

REVIEW OF *STATION ELEVEN*

“Are you asking if I believe in ghosts?”
“I don’t know. Maybe. Yes.”
“Of course not. Imagine how many there’d be.”
“Yes,” Kirsten said, “that’s exactly it.”¹

This book is a love letter to the modern world and a call to properly appreciate it. For example, from chapter 6:

AN INCOMPLETE LIST:

No more diving into pools of chlorinated water lit green from below. No more ball games played out under floodlights. No more porch lights with moths fluttering on summer nights. No more trains running under the surface of cities on the dazzling power of the electric third rail. No more cities. No more films, except rarely, except with a generator drowning out half the dialogue, and only then for the first little while until the fuel for the generators ran out, because automobile gas goes stale after two or three years...

No more flight. No more towns glimpsed from the sky through airplane windows, points of glimmering light; no more looking down from thirty thousand feet and imagining the lives lit up by those lights at that moment.²

Life after the apocalypse is not an exciting adventure; it’s a wistful twilight.

I like how the book uses its nonchronological presentation to complicate our feelings about an unsympathetic character. Tyler, who calls himself “the prophet”, is a despicable man whose narcissistic delusions drive so much pointless death and destruction. His last mention, though, is in a scene from the perspective of his father Arthur, when Tyler was still a child, and Arthur’s death—and the pandemic—are imminent. The intense longing that Arthur feels to be near his child was, to me, the most moving part of the book.

...[Arthur] didn’t want possessions. He didn’t want anything except his son.³

¹Emily St John Mandel, *Station eleven*, 1. ed (New York, NY: Knopf, 2014), 308.

²Ibid., 31.

³Ibid., 322.