

DATING AND THE DEATH OF THE TWOSOME

LAURA RUTKOWSKI considers old fashioned courtship, threesomes, and the drawbacks of being online...

At 21 years old, I'm within a minority of my peer group. Call me a prude - my views on technology and dating deem me old-fashioned. While I might joke that my parents are somewhat stagnated in their views about most forms of technology, I often wonder if they are right. They grew up in a different time - of telephone calls, letters and courting - but was life more romantic in its simplicity? Perhaps affairs of the heart are best left out of the virtual realm.

Snapchat leaves nothing to the imagination. Our lives are compressed into ten second snapshots, from inane food pictures, cat videos or even sexy selfies. Users can curate this imagery and portray a lifestyle they want to be seen having, but the result is often sharing a life nobody cares to see. Instagram, with its heavy hashtag appeal, is another visual tool but Facebook is number one for quenching the thirst for attention of its users. Some Facebookers possess the need to share every detail of their lives online, no matter how intimate, and they live for the likes. Everyone has that friend who's guilty of oversharing. Some things are best kept for the bedroom, not for the public's perusal. I don't know who these people are trying to convince more: the population of Facebook or themselves?

It's inescapable. Now that we are capable of communicating 24/7, it means we have no excuse to not stay in touch. Fuelling our paranoia, the digital age leaves us overthinking life's most infuriating questions: "Why didn't he text me when I gave him my number? Why didn't she reply when I can see she has read my message? Why, why, why?" The list goes on. I hate to break it to you, but rational answers to those questions rarely come down to broken phones, empty batteries or large scale emergencies. That person just couldn't be bothered. Before technology was at our fingertips,

it was easier to stay in denial - the letter got lost in the post, his parents were hogging the landline, or he ran out of credit. Becoming more advanced has been our undoing. We're out of excuses and now there's nothing to soften the blow of rejection. Ignorance was bliss.

You're not all that. Let's be honest, most of us believe we are popular but in reality few of us are a big deal. I'm sorry, but we are not. There is no excuse for being glued to your phone, entrenched in the virtual world, when you are on a date with a living, breathing person in real time. We've turned into a generation obsessed with gaining information, rather than living for the moment. What philosopher Jean Baudrillard said back in 1981 rings even more true today: "We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning," - an unsatisfactory tradeoff in my opinion. I wonder how many conversations have been cut short by the ping of a phone notification.

Don't get me wrong, technology can be advantageous. Without technology I wouldn't be able to speak to my friends around the world. The worldwide web has the answers to most of the life's questions, but this easy access has made us impatient. We need instant gratification, even if the journey to get that information would have been worthwhile. Our generation is hungry to be entertained, manic in its attempt to cure boredom. A commuter train full of people wearing headphones stuffed into their ears with their eyes cast down to their screens illustrates this. This over-reliance on technology is exactly why our dating lives are suffering. Technology has left us disillusioned and overconfident. We used to fish for love by casting a line and hoping for a bite, but modern dating apps mean we can fish with a whole trawler. A wide net is thrown out in the hopes of catching anything, but after sifting through you're rarely left with

what you'd hoped for, or indeed the best selection. Apps give the illusion that there are many options out there, so it's rare to stop and take a chance on somebody because you're already on the lookout for something better. It's a detrimental cycle.

When I first moved to London, I thought it would be easy to meet people and that date requests would be thrown left, right, and centre. I was very mistaken. More often than not, people resort to apps such as Tinder or online dating sites, like Match.com. I understand that people have busy lives and these methods appeal for their convenience, but I can't help thinking the art of wooing is a dying.

It's all painfully ironic. We're more connected, but also lonelier than ever, despite what our online personas would ever admit. A supposed singleton is already coupled up with his or her phone, looking unapproachable to prospective partners. Is it any wonder we never get asked on dates in person anymore? Technology has become the ultimate third wheel in relationships. In fact, phones ensure that twosomes are actually threesomes or foursomes. In a restaurant, for example, each diner inevitably has their phone placed next to their plate, waiting for the screen to light up or for that familiar dopamine-inducing ping. Technology hasn't made relationships any easier to navigate, either. They are still just as messy, passionate, and confusing as ever. Technology has the power to invade our lives, but that doesn't mean that we have to let it. All I ask is for you to disconnect once in a while and you're guaranteed to reap the rewards. Let's not let technology get in the way of a good thing.