomy is?



Most people have a general idea of what grey's anatomy is, that it's a show about doctors. Some people know the specifics, like the protagonist is Dr. Meredith Grey, and the show is based in Seattle, following Dr. Grey through her surgical internship and residency at Seattle Grace Hospital, alongside best friend Christina and love interest Derek.



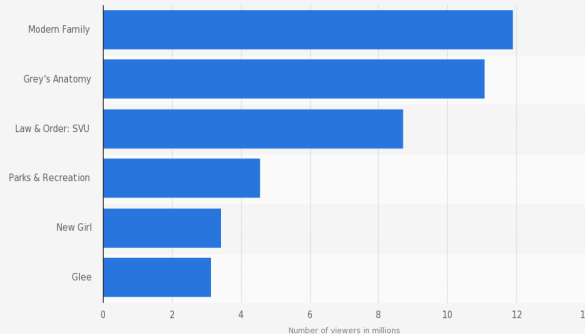
However, if you don't know what Grey's Anatomy is, you may argue that this is an ineffective ad, as it provides no information as to what the ad is for (a show, a movie, a play), who the mysterious "Grey" is, and does nothing to attract new viewers. This idea may have some merit, since if I had no

	<p>idea what Grey’s Anatomy was, I’d only be able to draw from this ad that it probably has something to do with doctors.</p>
	<p>Here’s the original ad again. I would like to argue that the risk taken by the writers of this advertisement was a smart and effective one, as it relies on the ethos of Grey’s Anatomy as a popular and credible TV show, keeps current viewers enticed by keeping the attractive doctors in the limelight and on the ads, and intrigues curiosity from the uninformed population who is unfamiliar with Greys Anatomy, therefore promoting new viewership.</p>
	<p>“Grey’s Anatomy” was created by a woman named Shonda Rhimes. Grey’s was her first major TV show, and now there is an entire night on ABC devoted to her work. Thursdays include just three of her many media creations, which are Grey’s Anatomy, Scandal, and How to Get Away with Murder.</p>



The name “Shonda Rhimes” as a writer and creator clearly carries a bit of weight, and she is very well known for her work. Fun fact: Grey’s protagonist Meredith Grey also attended Rhimes’s alma matter, Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. When the show first came out, and Meredith was often pictured in Dartmouth apparel, the current Dartmouth students made a drinking game of the show.

Number of viewers of select shows in the United States in the 2014/15 TV season (in millions)

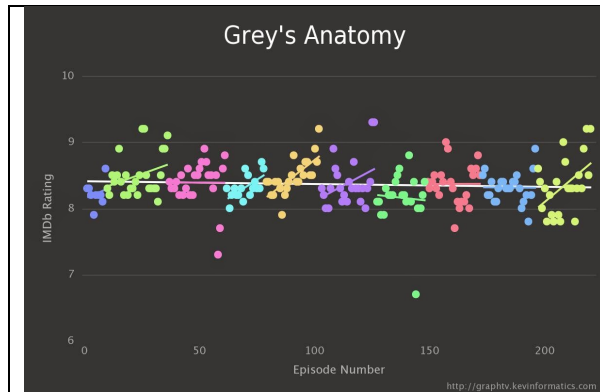


Source: Nielsen © Statista 2015

Additional information: United States, 2014 and 2015, P 24

statista

The first ever episode of Grey’s Anatomy aired on Sunday, March 27th, 2005 at 10pm, and was watched by 16.25 million viewers. The finale of the first season, just 9 weeks later, was watched by 22.22 million viewers. In just one season, the popularity of Grey’s Anatomy skyrocketed. Although Grey’s is less popular now than it has been in the past, it still outranks many other popular shows.





Grey's switched to a Thursday at 9pm timeslot on ABC for its third season, and the first episode was watched by an all time high of 25.41 million viewers. Clearly, Grey's Anatomy has a credible past, and is currently popular enough to have started its twelfth season on Thursday September 24th, 2015 at 8pm.





Taking the risk to include just the title "Grey's Anatomy" on the ad was definitely not undisputed, but this show has solid credentials. Grey's has been among the overall top 10 shows in the US, received the 2007 Golden Globe award for best TV series-drama, and has received multiple Emmy nominations, including 2 for outstanding drama series.



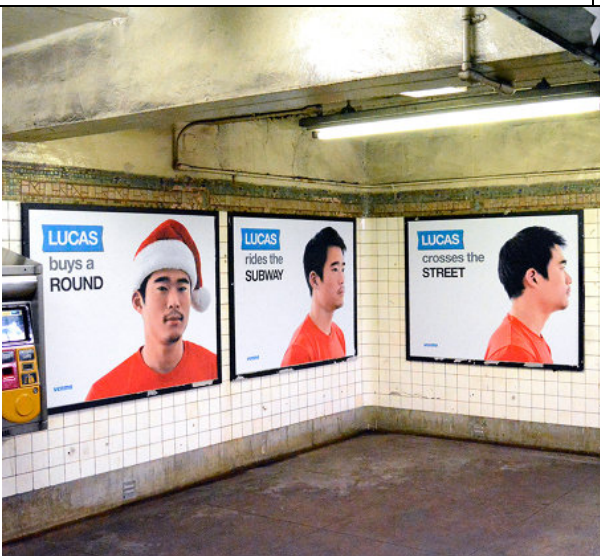
Current viewers already know that the doctors of Seattle Grace are attractive. This ad serves as a reminder of the show that may have slipped their mind during the offseason, and draws them back in with pictures of the pretty doctors. I'd be interested to know

	<p>where I can find a hospital with good quality doctors that look like this. Despite the unrealistic expectations Grey's sets for doctors, it makes for very visually appealing ads.</p>
	<p>The so-called "Cheerleader effect" has scientifically proven that people are more beautiful in groups. All the doctors are dressed similarly, in either light blue or dark blue scrubs, some with white lab coats, against a white and grey background. This draws attention to the faces of the actors, and to the name of the show in bolded letters in the center of the image.</p>
	<p>The bolded "GREYS ANATOMY" is white but outlined in black, so it is clearly visible but does not draw excessive amounts of attention. It is in the center of the image, but does not obscure the faces of any actors. The red underline of "Grey's" can signify a number of things, from the emphasis that "Grey" means something important (the last name of the protagonist, perhaps?) or blood</p>



	<p>from any one of the hundreds of surgeries performed on this show.</p>
	<p>The placement of the actors is slightly unusual, which would only be noticed by a veteran Grey's Anatomy viewer. Protagonist Meredith and lover Derek are front and center with all the other actors who have been on the show since season 1, but best friend Christina is off to the side, barely in the ad at all. This is strange, as clearly, Cristina and Meredith are very close.</p>
	<p>Even the population who has never seen Grey's Anatomy can be intrigued by this ad and have questions. For example, what do the different color scrubs mean? Some are in light blue, some are in dark blue, is there a hierarchy observed among doctors? Is it a gender or racial matter? Why are two of them not wearing lab coats? The background is white and grey paneling, is that a reference to a hospital? Why are some sitting and some standing?</p>


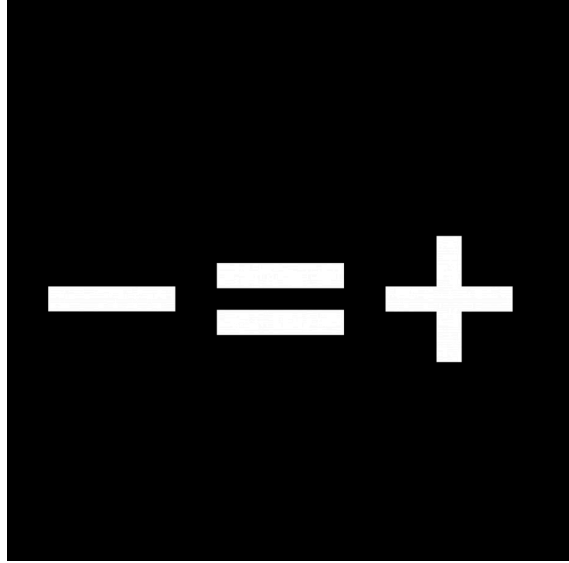
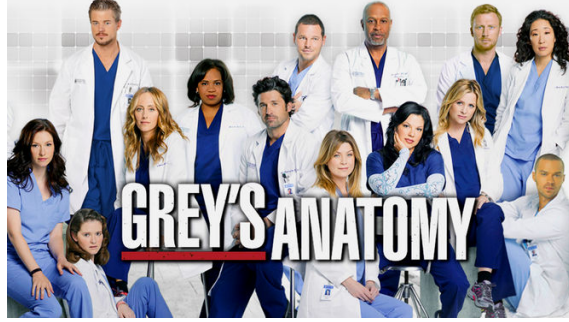


Why do they all look like they just walked out of a magazine? While these are primarily compositional elements to make the ad aesthetically pleasing, some of these are indeed questions that may trigger the curiosity of an uninformed viewer. Let's take a look at some other ads that play on the curiosity of the general public to generate awareness.



These ads plagued the New York City subway system about three years ago, they were on almost every train. They were all similar things like: Lucas shaves, Lucas buys a round, Lucas takes the stairs. All of these ads were very similar, with simply a picture of Lucas, his name, and his newest action. Of course, everyone wondered, well, who the hell is Lucas? Well, these ads were promoting....

	<p>Venmo!! Again, most people know what Venmo is, but when these ads came out, no one knew what it was. Well, the original Grey's ad is the same way. This ad is not exactly new, these actors are primarily from the earlier seasons of Grey's Anatomy. Coming across one might promote curiosity from an uninformed viewer, encouraging them to look it up.</p>
	<p>Maybe not look it up, because no one does that anymore, but maybe ask a friend if they know what it is. If they do, then it makes someone who isn't a part of this so-called "group" who watches Grey's Anatomy want to be a part of it. Everyone wants to feel included, and this ad invokes pathos, by playing on the sympathies of uninformed audiences and making them yearn to be a part of this "in-crowd"</p>

	<p>So what? There's an ad for a show that most people watch, it's a doctor show, and the actors are pretty people. Who cares? There's no information given about whatever the hell "Grey's Anatomy" is anyway, what's the point? What is gained from this ad being created?</p>
	<p>The point is that this ad introduces a strategic approach to advertisement that is relatively unexplored. Maybe less is more; less text, less information, let the image speak for itself. People like to, as bad as this sounds, think less nowadays, and prefer the simpler things. A mere title on a picture is better than the full biography of the show, which is unlikely to be read anyway.</p>
	<p>The risk taken by the creators of this ad was a bold choice, and it paid off in the end, promoting the popularity and credibility of Grey's Anatomy, and both keeping previous viewers interested and enticing new audiences with the attractive doctors and by invoking the emotions of uninformed</p>

	viewers.
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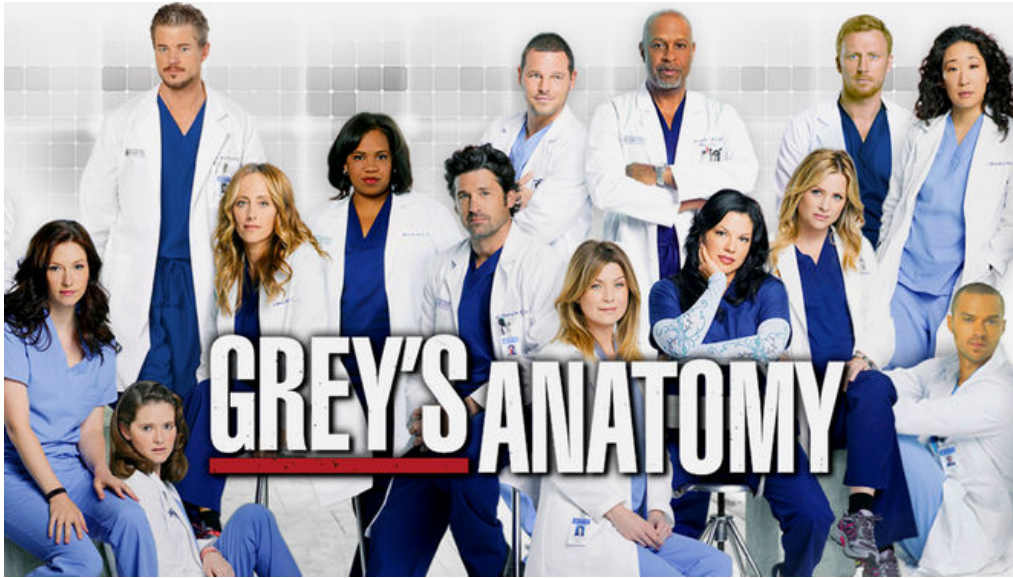
Reflection: The purpose of this presentation was to make an argument about an artifact, or in my case, an advertisement. This presentation was fairly difficult for me initially. Formulating my

thesis was the most difficult part. This was done through a process of observations about my ad, writing and rewriting statements about Grey's Anatomy until I landed on a thesis that was remotely arguable. My thesis had three parts: the credibility of Grey's Anatomy, keeping old viewers interested, and attracting new ones (that's how it is written on my outlines). Establishing credibility wasn't difficult; Grey's Anatomy has been a successful drama series for ten years. This is what I consider to be the strongest part of my presentation, as it invokes logos and is easily understandable for viewers. Keeping old viewers interested was a little trickier. The attractiveness of the actors catches the attention of the audience, and the old familiar faces trigger emotion in viewers. Attracting new viewers involved pathos and human emotion, and was the hardest part of this project for me. I consider this section, or the few slides considering the attraction of new audiences for Grey's Anatomy from this ad, to be the weakest part of my presentation.

Sydney Shulman; Blog Post #2: Super Sad True Love Story Reflection

In the dystopian setting of Gary Shteyngart's Super Sad True Love Story, privacy is nonexistent. A wide variety of information is available about any individual at the press of a button. People are monitored throughout daily life, from flashing credit scores above streetlamps as you walk down the street to answering personal questions from a stranger in order to board a ferry from Staten Island to Manhattan. One of the more disturbing scenes in Super Sad True Love Story occurs when Lenny goes to a bar in Staten Island with his friends, Vishnu and Noah. During the night, Lenny spots a pretty girl across the bar, and Vishnu introduces the term FAC, an acronym for "form a community." After pressing the appropriate button on his apparatus, looking at the girl, and placing his apparatus over his heart, Lenny was presented with an entire list of facts about the girl. Her entire life story became available to him instantly, including her sexual preferences, abusive familial background, financial status, and her opinion of him (in terms of fuckability, anal/vaginal/oral preference, and personality). The girl was provided with a similar biography of Lenny, and could see his opinions of her as well. This scene clearly illustrates, if it wasn't clear already, that privacy is nothing but an illusion.

In our present world, social media has almost completely destroyed privacy. Obviously our financial statistics and credit scores aren't written on our Facebook pages, but anyone can see our pictures, our friends and family members, and things we like and don't like, such as actors, movies, music, etc. Through programs like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, it is possible to monitor individuals regularly, and obtain information about them in the blink of an eye. The technology available in this day and age eliminates privacy from our daily vocabulary, and most of our society is unaware of the degree to which they can be monitored.

Sydney Shulman; Blog Post #3: Pecha Kucha Artifact

For my artifact, I have chosen this Grey's Anatomy ad. Grey's Anatomy is an ABC show written by Dartmouth Alum Shonda Rhimes. This show follows protagonist Meredith Grey and her friends through the ups and downs of her surgical internship, residency, and fellowship at Seattle Grace Hospital. This advertisement shows the doctors of Seattle Grace in their scrubs and lab coats. However, that is all it shows. Other than "Grey's Anatomy," there is no text on the ad. The text is white and in plain font, but the word "grey's" is larger than "anatomy," and underlined in red. This is because the show's protagonist is named Meredith Grey. The purpose of this ad is not to attract new viewers of the show, but to keep previous viewers engaged. No information is given in this ad about what Grey's Anatomy actually is, only that it most likely involves doctors. This advertisement appeals to both ethos and pathos. Ethos involves the credibility of Shonda Rhimes and Grey's Anatomy, because the show is well known enough that simply the name is enough to attract the attention of those viewing the ad. Pathos appeals to emotion, and in this

case, attraction. All of the Seattle Grace doctors are extremely attractive, which sets unrealistic standards for men and women, as well as unrealistic expectations for doctors in general.

Sydney Shulman; Blog Post #4

One scene in Gary Shteyngart's Super Sad True Love Story that I have found particularly dystopic is sadly a very realistic occurrence. On pages 246 to 248, Lenny is fleeing Staten Island with Eunice, Noah, and Amy, after receiving orders from Joshie to return to Manhattan as soon as possible. There are two ferries departing Staten Island, and Noah and Amy board a different ferry than Lenny and Eunice. While Lenny is communicating to his "American Mama" Nettie Fine that he is on a ferry to Manhattan and his friend Noah is on a different ferry but they are both safe, she asks Lenny which ferry he is on. This should alert him to an incoming problem, but he doesn't see the red flag. Almost immediately after Lenny tells Nettie Fine which ferry he is on, the opposing ferry is blown up in the water.

The image I have chosen to represent this scene is a photograph taken of New York City on September 11th, 2001. The twin towers, located in lower Manhattan, were hit by airplanes as

part of a terrorist attack on the city. Many were killed, even more were injured, and the city was shut down for weeks. This event hits particularly close to home for me, literally and physically, as I was living in New York City when this occurred. Nobody could believe what they were watching on the news, that something like this could actually happen. For months after 9/11, New Yorkers were scared to leave their homes, worried that the city was going to be targeted and hit again. As I was reading this scene of Super Sad True Love Story, I knew one of the ferries was going to be blown up. I got a gut wrenching feeling and immediately thought back to 9/11. I don't remember this specifically, but my mother has told me that I knew something bad was happening in New York, even though she hadn't told me. I was only 4 years old; I wasn't supposed to know that. On this one day in New York's history, the beloved city appeared to be a dystopic nightmare.

Sydney Shulman; Blog Post #7

I have chosen to write about Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* in my final paper. Since *Super Sad True Love Story* was published relatively recently, in 2010, there isn't an excess of literary commentary about it. However, some common topics that have been discussed about Shteyngart's novel throughout scholarly journals include age, credit scores, identity, and dystopian societies. One article that I have found to be particularly interesting is titled "Ending Aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological discourse in a *Super Sad True Love Story*" written by Ulla Kribernegg, and can be found at the following link:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/science/article/pii/S0890406512000758>.

Kribernegg discusses biogerontology, the subfield of gerontology that discusses why and how we age and how to slow the process, how the novel presents old age as a curable disease, and how the novel depicts age as both a uniting and dividing factor between Lenny and Eunice. In the introduction, Kribernegg uses an argument from a New York Times article written by M. Kakutani, "every toxic development already at large in America to farcical extremes" to extend her own arguments about the dystopia in which *Super Sad True Love Story* takes place. This article presents an interesting argument that may help me develop an angle for my paper as well. Aging is not the primary concern of the novel's plot, but age is always taken into consideration, and is very important at the end of the day. I would be interested in looking for another underlying aspect of the plot that isn't obvious in every journal entry or email but is vital to the storyline nonetheless, and influential to the characters' actions and motives.

Sydney Shulman; Blog Post #10

I have chosen to focus on the conclusion of the novel *Arrowsmith*, written by Sinclair Lewis and originally published in 1925 by Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. This work of fiction follows aspiring doctor, Martin Arrowsmith, through his medical school education and career as a doctor. Arrowsmith's early career took him all over the country, from the Midwest to the Caribbean Islands to New York to his final location, the wilderness of Vermont. Other characters in this novel also travel quite a bit as required by their professions, and they often unexpectedly run into Arrowsmith. The conclusion of this novel is very satisfying, for a few reasons. First of all, it informs readers of the whereabouts of all the important characters in relation to Arrowsmith at the book's close. For example, old professors of Arrowsmith's are at new institutions, and his old classmates have blossoming careers. Readers are also aware of the location of Arrowsmith, and how he is currently occupying his time. Secondly, the conclusion of the book refers back to the introduction. A professor told Arrowsmith on the first day of medical school, in the first chapter of the book, that a true medical student must know how to "wait and doubt" (Lewis, pg. 15) during scientific experimentation. The last line of the book is Arrowsmith saying to his companion, "maybe we'll get something permanent-and probably we'll fail" (Lewis, pg. 430). Readers get attached to Arrowsmith throughout the novel, and knowing that he ends up where he always wanted to be, a "true student" in the eyes of his mentor, is very pleasing. Tying my introduction and conclusion together is obviously a technique I'd like to incorporate while writing my final paper, as is informing the reader of the fate of the characters mentioned and of the society in question as a whole.

Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

Fact or Fiction? How Technology Forges Relationships in *Super Sad True Love Story*

In Gary Shteyngart's novel, *Super Sad True Love Story*, technology plays a key role in the dystopic society's everyday life. From constant apparatus interaction with total strangers to credit poles displaying financial information on city streets, it is impossible to escape the wrath of technology. It isn't unusual to wonder how anyone can form truly meaningful relationships in a world filled with public "fuckability" rankings and where people have their heads in their apparatuses. No relationship formed in this society can exist without being influenced by technology. Lenny and Eunice appear to have a relationship that exists *despite* technology's far and wide reach, but in truth the relationship between Lenny and Eunice in *Super Sad True Love Story* is simply a product of the dystopic society's technology. The shortcomings of this dystopic universe, as far as technology is concerned, are not imagined, but emphasized issues that are present in today's society. Using *Super Sad True Love Story* criticism and studies about technology impacting social relationships, I intend to prove in my paper that this society has been completely shaped by technology, and every relationship, from development to destruction, has been created with the intent to fail.

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<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27793307>.

This journal article analyzes how social interaction is impacted by technology. I will use this article to show how Lenny and Eunice's relationship was both developed and destroyed by technology, and that even their most intimate moments were nothing but technological creations.

Behe, Rege. "Gary Shteyngart's 'Super Sad True Love Story' Matches Low-Tech, Digital-Age." *ProQuest*. McClatchy-Tribune Business News, 22 Aug. 2010.
<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/docview/746340947/fulltext/D947BCDCED2041A0PQ/3?accountid=10747>. 24 Oct. 2015.

This article briefly elaborates on society's view of books in comparison to technology, and how Lenny and Eunice's relationship has been impacted by these views. This article can expand my argument that the relationship between Lenny and Eunice was created by technology. By showing that all of society is implicated in the web of technology too thoroughly to form lasting relationships, it will prove that Lenny and Eunice are no exception.

Kinchen, David M. "BOOK REVIEW: Super Sad True Love Story." *ProQuest*.
 McClatchy-Tribune Business News, 3 Aug. 2010.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/docview/734725243/fulltext/8BC869C8027A45B9PQ/3?accountid=10747>. 24 Oct. 2015.

This book review gives a brief plot overview of Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*. One paragraph in particular discusses the age gap between Lenny and Eunice, and how their technological preferences differ. This will help me analyze how Lenny and Eunice were never on the same page, even when they were together, and how much blame for that divide between them can be put on technology.

Kribernegg, Ulla. "Ending Aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological

Discourse in a Super Sad True Love Story." *Journal of Aging Studies* 27.1 (2012): 61-70.

ScienceDirect. University of Graz, Austria.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/science/article/pii/S0890406512000758>. 24 Oct. 2015.

This scholarly article discusses primarily the importance of aging as a theme in the novel. As that is not a topic I am analyzing in my paper, I am going to use the background information given about the society to emphasize the presence of technology in everyday life and how Lenny and Eunice's relationship was depicted by technology's overwhelming presence.

Researched Argument Rough Draft

Fact or Fiction? How Technology Forges Relationships in *Super Sad True Love Story*

In today's society, it isn't uncommon to meet someone new and immediately look them up on social media. Present society has yet to become completely reliant on technology, but it is certainly on its way. In Gary Shteyngart's novel, *Super Sad True Love Story*, published in 2010 by Random House, technology plays a key role in the dystopic society's everyday life. Shteyngart's dystopian universe is ridden with issues, not unlike today's society, including a complete and utter dependence on technology, to the extent where individuals consider themselves shaped by the technology available. This novel follows 39-year-old Lenny Abramov and 24-year-old Eunice Park, two people who appear to have found love in this technology-stricken wasteland. Lenny and Eunice differ in almost every way: age, race, intelligence, lifestyle. However, though their relationship helped them find happiness in their screwed up society, Lenny and Eunice were unable to remain in love, and their relationship inevitably ended badly. No relationship formed in this society can exist without being influenced by technology, and these two are no exception. **While Lenny and Eunice appear to have a relationship that exists *despite* technology's far and wide reach, in truth the relationship between Lenny and Eunice in *Super Sad True Love Story* is simply a product of the dystopic society's technology.** The relationship's failure was the fault of Shteyngart's fictional dystopia's reliance on technology, how social interactions in general are impacted by technological advances, and how although Lenny and Eunice may have truly fallen in love, their generational differences were rooted in their dependence on technology and ultimately that killed them.

“By reading this sign you have denied existence of the object and implied consent.”¹

What does that even mean? This saying is common in the dystopic society depicted in Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story*. The American Restoration Authority, the closest thing this country has to a government, places this commandment the end of announcements and bulletins. The citizens have been trained by this government to be dependent on technology and to rely on it, to an obscene extent. Technology is so intertwined with citizens everyday lives. It’s easy to wonder how anyone can form truly meaningful relationships in a world filled with public “fuckability” rankings and where people have their heads in their äppäräts. From constant äppärät interaction with total strangers to credit poles displaying financial information on city streets,² it is impossible to escape the wrath of technology. Ulla Krieberegg provides in her article, “Ending aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological discourse in a *Super Sad True Love Story*,” an insight to the anti-aging theme of the novel, imploring the possibility of altering human nature to live forever.³ This is a whole new level of technological integration with the real world. All of society is implicated in the web of technology too thoroughly to form lasting relationships, and Lenny and Eunice are no exception. For example, when Eunice went with Ben, the credit guy she met in Rome, to Lucca for a trip, and she would occasionally insult him, “he would get all intro on [Eunice], turn down the community access on his äppärät so that I wouldn’t know where the fuck his mind was, and then just stare off into space. It’s not like we didn’t do it. We did. And it was all right. But right afterwards I started having this major bawling panic attack and he tried to comfort me, told me I looked slutty and that my Fuckability was 800+ (which it’s so NOT, because I can’t find anyone in Rome who can do Asian hair) but he

¹ Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 43, 81. Print.

² Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 54-55. Print.

³ Krieberegg, Ulla. "Ending Aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological Discourse in a Super Sad True Love Story." *ScienceDirect*. Journal of Aging Studies, 5 Dec. 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2015. <http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/science/article/pii/S0890406512000758>.

couldn't."⁴ Whenever Eunice insulted Ben, he turned off his apparatus community so she couldn't see what he was thinking, and after they did it, Eunice had a breakdown and Ben tried to calm her down by saying she looked slutty and had a high fuckability ranking. Since when is that how mental breakdowns are handled? This dystopia is completely reliant on technology in everyday life, and value books about as highly as doorstops,⁵ referring to them as "printed, bound media artifacts."⁶ Lenny and Eunice's relationship was clearly impacted by conventional societal views of these topics. After Lenny and Eunice had met but once, in Rome, Lenny felt more than comfortable using the internet to obtain every detail of Eunice's adolescence. Through his untimely stalking of Eunice, Lenny learned that she "was a shy girl by comparison with others of her generation, so her digital footprint wasn't big. I had to go at her laterally, through her sister, Sally, and her father, Sam Park, D.P.M, the violent podiatrist. Working my lusty, overheated apparatus, I pointed an Indian satellite at southern California, her original home...Enough detective work. Enough obsessiveness. Enough trying to position yourself as the savior of a beaten girl."⁷ This behavior by Lenny does not seem out of the ordinary by the way he depicts it. Society's close relationship with technology is undoubtedly the reason why no one seems to be able to form lasting relationships outside technology's influence.

When you meet someone new, usually you have a clean slate. You don't know anything about them and they know nothing about you. Conversation is necessary to get to know a person, and even then at the first meeting you learn their name, perhaps their job, maybe where they're

⁴ Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 44. Print.

⁵ Behe, Rege. "Gary Shteyngart's 'Super Sad True Love Story' Matches Low-Tech, Digital-Age." *McClatchy-Tribune Business News* 22 Aug. 2010, Business and Economics sec. Tribune Content Agency LLC. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/docview/746340947/fulltext/D947BCDCED2041A0PQ/3?accountid=10747>. 24 Oct. 2015.

⁶ Kinchen, David M. "BOOK REVIEW: Super Sad True Love Story." *McClatchy-Tribune Business News* 3 Aug. 2010, Business and Economics sec. Tribune Content Agency LLC. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/docview/734725243/fulltext/>. 24 Oct. 2015.

⁷ Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 37-39. Print.

from. In this society created by Gary Shteyngart, all available information about a person is available just by looking at them. This technology is straining social interaction, and inhibiting human ability to form intimate relationships at all. Morana Alač writes, in her article "Moving Android: On Social Robots and Body-in-Interaction," that it is "believed that human cognition cannot be adequately approached without considering the role that the body plays in memory, perception, learning, and reasoning. Accordingly, thinking is not merely the abstract manipulation of symbols according to rules, but a process grounded in the sensory-motor capacities of an individual human body and its exchange with the world."⁸ Essentially, what this means is that an individual must be physically and mentally present in their own body in order to properly interact with society, and thinking is not a code that can be written into a brain by whatever technology is available. Societal interaction is not behavior that can be replaced by technology, but as the author later states, they are training robots to reproduce it. Towards the beginning of the novel, Lenny goes to a bar with his friends in Staten Island, New York City. As he arrives, he is greeted by his friend Noah Weinberg, who broadcasts Lenny using his *äppärät* on his Global Teens stream. "He turned the camera nozzle of his *äppärät* my way to record my lumbering arrival. "Heads up, *manitos*, here he comes!" he shouted. "Get out your butt plugs and get ready to groove. This is a 'Noah Weinberg Show!' *exclusive*. The arrival of our personal number-one Nee-gro from a year of bullshit self-discovery in Rome, Italia. We're streaming at you live, folks. He's walking toward our table in real time! He's got that goofy 'Hey, I'm just one of the guys!' smile. One hundred and sixty pounds of Ashkenazi second-generation, 'My parents are poor immigrants, so you gotta love me' flava: Lenny 'freak *and* geek' Abramov!" I

⁸ Alač, Morana. "Moving Android: On Social Robots and Body-in-Interaction." *Social Studies of Science* 39.4 (2009): 491-528. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Oct. 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27793307>, pg. 492.

waved to Noah, and then, hesitantly, to his äppärät.”⁹ This is just another example of how technological advances hinder even simple social interactions between humans. Sadly, no relationship formed in this society can exist without the influence of technology. Lenny and Eunice’s relationship was both developed and destroyed by technology, and that even their most intimate moments were nothing but technological creations.

It is only fair to briefly consider the possibility that Lenny and Eunice may have really been in love. Krieberegg analyzes Lenny and Eunice’s relationship, and considers the fact that “Both Lenny and Eunice try to come to terms with their hybrid identities and migratory backgrounds, a fact that ties the couple together as much as it separates them.”¹⁰ The common theory that opposites attract is intended to considerably apply to Lenny and Eunice, indicating that their differences drew them to one another. However, Lenny and Eunice’s differences and dependences on technology made it impossible for them to have had a true relationship. The two were far more different than they ever were alike. On page 99 of *Super Sad True Love Story*, Shteyngart writes, “Eunice Park is sitting NEXT TO ME on my couch while I’m writing this. Eunice Park: a tiny fragment of a human being I purple leggings, pouting at something terrible I may have done, anger in her wrinkled forehead, the rest of her absorbed by her äppärät, checking out expensive stuff on AssLuxury. I am close to her.”¹¹ Even though this is the first time Lenny and Eunice have seen each other since Rome, they are not interacting with each other. Lenny is writing in his diary about Eunice and Eunice is shopping on her äppärät. Here again we see the age/technological difference between Lenny and Eunice. Kinchen discusses the age gap between Lenny and Eunice, and how their technological preferences differ; “Lenny and Eunice are an odd

⁹ Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 83. Print.

¹⁰ Krieberegg, Ulla. "Ending Aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological Discourse in a Super Sad True Love Story." *ScienceDirect*. Journal of Aging Studies, 5 Dec. 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2015. <http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/science/article/pii/S0890406512000758>.

¹¹ Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 99. Print.

couple indeed, with Eunice a totally wired person addicted to her personal digital device, called an [äppärät]; Lenny has an old-fashioned wood-grained [äppärät], which he soon abandons for the latest model, but he's addicted to old-fashioned dead-tree books, having a wall of them in his one-bedroom Chinatown co-op apartment.”¹² This introduces the idea that Lenny and Eunice were never on the same page, and how much blame for the divide between them can be put on technology. “I still have an old Mead Five Star notebook from when I was a child that I’ve been dying to put to good use,” Shteyngart writes of Lenny, “...I folded the paper up and put it into my wallet for easy reference.”¹³ Lenny is old school, as he prefers paper lists to technology. “The story is mainly told via Lenny's old-fashioned diary entries and Eunice's chat and email messages from her “Global Teens” account. Their different approaches to communication and media, however, are only one of the many ways that express how Lenny and Eunice are not suited for each other.”¹⁴ Krieberegg restates that Eunice belongs in a technological world while Lenny simply resides in it, and would rather have his books. The relationship between Lenny and Eunice was created as a manifestation of the era’s technological advances.

While it is normal for technology to have a role in life, the extent to which it plays a role in the society depicted in Gary Shteyngart’s novel, *Super Sad True Love Story*, is a far extreme. Lenny Abramov and Eunice Park were two such individuals of this society that fell into some sort of routine with one another, and they seemed to call it love. Lenny and Eunice’s relationship was completely fabricated by the technology available in their era. Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story* society was ridiculously dependent on technology in everyday life. The influence of

¹² Kinchen, David M. "BOOK REVIEW: Super Sad True Love Story." *McClatchy-Tribune Business News* 3 Aug. 2010, Business and Economics sec. Tribune Content Agency LLC.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/docview/734725243/fulltext/>. 24 Oct. 2015.

¹³ Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2012. 50-51. Print.

¹⁴ Krieberegg, Ulla. "Ending Aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological Discourse in a Super Sad True Love Story." *ScienceDirect*. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 5 Dec. 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2015.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/science/article/pii/S0890406512000758>.

technology on social interactions and relationships was unavoidable. Lenny and Eunice's relationship initially appeared to exist despite the wide and far reach of technology, but in truth simply a product of the dystopic society's technological advances. They had the potential to succeed as a couple in a society less dependent on technology, but their personal differences regarding technology made it impossible for them to reconcile their relationship in this dystopic universe. The shortcomings of this dystopic universe, as far as technology is concerned, are not imagined, but emphasized issues that are present in today's society. Hopefully, society can anticipate this downfall into technological dependence and put an end to it before it is too late.

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Reflection

The strongest element of my paper is my last section: the debunking of the counter argument. In this section, I showed the differences between Lenny and Eunice, particularly their technological preferences, and claimed that it was what tore them apart in the end. I like this section of my paper because it is heavily supported with journal articles and passages from the text, *Super Sad True Love Story*. Also, this is the section of the paper that directly answers the thesis statement, that Lenny and Eunice's relationship was nothing but a manifestation of technology. A close second strongest element of my paper is the first argument, establishing the *Super Sad True Love Story* society as one that is extremely dependent on the presence and involvement of technology in everyday life. The weakest element of my paper is the middle section regarding technology's influence on social interaction. This was my least favorite part of the paper to write. This doesn't relate as directly to the novel as the other arguments I have made do, as many of the sources involved are articles regarding the real world, rather than Shteyngart's fictional dystopia.

Researched Argument Final Paper

Made for Each Other? How Relationships are Forged by Technology in *Super Sad True Love Story*

In today's society, it is not uncommon to meet someone new and immediately look them up on social media. Present society has yet to become completely reliant on technology, but it is certainly on its way. In Gary Shteyngart's novel, *Super Sad True Love Story*, published in 2010 by Random House, technology plays a key role in the dystopic society's everyday life. Shteyngart's dystopian universe is riddled with issues, not unlike today's society, including a complete and utter dependence on technology, to the extent where individuals cannot imagine living without it. This novel follows 39-year-old Lenny Abramov and 24-year-old Eunice Park, two people who appear to have found love in this technology-stricken wasteland. Lenny and Eunice differ in almost every way: age, race, intelligence, lifestyle. However, though their relationship helped them find happiness in their screwed up civilization, Lenny and Eunice were unable to remain in love, and their relationship inevitably ended badly. No relationship formed in this society can exist without being influenced by technology, and these two are no exception. While Lenny and Eunice appear to have a relationship that exists *despite* technology's far and wide reach, in truth the relationship between Lenny and Eunice in *Super Sad True Love Story* is simply a product of the dystopic society's technology. This was the fault of technology's overwhelming presence in this dystopia, both as a fault of the government and the society's citizens, and Lenny and Eunice's generational differences.

In theory, the *Super Sad True Love Story* society wasn't always completely dependent on technology. It is reasonable to assume that the dystopia became this way as a result of the world around them, and such an influence may have been the fault of government oppression. The American Restoration Authority, the closest thing this country has to a government, places this commandment the end of announcements and bulletins: "By reading this sign you have denied existence of the object and implied consent" (Shteyngart 43). What does that even mean? This saying is common in the dystopic society depicted in Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*. Government in this universe is extremely involved in the business of individuals. When Lenny was in Rome, for example, he visited the U.S. Embassy before returning to New York. Lenny was instructed to plug in his *äppärät*, and when he did so, he was greeted by an image of an otter named Jeffrey.

"Hi there, yourself!" the otter said. "Now I'm going to ask you some friendly questions for statistical purposes only. If you don't want to answer a question, just say, 'I don't want to answer this question.' Remember, I'm here to help you! Okay, then. Let's start simple. What's your name and Social Security Number?" (Shteyngart 8)

The otter then continued to ask Lenny pressing and personal questions, such as his job, credit ranking, political affiliation, whether he met "any nice *foreign* people" during his stay abroad, and if he had any intimate physical relationships with any non-Americans while he was in Rome (Shteyngart 9). These kinds of questions provide the government with all available information about its citizens, to an extent where their lives can be controlled by the ARA.

Another instance of government oppression occurs when Lenny arrived in New York from Rome. One of the other passengers on the plane was dragged off by what initially appeared to be army personnel, and Lenny documented it in his diary.

I snuck a glance at the fat man's tormentors, standing evenly around him, fingers on their triggers. Their uniforms were adorned with hasty insignia, a sword superimposed over Lady Liberty's crown, which I believe denotes the New York Army National Guard...as the soldiers finally pulled him to his feet, the cabin filled with the sound of a grown-up's out-of-practice whimpering...somehow the soldiers had made his crying stop, and all we could hear was the slap of his loafers among the steady thump of their man boots. It wasn't over yet. (Shteyngart 40-41)

What happened on the plane was that the ARA tracked down a man they did not believe was deserving of being a part of their society, and removed him. It is extremely plausible that this man had gone through the same process that Lenny had, with the "friendly" otter asking "harmless" questions. This is just another example of the government in this society abusing their power and technology to control its citizens. The citizens have been oppressed by this government and their technology to an obscene extent.

Technology is completely intertwined with citizens' everyday lives. From constant apparat interaction with total strangers to credit poles displaying financial information on city streets (Shteyngart 54-55), it is impossible to escape the wrath of technology. As Lenny says, "What kind of person couldn't be found on this earth?" (Shteyngart 55). Lenny's job concerns Indefinite Life Extension—simply put, making people live forever. Ulla Kribernegg provides in her article, "Ending aging in the Shteyngart of Eden: Biogerontological discourse in a *Super Sad True Love Story*," an insight to the anti-aging theme of the novel, imploring the possibility of altering human nature to live forever (Kribernegg 61-62). This is a whole new level of technological integration with the real world. The continually growing presence of technology is eliminating privacy by the minute. Every bit of information documented about a single individual is available to the public simply by looking at them. It's easy to wonder how anyone can form truly meaningful relationships in a world filled with public "fuckability" rankings and

where people have their heads in their äppäräts. This technology is straining social interaction, and inhibiting human ability to form intimate relationships at all. Morana Alač writes, in her article "Moving Android: On Social Robots and Body-in-Interaction," that it is

believed that human cognition cannot be adequately approached without considering the role that the body plays in memory, perception, learning, and reasoning. Accordingly, thinking is not merely the abstract manipulation of symbols according to rules, but a process grounded in the sensory-motor capacities of an individual human body and its exchange with the world. (Morana 492)

Essentially, what this means is that an individual must be physically and mentally present in their own body in order to properly interact with society, and thinking is not a code that can be written into a brain by whatever technology is available. Societal interaction is not behavior that can be replaced by technology, but as the author later states, they are training robots to reproduce it.

No relationship formed in Shteyngart's society can exist without the influence of technology. Towards the beginning of the novel, Lenny goes to a bar with his friends in Staten Island, New York City. As he arrives, he is greeted by his friend Noah Weinberg, who broadcasts Lenny using his äppärät on his Global Teens stream.

He turned the camera nozzle of his äppärät my way to record my lumbering arrival. "Heads up, manitos, here he comes!" he shouted. "Get out your butt plugs and get ready to groove. This is a 'Noah Weinberg Show!' exclusive. The arrival of our personal number-one Nee-gro from a year of bullshit self-discovery in Rome, Italia. We're streaming at you live, folks. He's walking toward our table in real time! He's got that goofy 'Hey, I'm just one of the guys!' smile. One hundred and sixty pounds of Ashkenazi second-generation, 'My parents are poor immigrants, so you gotta love me' flava: Lenny 'freak and geek' Abramov!" I waved to Noah, and then, hesitantly, to his äppärät.

(Shteyngart 83)

As can be seen, face-to-face interaction is being easily replaced by cameras and äppäräts. Less importance is being placed on physical contact, lowering the value of the body itself. This is just

another example of how technological advances hinder even simple social interactions between humans. Society's close relationship with technology is undoubtedly the reason why no one seems to be able to form lasting relationships outside technology's influence. Another example of this is when Eunice went with Ben, the credit guy she met in Rome, to Lucca for a trip. She would occasionally insult him, and as a result,

He would get all intro on [Eunice], turn down the community access on his äppärät so that I wouldn't know where the fuck his mind was, and then just stare off into space. It's not like we didn't do it. We did. And it was all right. But right afterwards I started having this major bawling panic attack and he tried to comfort me, told me I looked slutty and that my Fuckability was 800+ (which it's so NOT, because I can't find anyone in Rome who can do Asian hair) but he couldn't. (Shteyngart 44)

Whenever Eunice insulted Ben, he turned off his äppärät community so she couldn't see what he was thinking, and after they did it, Eunice had a breakdown and Ben tried to calm her down by saying she looked slutty and had a high fuckability ranking. In today's society, this is not how a mental breakdown would be handled, with superficial assurances and technological references. However, in this fictional dystopia, handling a significant other's unhappiness this way is completely normal. This is yet another instance of how no relationship formed in Shteyngart's society can exist without the influence of technology.

Lenny and Eunice's relationship was clearly impacted by conventional societal views of these topics. After Lenny and Eunice had met but once, in Rome, Lenny felt more than comfortable using the internet to obtain every detail of Eunice's adolescence. Through his untimely stalking of Eunice, Lenny learned that she

was a shy girl by comparison with others of her generation, so her digital footprint wasn't big. I had to go at her laterally, through her sister, Sally, and her father, Sam Park, D.P.M, the violent podiatrist.

Working my lusty, overheated äppärät, I pointed an Indian satellite at southern California, her original

home...Enough detective work. Enough obsessiveness. Enough trying to position yourself as the savior of a beaten girl. (Shteyngart 37-39)

This behavior by Lenny does not seem out of the ordinary by the way he depicts it. Kribernegg analyzes Lenny and Eunice's relationship, and considers the fact that "Both Lenny and Eunice try to come to terms with their hybrid identities and migratory backgrounds, a fact that ties the couple together as much as it separates them" (Kribernegg 62). The common theory that opposites attract is intended to considerably apply to Lenny and Eunice, indicating that their differences drew them to one another. However, Lenny and Eunice's differences and dependences on technology made it impossible for them to have had a true relationship. The two were far more different than they ever were alike. On page 99 of *Super Sad True Love Story*, Shteyngart writes, "Eunice Park is sitting NEXT TO ME on my couch while I'm writing this. Eunice Park: a tiny fragment of a human being I purple leggings, pouting at something terrible I may have done, anger in her wrinkled forehead, the rest of her absorbed by her äppärät, checking out expensive stuff on AssLuxury. I am close to her" (Shteyngart 99). Even though this is the first time Lenny and Eunice have seen each other since Rome, they are not interacting with each other. Lenny is writing in his diary about Eunice and Eunice is shopping on her äppärät. Here again we see the age/technological difference between Lenny and Eunice.

In David Kinchen's book review of *Super Sad True Love Story*, in the McClatchy-Tribune Business News, he discusses the age gap between Lenny and Eunice, and how their technological preferences differ;

Lenny and Eunice are an odd couple indeed, with Eunice a totally wired person addicted to her personal digital device, called an [äppärät]; Lenny has an old-fashioned wood-grained [äppärät], which he soon abandons for the latest model, but he's addicted to old-fashioned dead-tree books, having a wall of them in his one-bedroom Chinatown co-op apartment. (Kinchen)

This introduces the idea that Lenny and Eunice were never on the same page, and how much blame for the divide between them can be put on technology. “I still have an old Mead Five Star notebook from when I was a child that I’ve been dying to put to good use,” Shteyngart writes of Lenny, “...I folded the paper up and put it into my wallet for easy reference” (Shteyngart 50-51). Lenny is old school, as he prefers paper lists to technology. This dystopia is completely reliant on technology in everyday life, and value books about as highly as doorstops (Behe), referring to them as “printed, bound media artifacts” (Kinchen). “The story is mainly told via Lenny's old-fashioned diary entries and Eunice's chat and email messages from her “Global Teens” account. Their different approaches to communication and media, however, are only one of the many ways that express how Lenny and Eunice are not suited for each other” (Kribernegg 62). Kribernegg restates that Eunice belongs in a technological world while Lenny simply resides in it, and would rather have his books. Before Eunice arrived in New York, Lenny was aching to speak to her. After drinking a double whiskey at a bar in Staten Island with his friends Noah and Vishnu,

“Eunice Park!” I wailed into Noah’s äppärät. “Eunice, honey. Can you hear me out there? I miss you so much”...and I started to blabber about how much she meant to me...“She really listened to me. She paid attention to me. She never even looked at her äppärät while I was speaking to her...she wants to get to know me better, and she wants to help me, and I want to care for her.” (Shteyngart 93)

Eunice surely witnessed Lenny’s drunken antics on her äppärät, as she spends most of her time on it, and decided to come to New York anyway. Lenny and Eunice would not have even met if it were not for the existence of technology! Back in Rome where they first met, Eunice was talking to an American Sculptor, who Lenny happened to be familiar with.

“Oh, it’s Lenny,” the American sculptor said when I came around to shake his hand. He was a High Net Worth Individual, if barely, and I had tried to court him on several occasions. The young Korean woman glanced at me with what I took to be serious lack of interest. (Shteyngart 16)

Lenny would not have attempted to talk to the sculptor had he not been familiar with his High Net Worth status and attempted to recruit him as a client for Indefinite Life Extension previously. Not only was their introduction the fault of technology, but their relationship itself had instances of dependence on it. Society’s close relationship with technology is undoubtedly the reason why no one seems to be able to form lasting relationships outside technology’s influence. Lenny and Eunice’s relationship was both developed and destroyed by technology, and even their most intimate moments were nothing but technological creations.

While it is normal for technology to have a role in life, the extent to which it plays a role in the society depicted in Gary Shteyngart’s novel, *Super Sad True Love Story*, is a far extreme. Lenny Abramov and Eunice Park were two such individuals of this society that fell into some sort of routine with one another, and they seemed to call it love. Lenny and Eunice’s relationship was completely fabricated by the technology available in their era. Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story* society was abundantly dependent on technology in everyday life. The influence of technology on social interactions and relationships was unavoidable. Lenny and Eunice’s relationship initially appeared to exist despite the wide and far reach of technology, but in truth simply a product of the dystopic society’s technological advances. They had the potential to succeed as a couple in a society less dependent on technology, but their personal differences regarding technology made it impossible for them to reconcile their relationship in this dystopic universe. The shortcomings of this dystopic universe, as far as technology is concerned, are not imagined, but emphasized issues that are present in today’s society. Hopefully, society can anticipate this downfall into technological dependence and put an end to it before it is too late.

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Reflection

My rough draft was edited more than rewritten for the final draft. With all my ideas on paper, I realized how unorganized the whole paper was. I had to tackle the edits piece by piece in order to create a paper that was interesting to read, made logical sense while arguing my position, and stuck to the accepted format. First, my title was changed. Initially I focused on the nature of my main topic, Lenny and Eunice's relationship, and titled my paper "Fact or Fiction? How Technology Forges Relationships in *Super Sad True Love Story*." This was intended to reference the relationship itself. I edited "Fact or Fiction?" to "Made for Each Other?" and now truly question the legitimacy of Lenny and Eunice's relationship, which is what my paper is arguing. I read over my paper a few times as I began additional edits, changing sentences denoted as "too casual for a formal researched argument" to a tone more appropriate for the assignment. I rewrote my thesis rationale in an attempt to simplify it for clarity. I included a section of my paper about government oppression with the use of technology, then went on to discuss technology in everyday life, relationships (romantic and otherwise), and Lenny and Eunice's affair. This resulted in a bit of rearranging of the order of paragraphs of my paper, but I am happy with the arrangement that I created.