

Stephanie Pish
December 15, 2015
Final Portfolio

Cover Letter

Throughout this semester of English 181: Writing about Science Fiction Literature and Film, I discovered that my writing can be more than dry, factual reports. While it is important to incorporate other's ideas and opinions into my writing, I realize it is more interesting if I am not simply regurgitating information or quoting articles. Through completing this course, I realize I can express myself in many different ways: blog posts, letters, or essays for example. Before this semester, I was never comfortable writing informally, using the first person tense, and not supporting my ideas with facts. However, I found that this was actually the best way for me to brainstorm my ideas; therefore beginning the writing process.

In this portfolio, I include pieces of writing from many different genres, ranging from informal blog posts, to a structured **Pecha Kucha** presentation, to my final research essay that required multiple drafts. Each piece of writing served a different purpose; the blog posts helped me compose ideas for my larger projects, while the research paper and **Pecha Kucha** shared my ideas with others. My **Literary Response Letter** and **Final Research Paper** included in this portfolio also show a broad spectrum of formality in my writing, as well as the transformation of my writing skills in general over the course of the semester. These two pieces of writing are geared toward different audiences, as the Letter is written to Eunice from *Super Sad True Love Story* specifically, while the **Research Paper** is written to be shared with anyone interested in the topic.

My **Literary Response Letter** was an informal writing assignment, which at first was a challenge for me. Initially I was uncomfortable to use acronyms and the first person perspective,

but over time I found it to be a fun and interesting assignment. I was able to write from the perspective of Lenny Abramov in a letter to Eunice Park, starting with, “LEONARDO DABRAMOVINCI TO EUNI-TARD ABROAD” and ending with, “If you need anything, feel free to reach out to me. Hope to hear from you soon! Love, Lenny.” This structure allowed me to write in a manner that taught me to be comfortable writing in a less formal context, without incorporating factual evidence. I needed to be creative and adapt a passage from *Super Sad True Love Story* for this assignment, which made me step out of my comfort zone and really brainstorm new ideas. As opposed to my **Final Research Paper**, the **Literary Response Letter** tells a story rather than backs up an assertion I make.

The **Final Research Paper** is a much more formal assignment in which I incorporate quotes from *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart, as well as evidence from scientific articles. I am more accustomed to writing papers of this format, so this assignment was not as much as a challenge as the **Literary Response Letter**. In my **Research Paper**, I discuss the ways in which Shteyngart uses the novel to tell readers of the dangers of becoming too reliant on technology. The paper is written in a way that allows anyone, even someone who has not read the book, to understand my argument.

In my first assertion of the paper, I introduce the loneliness factor that accompanies overuse of technology. I incorporate the argument of Margie Warrell to introduce the idea: “While she acknowledges the benefits of social media, Warrell explains that some people use technology to avoid feeling vulnerable either within themselves or with others, which can create a social divide and increased feelings of loneliness (“Text or Talk”).” In the next paragraph, I highlight a quote by Lenny in which seclusion of Lenny and Eunice is apparent: “I looked sadly at my own rankings . . . Someone had written about my stubble, ‘That dude next to the cute

Asian spermbank has like pubic hair growing out of his chin,’ and I was ranked fortieth out of the forty-three guys in the room” (Shteyngart, 161).” I used this moment in the novel paired with the article by Warrell to show how the seclusion in *Super Sad True Love Story* is echoed in real life. The structure of the **Research Paper** compared to the **Literary Response Letter** allows me to create my own argument and support it using evidence from the novel, as well as articles by other authors. These articles allowed me to bring in a science aspect to my paper, which made this assignment even more interesting to me.

Another genre of writing used in this class was blog posts, which at first intimidated me. Again, I was not comfortable writing in such an informal manner, let alone for others to see. However, the topics of the blog posts gave me an avenue to form the basis for my larger assignments, such as my Pecha Kucha and my Research Paper. This was only the beginning of the writing process for me. After using the blog posts to form my original ideas, I often followed the theme of technology destroying communication skills throughout my blog posts. There were many different stages of my Final Research Paper, beginning with **Blog Post 4, Blog Post 5, Blog Post 9, my Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, and Research Paper Rough Draft**. Each of these played an important role in developing my final paper.

After writing **Blog Post 4** about the invasion of privacy found in the novel, I found Margie Warrell’s article about seclusion related to technology use for **Blog Post 5**, in which we had to incorporate another author’s argument. After discussing Warrell’s analysis of studies that explain how social media makes users feel lonely, I related it to the novel by saying, “Characters in *SSTLS* are used to judging others and being judged based on their ‘personality’ and ‘fuckability’ and having so much information readily available. They felt connected to each other through this but often did not know how to have real human interaction.” Not only did

incorporating Warrell's research solidify my argument, it gave me a basis to expand on this thought. I realized this theme of loneliness and interrupted social interactions due to technology were common throughout the entire novel.

The recognition of a common theme in my blog posts, as well as in the novel, led to my **Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography**. In the proposal, I introduced the novel, then stated, "I would like to explore how Shteyngart represents technology and what he believes the effects overuse of technology could have on society." I also wrote brief summaries of five secondary sources in my annotated bibliography, two of which I would not use in my **Rough Draft** or **Final Research Paper**. After writing my **Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography**, I produced a rough outline of how I would approach my paper in **Blog Post 9**. I discussed my plans for organizing my paper, including first introducing the studies that show the damaging effects of technology, followed by using examples of these effects from the novel. In the first paragraph of **Blog Post 9**, I also stated, "My thesis is built around Lenny's privacy and his being harshly judged by the information available to others due to the technological advances, as well as Eunice's lack of normal relationships and inability to connect to others without technology." After outlining, I began writing my **Rough Draft**.

In my **Rough Draft**, I mostly changed the organization from what I predicted **Blog Post 9**. In the **Rough Draft**, I broke up my argument into different sections, each introduced by the studies showing the different effects of social media. For example, I introduced my second argument that technology provides an avenue for our privacy to be invaded by stating, "The authors of the article 'The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact highlight the false sense of anonymity that the Internet creates for its users. Being able to acquire and share personal information 'anonymously' is never actually anonymous, which allows websites and

other humans to invade our privacy based on our online searches and posts (Yusuf, Nisreen Al-Banawi, and Al-Imam).” I then followed with paragraphs that contained evidence of this invasion of privacy. For my opposing argument, I followed the same format: real life study followed by evidence from the novel contradicting the study. I did not focus on all of the effects of social media at once like I stated I would in my **Proposal**, however the thesis remained the same aside from a few word changes.

In my **Final Research Paper**, most of the changes made from the **Rough Draft** required reverse outlining. In the **Rough Draft**, I discussed the use of technology to invade characters’ privacy. However, I did not realize that I mostly focused on the government invading characters’ privacy. In **Screenshot 1** of my **Rough Draft**, I included examples of personal invasion of privacy and government invasion of privacy in the same paragraph. After using reverse outlining to ensure all evidence made sense in their respective paragraphs, I decided these two points should be separated into more specific paragraphs, as highlighted in **Screenshot 2**. Through using different forms of writing, I was able to better understand the importance of each stage of writing. While it can be easy to simply write one draft of a paper and be done, writing as a process with different steps makes it easier to organize ideas and create a coherent final product.

Throughout this semester, I have become more comfortable with different forms of writing, incorporating others’ ideas and feedback into my writing, and realized the importance of each stage of writing. This portfolio showcases my transition as a writer, and shows each stage of my writing, specifically for my **Final Research Paper** and **Pecha Kucha** presentation. Overall, I have become more confident as a writer and now find that my best ideas come from the shorter, less formal pieces of writing that I was originally hesitant to share.

Literary Response Letter

September 15, 2015

LEONARDO DABRAMOVINCI *TO* EUNI-TARD ABROAD

Hey again Eunice, you still haven't returned my last message but I wanted to catch up with you! I hope Rome is treating you well. Hopefully you can get back to me soon! My offer still stands for you to stay with me when you come to New York. I could show you around, maybe take you to my favorite restaurants if you aren't in the mood for some kick-ass eggplant LOL. Anyways, so much has happened since we parted ways. I'll give you a brief overview.

On the way home, a group of security personnel stormed the plane as soon as it landed in New York. They took a man away for questioning and herded the rest of the first class passengers into a security shed!! When I saw them barge into the cabin, I thought I was done for because the Welcome Back, Pa'dner otter froze after I answered a question and Nettie Fine thought I might get stopped at JFK. I also received a message from my boss saying that there would be cutbacks at work and I'm slightly worried because my performance has been less than stellar. Oh well, that isn't really important. The important thing is that after the whole debacle, I have decided to make some changes in my life. I call this list of changes the STRATEGY FOR SHORT-TERM SURVIVAL AND THEN IMMORTALITY FOLLOWING RETURN TO NEW YORK AFTER EUROPEAN FIASCO. Basically, theme of this list is that I'll never die and improve my (eternal) life. Is that weird? Anyways the list looks something like this:

1. Work hard and show that I'm not a complete loser grandpa like you might think I am
LOL JBF (see, I told you I've been practicing my abbreviations). But really, I'm going to work harder, get a raise, and save up my money to get anti-aging treatments to achieve Indefinite Life Extension, hence, never dying.

2. Make Joshie (my boss) protect me by creating a father-like bond and telling him what happened on the plane.
3. Rekindle close friendships. This goes along with making my new eternal life worth living. It's always more fun when you aren't alone. I think it would be even more fun if you came to visit!
4. Love my parents. Yes sometimes they're mean to me, you know how it is I'm sure, but they've always been there for me so I at least owe them conditional love.
5. Enjoy the things I have. I really don't have it that bad. At least I wasn't the man on the plane getting taken away by the officers.

Anyways, sorry if that droned on. I swear I'm not a boring old man; I actually have a lot of fun things planned for the days, weeks, and months ahead, as you can see from my list.

Hopefully you can come see me and I can show you the beauty of New York City. I hope you're having a great time in Rome, maybe send me some pictures or something? Oh well, if not that, just let me know how you're doing. If you need anything, feel free to reach out to me. Hope to hear from you soon!

Love,

Lenny

Reflection

In my adaption of pages 50-51 of *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart, I rewrote Lenny Abramov's diary entry as an online message to Eunice Park. I wrote in a tone similar to that of his first message to Eunice on page 33, using acronyms that Eunice used in her conversation with him. I wanted to show the side of Lenny that is trying to impress Eunice while

also conveying the message in from the original diary entry on pages 50 and 51. I started by using a conversational tone and topics, then talking about the events that happened in the few days since he had messaged her first, referenced from the events on pages 10, 11, 40, and 41. This led into the list of changes Lenny wants to make in his life, which was modified from the original diary entry. I ended the letter with a familiar tone and that of someone who wishes to hear from someone soon, as Lenny secretly misses Eunice, however he does not want to come across as too forward.

One of the stronger aspects of my letter is the way I merged two parts of the novel into one (events that occurred on pages 10, 11, 40, and 41 with the diary entry that I adapted from pages 50-51). The weakest aspect of my letter is the awkward conversational aspect at times. I feel at some points it seems forced, however this could also help convey Lenny's unrequited desire for Eunice.

Pecha Kucha: “The Mild Mild West” by Banksy

October 6, 2015



<http://www.stencilrevolution.com/banksy-art-prints/mild-mild-west/>

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

In my Pecha Kucha, I analyzed this mural (which I found as a poster in my friend's room), "The Mild Mild West," by graffiti artist Banksy. This piece of street art was painted in Bristol, England in response to a series of attacks against the public by police officers. This painting is found on a wall, which is easily accessible to the public. Banksy uses this media to share his message with all who walk by, no matter their age or social class. He also uses the contrast between dark and light colors to draw attention to the main focus and metaphor in his painting: the teddy bear. In my analysis, I discussed the conflict between innocence and violence. The teddy bear in this painting represents the innocence, while the Molotov cocktail in his hand represents the violence. He is also aiming the Molotov cocktail at police wearing riot gear. The teddy bear is supposed to be innocent, so why are the police wearing riot gear? It seems like a bit

unnecessary if the teddy bear is really innocent. The use of color is also indicative of who “good guy” is and who the “bad guy” is. Typically, white is seen as a color of innocence; the teddy bear is depicted in white, so he is seen as the innocent victim here. The officers are shown in shadows and wearing black riot gear, which gives the viewer the impression that they are the antagonists in this case. This painting shares Banksy’s message that police are using excess force to control innocent citizens, who cause uprisings when authority figures (in this case the police) abuse their power.

In addition to the analysis of the painting itself, I also discussed the relevance of the piece in today’s society. Recently, the police force of America has been criticized in the media for attacking “innocent” citizens; such was the case in Ferguson and Baltimore. While this painting was in response to events in England, it is relevant all over the world. Police violence is not something that occurs only in England, or only in the United States; it happens in many locations to people of many backgrounds. Banksy’s message has been seen by many, due to his popularity as a graffiti artist, both in Bristol and on the Internet. His images have been shared on social media, and have even been made into posters. While this image is controversial because some believe the “innocent” citizens are not as innocent as they are sometimes portrayed in the media, it definitely brings light to an important issue. Police violence is widespread, and people in locations where it is prevalent can relate to Banksy’s image “The Mild Mild West.” It represents the constant struggle between innocence and violence, as well as the conflict that occurs between citizens and the police when those who are supposed to protect us abuse their power.

Super Sad True Love Story Blog Post

September 16, 2015

Certain aspects of *Super Sad True Love Story* parallel those found in real life, such as seclusion and ridicule due to personal differences. While the loneliness found in the futuristic setting of the novel manifests itself differently than in real life, it shows through especially in the case of Lenny. Lenny's disconnect from his peers is seen especially in pages 57-65, upon his return to work. In the novel, most people are trying to achieve eternal life and the illusion of being young forever. Lenny, however, is visibly aging while surrounded by young people. He does not like new technology, likes to read books, and simply does not have the funds to complete the anti-aging treatments that others do. He is shamed for being visibly older and laughed at when he tries to fit in. Certainly most of us would agree that we have felt excluded at some point in our lives, whether that be due to differing interests, cultures, or personalities and this is exemplified in *Super Sad True Love Story*.

This scene in the novel alludes to those instances in real life, in which someone tries to fit into a group in which he or she is clearly not comfortable or does not conform to what is “normal” for that group. This is an important issue, because in Lenny's case, this exclusion makes him want to change who he is and how he acts. Unfortunately however, real people also experience these things every day and want to change to fit in with certain groups. The theme of loneliness and exclusion based on personal differences in *Super Sad True Love Story* translates into real life scenarios, and shows how destructive this behavior can be to those targeted by the ridicule.

Artifact Blog Post
September 22, 2015



<http://www.stencilrevolution.com/banksy-art-prints/mild-mild-west/>

I chose to analyze this mural by the graffiti artist Banksy after seeing a poster of it in my friend's room. I think it is an interesting piece of art as it captures the conflict between the common people and the police, as well as the conflict between innocence and violence. It depicts a teddy bear (innocence) throwing a Molotov cocktail (violence) at police in riot gear. The words "The Mild Mild West" are inscribed in white on the top of the black background, which is again, a contrast. The police are wearing black, in front of a background, which can suggest that the police are the evil here, while the bear is white, suggesting that he is the "good guy," or the common people.

The graffiti artist Banksy painted this mural. This is a mural on the side of a building, so he intended for it to be seen by the general public. Anyone with access to the area would be able to see the artist's message, which I described above. This is an effective way of sharing his idea

with the public because it is free to everyone. He draws attention to the main focus of the piece (the teddy bear) by centralizing the light and color on that part of the image. It is, important however, for the audience to have an idea of the people's relationship with the police, as that is the focus of this mural. Overall, this piece can be interpreted in many ways, and I would like to analyze it further.

Blog Post 4

September 28, 2015

I find the scene on pages 129-131 particularly dystopic. It describes Lenny and Eunice disembarking a train and encountering many security guards, as well as people of many different nationalities. This scene also portrays the security guards as hasty and accusatory, as they scan each person's apparat and make judgments based on their information, which should remain private. They scan Lenny's apparat and deduce that he is guilty of "malicious pervasion of data." These officers judge Lenny for only what they see on his apparat, which is not a fair representation of his true character. Unfortunately, rash judgment is not only seen in *Super Sad True Love Story*, it can be seen in America today, as was the case in Ferguson, Missouri. Many have concluded that police officers stereotype African Americans as more violent, and therefore are more likely to use unnecessary, excessive force.



http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/77159000/jpg/_77159481_police_standoff.jpg

This image shows a person, looking innocent to the viewers of the photo, facing armed police. This image relates to the scene where the security officers are accusing Lenny of "malicious pervasion of data" without having any incriminating evidence, much like the police officers in this image. Sadly, even when they release Lenny, the officers are rude and condescending, solely because they knew a few choice things about him from his apparat. This image reminded me of the racial stereotypes in Ferguson, not only because of the way the officers act toward Lenny, but also because he mentions the diversity of the area. This scene represents a sadly realistic dystopia in which people are judged based on a few facts that others know about them, which is magnified by the fact that anyone can glean information about a person from their apparat.

Blog Post #5

October 5, 2015

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, one thing is always constant, and that is technology. Well, it is constant until all apparäti stop working. This sudden disconnect from technology, as seen on page 270, is enough to almost destroy the society in which Lenny, Eunice, and the rest of the characters in *SSTLS* live because without technology, they do not know how to communicate with each other, with some committing suicide. Unfortunately, this is not only true of the society in *SSTLS*, as Margie Warrell writes in her article "Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?" for *Forbes*, more people under the age of 35 feel lonely than ever before. This is mostly due to the increased use of technology and social media. Characters in *SSTLS* are used to judging others and being judged based on their "personality" and "fuckability" and having so much information readily available. They felt connected to each other through this but often did not know how to have real human interaction.

Warrell discusses this false sense of connection caused by technology in her article, stating that young people often turn to social media and technology as an outlet for their insecurities. People under the age of 35 have fewer confidants than people in older generations, as they are more reliant on technology for communication. They do not have as many intimate face-to-face interactions, which sounds similar to those in *SSTLS*. Young people in America today and characters in *SSTLS* rely too heavily on technology for their "connections" and when technology is taken away, they feel lonely and have trouble making real, intimate connections to those around them.

Warrell, Margie. "Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?" *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, n.d. Web. 05 Oct. 2015. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/05/24/text-or-talk-is-technology-making-you-lonely/>>.

Blog Post 9

November 2, 2015

In my research paper, I plan on showing how Shteyngart's ideas of seclusion and isolation due to overuse of technology in *Super Sad True Love Story* are echoed in today's society. In the introduction, I would briefly discuss how the characters in the novel, specifically Lenny and Eunice feel a sense of seclusion, and how this could be connected to the abundance of technology and social media. I would then introduce some of my sources, which consist of multiple studies that show how social media and technology can create lack of self-confidence and retract from face to face interactions among those who use it most. My thesis is built around Lenny's privacy and his being harshly judged by the information available to others due to the technological advances, as well as Eunice's lack of normal relationships and inability to connect to others without technology.

I think that it is important to first explain the real life evidence that technology is damaging the communication skills of the younger generations, as this will allow me to then show how Shteyngart highlights these occurrences in *SSTLS*. In order to do this, I will quote Margie Warrell's article, "Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?" which explains how people who are more active on social media have a harder time forming close relationships with others. I would also quote "The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact", which talks about the effects that technology and social media use have on students in particular. Quoting these articles will give me a basis to build upon and explain how these effects of social media are seen in *SSTLS*.

After discussing some of the studies that show how technology can affect our intimate relationships in real life, I would then show how this is seen in the novel. I plan to focus on instances when Lenny is ostracized for being different through the use of social media. For

example, when he is in the bar with Eunice and she is overall rated high based solely on what the information that others can see about her, while Lenny is rated extremely low. Also, I would reference the entries where Eunice and Lenny cannot connect with anyone because none of the apparäti are working. These scenes in particular portray the damaging effects that reliance on technology for communication can have on personal relationships with people.

Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

October 27, 2015

The Social Disconnect

The world portrayed in Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*, written in 2010, depicts a dystopian society, overrun by technology and social media. In the novel, Lenny Abramov, one of the main characters, falls in love with a young girl, Eunice Park. In this society, Lenny is one of the few people who does not have the most recent technology. He reads books and enjoys spending time with his friends face to face, which is uncommon in the novel and he is often patronized for these interests. Shteyngart uses exaggerated examples of super-advanced and invasive technology to show the dangers that society faces when adopting technology and social media as a top priority or main method of gathering and communicating information. I would like to explore how Shteyngart represents technology and what he believes the effects overuse of technology could have on society. He uses the novel as a shock piece, exaggerating the ridicule of Lenny Abramov and seclusion of Eunice Park to show the reader how technology can debilitate human interactions, retract from our sense of personal privacy, and create insecurities and unhappiness in some cases.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Warrell, Margie. "Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?" *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 24 May 2012. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.
<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/05/24/text-or-talk-is-technology-making-you-lonely/>>.

In this article, Margie Warrell discusses the way that technology use affects our interactions with each other. She states that people who use technology and social media more frequently are less able to sustain normal personal relationships because they are no longer accustomed to sharing emotions and personal subjects face to face. This is especially true among the younger generations, as the frequency of technology use is much higher than that of the older generations. I would like to use this article to show how this antisocial and solitary behavior is mimicked in *Super Sad True Love Story*. Throughout the novel, Eunice, Lenny, and Lenny's friends spend so

much time on their äppärät, judge each other through a type of social media, and communicate with each other in this manner.

2. Behe, Rege. "Gary Shteyngart's 'Super Sad True Love Story' Matches Low-Tech, Digital-Age." *Tribune - Review / Pittsburgh Tribune - Review* Aug 22 2010. *ProQuest*. Web. 26 Oct. 2015 .

This article is an interview of Gary Shteyngart, the author of *Super Sad True Love Story*, in which he talks about the ways the technological advances in the novel parallel the technological advances and ideals in real life. He mentions that he got the inspiration for the novel when a TV repairman critiqued him on his small TV and large collection of books. He realized that now technology has taken over as the predominant method of collecting information. I plan on using this article to back up my interpretation of the significance of technology in the novel in social environments. I would like to incorporate the author's commentary on certain subjects in the novel, such as the language used and the prevalence of rapid technological advancement.

3. McCausland, Lauren, B.S.N., R.N., & Falk, Nancy L, PhD, R.N., M.B.A. (2012). From dinner table to digital tablet: Technology's potential for reducing loneliness in older adults. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 50(5), 22-26.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20120410-01>

This article is somewhat of a contradiction to the first article that I chose, as it discusses the ways in why technology can combat loneliness in older adults by giving them a sense of connectedness. This scientific article states that older people, especially those living alone or those with limited mobility, will benefit from the use of the Internet, social media, and email, as they will be able to more easily communicate with family and friends without leaving home. I would like to use this article to provide a counterexample to the negative effects of technology in *SSTLS*. I would like to discuss some of the perceived effects of technology, as shown in this article, and the actual consequences of overuse of technology found in *SSTLS*, such as the seclusion of Lenny from the more "ideal" people, and the lack of intimate connection between Eunice and Lenny and/or her family.

4. Yusuf, Nadia, Nisreen Al-Banawi, and Hajjah Abdel Rahman Al-Imam. "The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact." *Journal of Business & Economics Research (Online)* 12.1 (2014): 1, n/a. *ProQuest*. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

This article provides a broad description on how technology, specifically social media, affects our everyday lives. Part of the article focuses on how technology influences students and the learning process, mentioning that as they spend more time on social media, their face to face interactions become less frequent and meaningful, and their academic performance suffers due to increased distraction. While technology readily provides valuable information to students, it also causes them to rely solely on the Internet for their information, taking away from the research process. Using the facts in this article, I plan to show how the over-availability of information is inhibiting the work ethic of those relying the Internet for all schoolwork, inhibiting people from forming intimate connections, and taking away personal privacy. This availability of information

and lack of privacy is seen in *SSTLS* when Lenny finds out everything about Eunice's personal history, as well as all of her parents' information.

5. Fischer, T. (2010, Sep 04). Review: FICTION: Pull the otter one: It's funny, it's clever and it's too much, says Tibor Fischer: *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart 272pp, granta, pounds 12.99. *The Guardian* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/749475354?accountid=10747>

This article is a criticism on Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*. It discusses the style in which the novel is written, but I mainly want to focus on the part in which the author, Tibor Fischer, interpreted the novel to foreshadow the future of America. Fischer says that the novel paints a bleak picture for the future, one that is overrun with technology. Fischer picks out specific moments in which the overuse of technology is so extensive that it is almost absurd, such is the case of the otter. I would use this part of the book review to expand on my idea that Shteyngart uses this novel as somewhat of a shock piece to warn of the dangers of being so reliant on technology.

Research Paper Rough Draft

November 15, 2015

The Social Disconnect

“Connect with your friends and the world around you on Facebook” (Facebook Slogan).

This is what you see when logging in to one of the world’s most popular social media websites, Facebook. The premise of Facebook and social media in general is to connect people across the globe and share personal photos, moments, and information. But are these social media sites and technology as a means of communication helpful to human interactions, or are they causing us to lose touch with each other and become more absorbed with the technology itself?

In Gary Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story*, published in 2010, Lenny Abramov seeks approval from others, but instead faces judgment through the social media platform GlobalTeens, all while trying to connect to Eunice Park, a young girl with whom he has fallen in love. In *Super Sad True Love Story*, privacy is invaded, intimate situations are disrupted, and characters’ social interactions are increasingly awkward and infrequent. In a world with so much “connection” due to social media and communication via technology, how could the characters in the novel feel so lonely and disconnected? Unfortunately, the loneliness caused by reliance on technology is also prevalent in today’s society. **In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Shteyngart uses exaggerated examples of super-advanced and invasive technology to show the dangers of adopting technology and social media as a top priority or a main method of gathering and sharing information. He uses the novel as somewhat of a shock piece, using the ridicule of Lenny Abramov and seclusion of Eunice Park to warn readers how technology reliance can debilitate human interactions, retract from our sense of personal privacy, and create insecurities and unhappiness.**

Many people feel as though technology provides endless opportunity to connect with others, however, recent studies have shown that younger generations feel lonelier and more depressed than previous generations because they lack the social skills necessary to maintain intimate relationships. This seclusion is due to the reliance on technology and social media to communicate personal ideas and feelings rather than actually sharing them with others face to face. Another factor that influences this negative self-perception is the receipt of hurtful criticism from others over social sites. Margie Warrell, a writer for *Forbes*, discusses this issue in her article “Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?” While she acknowledges the benefits of social media, Warrell explains that some people use technology to avoid feeling vulnerable either within themselves or with others, which can create a social divide and increased feelings of loneliness (“Text or Talk”). This personal dissatisfaction is highlighted in *Super Sad True Love Story* in nightmarish social situations, specifically focusing on Lenny.

After Lenny successfully introduces Eunice Park to his parents, he decides that he should take her to meet his friends. They all go to a bar, and he believes that his night is going well until Eunice begins looking at her “rankings,” which is a system in the novel in which people in a location rate the “fuckability” and “personality” of the other characters in that location over social media. While Eunice receives decent ratings, Lenny says about himself, “I looked sadly at my own rankings . . . Someone had written about my stubble, ‘That dude next to the cute Asian spermbank has like pubic hair growing out of his chin,’ and I was ranked fortieth out of the forty-three guys in the room” (Shteyngart, 161). While it is possible that anyone could say this to his face, this system of anonymous criticism makes Lenny feel lonely and self-conscious. The fact that there is a “fuckability” rating is simply objectifying, and the “personality” rating will be inaccurate, as the people judging the characters know almost nothing about their real

personalities. The system is designed to allow people to make others feel bad about themselves in an anonymous setting, and Lenny often finds himself at the receiving end of this. Although this is technically a way to share personal opinions with others, therefore “connecting” them, it understandably creates a sense of hostility and discomfort in social situations.

Toward the end of the novel, many of the characters have become so reliant on technology that they are incapable of connecting with the people they care about. At one point, the *äppäräti* stop functioning, and Lenny says, “. . . I can’t connect in any meaningful way to anyone, even to you, diary. Four young people committed suicide in our building complexes, and two of them wrote suicide notes about how they couldn’t see a future without their *äppäräti*” (Shteyngart, 270). In this situation, the entire community in *Super Sad True Love Story* has become overly dependent on their *äppäräti* for everything they do. If there were only one person struggling to communicate or do their shopping, for example, this desperation for their *äppäräti* would not seem as drastic. However, four people kill themselves because they do not know how to live their lives without the technology that they are accustomed to. Even Lenny, who used to read books and was considered technologically outdated by the standards in the novel, has fallen into the technology dependence that is so common in the novel. While the extent to which most people in society today rely on their technology may not be as drastic as shown in *Super Sad True Love Story*, the message Gary Shteyngart is trying to convey is obvious: becoming dependent on technology drives a wedge between us and other people around us, as we become more secluded and introverted, losing the ability to have constructive social interactions.

Another downfall of technology that is often highlighted in *Super Sad True Love Story* is the frequent invasion of privacy by using technology to procure personal information. Since we were introduced to the Internet, we have been told to be careful about what we post online

because it is out there forever once we post it. The authors of the article “The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact” highlight the false sense of anonymity that the Internet creates for its users. Being able to acquire and share personal information “anonymously” is never actually anonymous, which allows websites and other humans to invade our privacy based on our online searches and posts (Yusuf, Nisreen Al-Banawi, and Al-Imam). Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, our online activity is being monitored and personal data is being collected by these websites. This is seen more prevalently in *Super Sad True Love Story*, as not only the website employees, but those who know you personally can collect whatever data they want about you, even if it is private information.

The first example of invasive technology is seen in the first chapter of *Super Sad True Love Story*, when Lenny attempts to return to America from Rome. He is forced to speak to an otter on an *äppärät*, who asks personal, and sometimes seemingly irrelevant questions such as, “What’s your Credit ranking, Leonard or Lenny, out of a total score of sixteen hundred? . . . Now I just *have* to ask, are you a member of the Bipartisan Party? . . . did you have any intimate physical relationships with any *non*-Americans during your stay?” (Shteyngart, 9). The otter also says, “You must really know how to pinch those pennies. You have money in the bank, you work for ‘effeminate life invention’” (Shteyngart, 9). While there are moments intended to create a sense of humor, such as the otter making small talk and saying Lenny works for “effeminate life invention” while he really works for “indefinite life extension,” invasive questions are hidden amongst the seemingly innocent nature of the animal. Lenny becomes concerned when the otter asks if he has had sexual relations with foreigners, as this information seems irrelevant to him. He debates answering the question, and when the otter malfunctions, he becomes even more worried that the American government may harm the woman he had sex with. The

government uses this talking otter to collect information from citizens in an interesting and somewhat confusing way; they use an otter, which seems innocent. Shteyngart includes this strange example to convey the message that even though we may feel safe providing personal information through technology, perhaps through social media, it is more invasive than we are led to believe. Perhaps it is not as apparent in real life, but technology provides an opportunity for corporations, and other people, to collect data about us with or without our knowledge, and Shteyngart's unique example of the otter is a depiction of this.

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, information about the characters is available to other characters, no matter how private it may seem. For example, as Eunice and Lenny disembark a train, they encounter a swarm of security guards that check each person before they are allowed to continue past them. Lenny says of his encounter with the guard, "A paunched, goateed *muzhik* in a camouflaged helmet scanned my äppärät with an unhappy display of teeth and a gust of morning breath that had lasted well into the afternoon. 'Malicious *pervision* of data' he barked at me . . . 'What the heck, son?'" (Shteyngart, 130). The guard has no prior knowledge about anything regarding Lenny, yet he is able to gather this information from scanning his äppärät without Lenny's permission. Lenny feels as though being charged with "Malicious *pervision* of data" is a mistake, and does not want the guard to know or judge him based on this information, which Lenny does not feel he should have access to anyway. Another example of people accessing personal information without their permission or knowledge can be found on pages 37 through 39, in which Lenny uses his äppärät to learn as much about Eunice as possible. He learns about her father's podiatry practice, their net worth, where she lives, and about her sister. He learns that her father abuses her, and finds pictures that others have taken of her (Shteyngart 37-39). Although Lenny means no harm and simply wants to know more about the girl he is

infatuated with, he begins to uncover information that should not be available to the public.

Perhaps this is the norm in the society in *Super Sad True Love Story*, but this extreme invasion of privacy by Lenny conveys how easy it is for an individual to lose his or her sense of security if they allow too much to be shared on the Internet or through electronic forms of communication.

In many regards, technology and social media are intended to make connecting to others easier, as “Current research, although limited, indicates the potential for Internet use to improve connectivity and reduce loneliness . . . Additional research has also shown a reduction of depression symptoms associated with Internet use” (McCausland and Falk). Social media can play a role in connecting families and friends across the globe, however, in *Super Sad True Love Story*, technology dominates social gatherings and retracts from face-to-face interactions. For instance, when Lenny takes Eunice out to meet his friends, no one seems interested in much conversation. Lenny describes an encounter with his friend Grace: “‘She’s too young for you,’ she whispered to me after Eunice had turned away from us and started AssLuxury shopping. There wasn’t anything particularly antisocial about this- the boys were watching Chinese Central Banker Wangsheng Li’s visit to Washington on their own äppäräti, and Noah’s girl, Amy was setting up hand lotion and other sponsored products for a live stream of the ‘Amy Greenberg Muffintop Hour’” (Shteyngart, 153-154). This scene highlights the antisocial nature of this group of friends, who ironically are blinded to the fact that they are being antisocial. When Lenny says this is not an antisocial action, it is ironic because none of the characters involved are interacting with each other. While they feel social because they are watching or chatting with people on their äppäräti, they are completely ignoring the people they are personally with, absorbed in the world of social media and technology. This is exactly what Shteyngart is trying to show in *Super Sad True Love Story*, as instances like this are all too apparent in today’s society as well.

Look around next time you are on a bus or at the grocery store. It is easy to see the infatuation people have with their cell phones and computers. While using technology to communicate with others and find out information about the world around us can be beneficial and make many things much more efficient, we must be aware of the true reasons we use it. Are we trying to make ourselves look better on social media and boost our self confidence with how many “likes” we can get? Or, are we simply using it as an easier means of communication for family member across the world? The distinction between practicality and dependence is important, as there comes a certain point where we lose the ability to maintain our personal identity and relationships with those around us. Gary Shteyngart uses *Super Sad True Love Story* to show the negative effects of dependence on technology by his use of extreme examples of social disconnection and invasions of privacy throughout the novel.

Bibliography

"Facebook Slogan." *Facebook*. Facebook, n.d. Web. 15 Nov. 2015.
<<https://www.facebook.com/facebook>>.

McCausland, Lauren, B.S.N., R.N., & Falk, Nancy L, PhD, R.N., M.B.A. (2012). From dinner table to digital tablet: Technology's potential for reducing loneliness in older adults. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 50(5), 22-26.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20120410-01>

Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Warrell, Margie. "Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?" *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 24 May 2012. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.
<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/05/24/text-or-talk-is-technology-making-you-lonely/>>.

Yusuf, Nadia, Nisreen Al-Banawi, and Hajjah Abdel Rahman Al-Imam. "The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact." *Journal of Business & Economics Research (Online)* 12.1 (2014): 1, n/a. *ProQuest*. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

Reflection

While writing this paper, my biggest challenge was organizing my ideas in a way that would make sense to the reader chronologically, while still supporting my thesis. I knew exactly where I wanted to go with my argument and which passages I wanted to include, as well as the outside sources I wanted to use, but organizing them was still difficult. I think this may be the weakest element of my paper, as I am still not sure whether I should have talked about the studies conducted before or after I explained how different messages were conveyed in the novel. I do think that my argument relates well to the novel however, and this may be the strongest element of my paper. I felt as though I had a clear understanding of the messages Shneygart was trying to share, therefore my argument is sound and explored in detail.

Personally, I enjoyed being able to use outside sources to show how the book relates to real life and bring in somewhat of a “science” aspect to the paper, as there are studies based around technology use. I think the studies I included about what can happen if you become too dependent on technology add to the validity of my thesis and my comparison of the novel to real life situations. Overall, I found this topic interesting and I enjoyed being able to explore something so important to society in relation to such a unique novel.

The Social Disconnect

“Connect with your friends and the world around you on Facebook” (Facebook Slogan). This is what you see when logging in to one of the world’s most popular social media websites, Facebook. The premise of Facebook and social media in general is to connect people across the globe and share personal photos, moments, and information. But are these social media sites and technology as a means of communication helpful to human interactions, or are they causing us to lose touch with each other and become more absorbed with the technology itself?

In Gary Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story*, published in 2010, Lenny Abramov seeks approval from others, but instead faces judgment through the social media platform GlobalTeens, all while trying to connect to Eunice Park, a young girl with whom he has fallen in love. In *Super Sad True Love Story*, privacy is invaded, intimate situations are disrupted, and characters’ social interactions are increasingly awkward and infrequent. In a world with so much “connection” due to social media and communication via technology, how could the characters in the novel feel so lonely and disconnected? Unfortunately, the loneliness caused by reliance on technology is also prevalent in today’s society. In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Shteyngart uses exaggerated examples of super-advanced and invasive technology to show the dangers of adopting technology and social media as a top priority or a main method of gathering and sharing information. By highlighting the ridicule of Lenny Abramov and consistent seclusion of Eunice Park, Shteyngart uses the novel to warn readers that technological reliance can debilitate human interactions, detract from our sense of personal privacy, and create insecurities and unhappiness.

Many people feel as though technology provides endless opportunity to connect with others, however, recent studies have shown that younger generations feel lonelier and more

depressed than previous generations because they lack the social skills necessary to maintain intimate relationships. This seclusion is due to the reliance on technology and social media to communicate personal ideas and feelings rather than actually sharing them with others face-to-face. In some cases, people may receive hurtful criticism from others over social sites, which can increase negative self-perception, seclusion and depression. Margie Warrell, a writer for *Forbes*, discusses this issue in her article “Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?” While she acknowledges the benefits of social media, Warrell explains that some people use technology to avoid feeling vulnerable either within themselves or with others, which can create a social divide and increased feelings of loneliness (“Text or Talk”). This personal dissatisfaction is highlighted in *Super Sad True Love Story* in nightmarish social situations, specifically focusing on Lenny’s discomfort while Eunice becomes withdrawn.

After Lenny successfully introduces Eunice Park to his parents, he decides that he should take her to meet his friends. They all go to a bar, and he believes that the night is going well until Lenny begins looking at his and Eunice’s “rankings,” which is a system in the novel in which people in a location rate the “fuckability” and “personality” of the other characters in that location over social media. While Eunice receives decent ratings, Lenny says about himself, “I looked sadly at my own rankings . . . Someone had written about my stubble, ‘That dude next to the cute Asian spermbank has like pubic hair growing out of his chin,’ and I was ranked fortieth out of the forty-three guys in the room” (Shteyngart, 161). While it is possible that anyone could say this to his face, this system of anonymous criticism makes Lenny feel lonely and self-conscious. It allows users to make hurtful comments without considering the recipient’s feelings. The “fuckability” rating is simply objectifying, as it focuses solely on the person’s appearance, and the “personality” rating will be inaccurate, as the people rating the characters know nothing

about their real personalities. The system is designed to allow people to make others feel bad about themselves in an anonymous setting, and Lenny often finds himself on the receiving end of this. In addition, Eunice receives generally high ratings, however she is non-responsive throughout the situation; she does not care about her ratings and keeps to herself. Although the rating system is technically a way to share personal opinions with others, therefore “connecting” them, it actually creates a sense of hostility and discomfort in social situations. The reality is that the rating system makes Lenny feel uncomfortable with himself, while Eunice remains introverted, meaning that this is truly a false connection between the characters in the novel.

Toward the end of the novel, many of the characters have become so reliant on technology that they are incapable of connecting with people they care about. When the economy crashes, attacks are launched throughout New York City and society is thrown into chaos. At one point, the *äppäräti* stop functioning, and Lenny says, “. . . I can’t connect in any meaningful way to anyone, even to you, diary. Four young people committed suicide in our building complexes, and two of them wrote suicide notes about how they couldn’t see a future without their *äppäräti*” (Shteyngart, 270). In this situation, the entire community in *Super Sad True Love Story* has become overly dependent on their *äppäräti* for everything they do. If only one person is struggling to communicate or do their shopping, for example, this desperation for their *äppäräti* would not seem as apparent. However, four people kill themselves because they do not know how to live their lives without the technology that they are accustomed to. While not everyone takes such drastic measures, the multiple cases of suicide convey the sense that most members of this dystopian society feel lost without their *äppäräti*. Even Lenny, who used to read books and was considered technologically outdated by the standards in the novel, has fallen into the technology dependence that is so common in the novel. The fact that he can no longer create

meaningful connections with others, which is a stark contrast to his personality in the beginning of the novel, shows that living in such a technological society has destroyed his communication skills. While the extent to which most people in society today rely on their technology may not be as obvious as shown in *Super Sad True Love Story*, the message Gary Shteyngart is trying to convey is obvious: becoming dependent on technology drives a wedge between us and other individuals as we become more secluded and introverted, losing the ability to have constructive social interactions.

Another downfall of technology that is often highlighted in *Super Sad True Love Story* is the frequent invasion of privacy by using technology to procure personal information. Since we were introduced to the Internet, we have been told to be careful about what we post online because it can never be completely erased. The authors of the article "The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact" highlight the false sense of anonymity that the Internet creates for its users. Being able to acquire and share personal information "anonymously" is never truly anonymous, which allows websites and other humans to invade our privacy based on our online searches and posts (Yusuf, Nisreen Al-Banawi, and Al-Imam). Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, our online activity is being monitored and personal data is being collected by these websites. This is seen more prevalently in *Super Sad True Love Story*, as not only the website employees, but government employees as well as those you know personally can collect your private information.

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, information about the characters is available to other characters, especially the government and its employees, no matter how confidential it may seem. The first example of invasive technology use by the government is seen in the first chapter, when Lenny is returning to America from Rome. He is forced to speak to an otter on an

äppärät, who asks personal, and sometimes seemingly irrelevant questions such as, “What’s your Credit ranking, Leonard or Lenny, out of a total score of sixteen hundred? . . . Now I just *have* to ask, are you a member of the Bipartisan Party? . . . did you have any intimate physical relationships with any *non*-Americans during your stay?” (Shteyngart, 9). The otter also says, “You must really know how to pinch those pennies. You have money in the bank, you work for ‘effeminate life invention’” (Shteyngart, 9). While there are moments intended to create a sense of humor, such as the otter making small talk and saying Lenny works for “effeminate life invention” while he really works for “indefinite life extension,” invasive questions are hidden amongst the seemingly innocent nature of the animal. Lenny becomes concerned when the otter asks if he has had sexual relations with foreigners, as this information seems irrelevant to him. He debates answering the question, and when the otter malfunctions, he becomes even more worried that the American government may harm the woman he had sex with. The government uses this talking otter to collect information from citizens in an interesting and somewhat confusing way; they use an otter, which seems innocent. Shteyngart includes this strange example to convey the message that even though we may feel safe providing personal information through technology, perhaps through social media, it is more invasive than we are led to believe. Perhaps it is not as apparent in real life, but technology provides an opportunity for the government, corporations, and other people to collect data about us with or without our knowledge, and Shteyngart’s unique example of the otter is a depiction of this.

Throughout *Super Sad True Love Story*, the government continues to spy on the citizens through their äppäräti. For instance, as Eunice and Lenny disembark a train, they encounter a swarm of security guards that check each person before they are allowed to continue past them. Lenny says of his encounter with the guard, “A paunched, goateed *muzhik* in a camouflaged

helmet scanned my äppärät with an unhappy display of teeth and a gust of morning breath that had lasted well into the afternoon. ‘Malicious *pervision* of data’ he barked at me . . . ‘What the heck, son?’” (Shteyngart, 130). The guard has no prior knowledge about anything regarding Lenny, yet he is able to gather this information from scanning his äppärät without Lenny’s permission. Lenny feels as though being charged with “Malicious *pervision* of data” is a mistake, and does not want the guard to know or judge him based on this information, which Lenny does not feel he should have access to anyway. Shteyngart includes this interaction to emphasize the idea that nothing we do online is truly confidential. While a government official may not necessarily confront us for our online activity, they can monitor our online activity and use it to gather information about us.

The invasion of privacy is not limited to the government; citizens of this society also have almost unlimited access to information about other characters. An example of people accessing personal information without their permission or knowledge can be found on pages 37 through 39, in which Lenny uses his äppärät to learn as much about Eunice as possible. He learns about her father’s podiatry practice, their net worth, where she lives, and about her sister. He learns that her father abuses her, and finds pictures that others have taken of her (Shteyngart 37-39). Although Lenny means no harm and simply wants to know more about the girl he is infatuated with, he begins to uncover information that should not be available to the public. Perhaps this is the norm in the society in *Super Sad True Love Story*, but this extreme invasion of privacy by Lenny conveys how easy it is for an individual to lose his or her sense of security if they allow too much to be shared on the Internet or through electronic forms of communication.

In many regards, technology and social media are intended to make connecting to others easier, as “Current research, although limited, indicates the potential for Internet use to improve

connectivity and reduce loneliness . . . Additional research has also shown a reduction of depression symptoms associated with Internet use” (McCausland and Falk). Social media can play a role in connecting families and friends across the globe; however, in *Super Sad True Love Story*, technology dominates social gatherings and disrupts face-to-face interactions. For instance, when Lenny takes Eunice out to meet his friends, no one seems interested in much conversation. Lenny describes an encounter with his friend Grace:

“‘She’s too young for you,’ she whispered to me after Eunice had turned away from us and started AssLuxury shopping. There wasn’t anything particularly antisocial about this—the boys were watching Chinese Central Banker Wangsheng Li’s visit to Washington on their own äppäräti, and Noah’s girl, Amy was setting up hand lotion and other sponsored products for a live stream of the ‘Amy Greenberg Muffintop Hour’” (Shteyngart, 153-154).

This scene highlights the antisocial nature of this group of friends, who ironically are blinded to the fact that they are being antisocial. When Lenny says this is not an antisocial action, it is ironic because none of the characters involved are interacting with each other. While they feel social because they are watching or chatting with people on their äppäräti, they are completely ignoring the people they are personally with, absorbed in the world of social media and technology. Eunice, especially, is often withdrawn from these social situations, which can also be seen when Lenny takes her to his friends’ party to announce their pregnancy. He says of the event, “I tried to get Eunice involved, but she mostly stayed by the edge of the deck with her äppärät” (Shteyngart, 235). At this point, Lenny acknowledges that Eunice has become more introverted and chooses her äppärät over actually interacting with him and his friends. Shteyngart

highlights these moments of withdrawal into technology in social setting in *Super Sad True Love Story*, as instances like this are all too apparent in today's society.

Look around next time you are on a bus or at the grocery store. It is easy to see the infatuation people have with their cell phones and computers. While using technology to communicate with others and find out information about the world around us can be beneficial and make many things much more efficient, we must be aware of the true reasons we use it. Are we trying to make ourselves look better on social media and boost our self confidence with how many "likes" we can get? Or, are we simply using it as an easier means of communication for family member across the world? The distinction between practicality and dependence is important, as there comes a certain point where we lose the ability to maintain our personal identity and relationships with those around us. Gary Shteyngart uses *Super Sad True Love Story* to show the negative effects of dependence on technology by his use of extreme examples of social disconnection and invasions of privacy throughout the novel.

Bibliography

"Facebook Slogan." *Facebook*. Facebook, n.d. Web. 15 Nov. 2015.
<<https://www.facebook.com/facebook>>.

McCausland, Lauren, B.S.N., R.N., & Falk, Nancy L, PhD, R.N., M.B.A. (2012). From dinner table to digital tablet: Technology's potential for reducing loneliness in older adults. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 50(5), 22-26.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20120410-01>

Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.

Warrell, Margie. "Text or Talk: Is Technology Making You Lonely?" *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 24 May 2012. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.
<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/05/24/text-or-talk-is-technology-making-you-lonely/>>.

Yusuf, Nadia, Nisreen Al-Banawi, and Hajjah Abdel Rahman Al-Imam. "The Social Media as Echo Chamber: The Digital Impact." *Journal of Business & Economics Research (Online)* 12.1 (2014): 1, n/a. *ProQuest*. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

Reflection

During the revision process, I focused mostly on organization of my paragraphs and being more specific in my analysis explaining how the chosen quotes relate to the topics of the paragraphs. In my rough draft, I had three paragraphs focusing on the invasion of privacy, however I did not differentiate between the government invading the privacy of the citizens and the characters invading each other's privacy. By being more specific in my analysis, I believe I am better able to explain the breadth of the topics touched on in *Super Sad True Love Story*.

Also, in my rough draft, I barely incorporated Eunice into my argument. I mentioned her in my thesis, but that was the extent of it. In this final paper, I believe I do a better job of explaining how Shteyngart utilizes her consistent seclusion. This allows me to expand my argument to include more examples aside from Lenny, as he is not the only person in the novel affected by the societal expectations regarding technology. Her seclusion is sometimes hard to pinpoint in the novel because it is usually more subtle and mentioned mostly by Lenny when they are in social situations. However, it is still important to mention because these examples show how technology disrupts social interactions.

Other than being more specific in my analysis and incorporating examples of Eunice's seclusion, I mostly just made simple proofreading changes. I changed some punctuation, reworded sentences, and made some sentences more concise. Reverse outlining and rereading multiple times, as well as readers' comments helped me make constructive changes to my rough draft to get to this final paper.

Screenshot 1

Lenny says of his encounter with the guard, “A paunched, goateed *muzhik* in a camouflaged helmet scanned my äppärät with an unhappy display of teeth and a gust of morning breath that had lasted well into the afternoon. ‘Malicious *pervision* of data’ he barked at me . . . ‘What the heck, son?’” (Shteyngart, 130). The guard has no prior knowledge about anything regarding Lenny, yet he is able to gather this information from scanning his äppärät without Lenny’s permission. Lenny feels as though being charged with “Malicious *pervision* of data” is a mistake, and does not want the guard to know or judge him based on this information, which Lenny does not feel he should have access to anyway. Shteyngart includes this interaction to emphasize the idea that nothing we do online is truly confidential. While a government official may not necessarily confront us for our online activity, they can monitor our online activity and use it to gather information about us.

The invasion of privacy is not limited to the government; citizens of this society also have almost unlimited access to information about other characters. An example of people accessing personal information without their permission or knowledge can be found on pages 37 through 39, in which Lenny uses his äppärät to learn as much about Eunice as possible. He learns about her father’s podiatry practice, their net worth, where she lives, and about her sister. He learns that her father abuses her, and finds pictures that others have taken of her (Shteyngart 37-39). Although Lenny means no harm and simply wants to know more about the girl he is

Screenshot 2

Lenny says of his encounter with the guard, “A paunched, goateed *muzhik* in a camouflaged helmet scanned my äppärät with an unhappy display of teeth and a gust of morning breath that had lasted well into the afternoon. ‘Malicious *pervision* of data’ he barked at me . . . ‘What the heck, son?’” (Shteyngart, 130). The guard has no prior knowledge about anything regarding Lenny, yet he is able to gather this information from scanning his äppärät without Lenny’s permission. Lenny feels as though being charged with “Malicious *pervision* of data” is a mistake, and does not want the guard to know or judge him based on this information, which Lenny does not feel he should have access to anyway. Shteyngart includes this interaction to emphasize the idea that nothing we do online is truly confidential. While a government official may not necessarily confront us for our online activity, they can monitor our online activity and use it to gather information about us.

The invasion of privacy is not limited to the government; citizens of this society also have almost unlimited access to information about other characters. An example of people accessing personal information without their permission or knowledge can be found on pages 37 through 39, in which Lenny uses his äppärät to learn as much about Eunice as possible. He learns about her father’s podiatry practice, their net worth, where she lives, and about her sister. He learns that her father abuses her, and finds pictures that others have taken of her (Shteyngart 37-39). Although Lenny means no harm and simply wants to know more about the girl he is