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WOMEN REPRESENTATIONS AND TECHNOCULTURAL PATRIARCHY IN *CAM*, *CAUGHT IN THE WEB*, AND *FIFTEEN MILLION MERITS*

Jan Raen Carlo Mijaro Ledesma[1*] and Aldrin Enciso Manalastas[2]
[1,2]University of Santo Tomas, Philippines
jmledesma@ust.edu.ph[1] and aemanalastas@ust.edu.ph[2]
*correspondence: jmledesma@ust.edu.ph
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Abstract
This paper examined women protagonists from three media samples: *Cam* (2018), *Caught in the Web: The Murders Behind Zona Divas* (2024), and *Black Mirror*'s *Fifteen Million Merits* (2011). It analyzed women as the subjects of visual pleasure and extended the discourse on gender and technology, shedding light on how technology is grounded in the project of patriarchy. Capitalizing on the critical research design and on the feminist film theory of Laura Mulvey, and feminist and technology theories of Judy Wajcman, Joan Pujol and Maria Montenegro, the analysis demonstrated how the samples partook in the dynamic correlations of visual pleasure, feminism and technology with them exploring the political specificities of sexual hierarchies and their emplacements in a technological capitalistic world, the patriarchal shaping of technology espousing the exclusion and reification of women, the compartmentalization of their bodies and autonomies by technology leading to their pessimistic and subjugated portrayals unveiling the image of men as the forerunners of technological control. The feminist issues that they faced opened the subject of technology as a gendered culture and entity seriously shaped by phallocentric ideologies, conveying how the ideologies of maleness and androcentrism can steer its complexities.

Keywords: androcentrism, feminist media, gendered technology, technoculture, visual pleasure

Introduction
Since the 1960s, patriarchal ideology has powerfully shaped and penetrated all aspects of women's lives, resulting in the heightening of feminism in critical and cultural studies. One of the areas affected by this ideology is the representation of women in cinema. As a result, they are rendered as visual erotic spectacles with them being the bearers of the look of the male gaze. Such a view created and reinforced the assumption that Hollywood movies have an inherent gender bias, offering the view that women are subordinate and exist by virtue of the superiority of the look that they are receiving from the male subjects (Marshment, 1997). These are the issues that the feminist film theorist, media studies scholar, and filmmaker Laura Mulvey explored in her seminal essay titled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, published in 1975. This is an essay that was released during the peak of the second wave of feminism, greatly shaping the intellectual landscape of women's studies of the time (Boyle, 2015). In this essay, Mulvey unveiled Hollywood

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misogyny, subtly manipulating people's gendered experience of narrative cinema. Drawing theoretical insights from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, she demonstrated that conventional Hollywood cinema represented the power of patriarchal ideology concretized by the notion and activity of the "male gaze," resulting in the oppression of women. In her arguments grounded on psychoanalytic theory, she provided a representation of women as entities deprived of penises, resulting in them becoming castrated beings. With men in possession of the phallus and women envying them for such a feature, the former became superior, monitoring the latter, them being associated with sensualism, eroticism, and beauty. This divide in gender can also be seen influencing film techniques such as lighting, editing, camera movement, sound variations, and vantage points.

Looking at the main contributions of Laura Mulvey, readers today can still find her arguments highly influential and significant in understanding and analyzing female representations in films (Guo, 2023). The critical groundwork that Mulvey created, focusing on the scrutiny and deconstruction of psychoanalytic theory, the pleasure and liking of the viewer or the male gaze generated from the Freudian notion of scopophilia, and the linkage between narrative and gender are all instrumental in understanding current gendered representations of female bodies and subjectivities in films with technology and the concept of technoculture at their respective backdrops. In this case, echoing Guo's claim about the relevance and timelessness of Mulvey's visual pleasure theory, we can consider technology and technoculture as potent extensions of Mulvey's visual pleasure theory.

Taking our cue from the cases of the women representations with technology and technoculture at the foregrounds in Daniel Goldhaber's film titled *Cam* (2018), the four-part Mexican Netflix documentary *Caught in the Web: The Murders Behind Zona Divas* (2024) and in the second episode titled *Fifteen Million Merits* of the first series of the science fiction anthology *Black Mirror* (2011), we attempted to further expound on the visual pleasure theory of Laura Mulvey asserting that technology and technoculture function as forceful tools of the intricacies of castration and phallocentrism. These two concepts are instrumental in shaping the way the unconscious of patriarchal society and ideology has markedly structured the form of media and the representations of women in them, affirming the idea that visual pleasure and its correlation with technoculture are also a means of bolstering male-centric theorizing that continuously rules the image of women on the screens (Guo, 2023).

Critical correlations: Visual pleasure and technology scholarship

In *To What Extent Is Laura Mulvey's Argument in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) Still Relevant Today?*, Guo (2023) appraises the importance of Laura Mulvey's visual pleasure and narrative cinema theory. Guo declares that the theory advanced by Mulvey is epoch-making and trailblazing, affirming the intricacies of the power of the male gaze in examining the representation of women in films as erotic spectacles directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously. An important point to consider that can question the claims of Mulvey's theory is the rise of the female workforce and the widespread attention given to various female minority groups. It is because of the creation of these minorities that questioned the power and weight of the theory of Mulvey. Taking the cue from this critical observation, it becomes evident that Mulvey only explored gender relations and dynamics in filmic representations stringently from the vantage point of spiritual lenses, ignoring other wide-ranging socio-political issues affecting women during the 1970s. The visual pleasure that Mulvey analyzed in her theory dwelt only on the act of gazing done by men, devoid of any other engagements. However, in feminist film theory, one cannot contend that Mulvey's theory is one of the most influential ideas that rendered psychoanalysis as a highly gendered political tool.

In *Feminist Film Studies 40 years after 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', A Triologue*, Mulvey et al. (2015) assert that the case on point for visual pleasure theory was Hollywood cinema complemented by its representations of the female body as a site of contestation. Rogers, Van den Oever, and Mulvey importantly expounded on the feminist hallmarks of such political disputation—one that recognizes the struggle for reproductive health and rights touching on the topics of abortion and the availability of contraception, and the demands of women to vividly define their sexualities. In this revisiting of the theory, Mulvey further explained the inspiration behind visual pleasure. The political impetus was markedly drawn from psychoanalysis and the notions of patriarchal order and ideology. In the same interview article, it was Backman Rogers who posited the observation that Mulvey's psychoanalytic-feminist scholarship is all about diversity and multiplicity, disclosing the idea that feminism can be interdisciplinary in approach. Manifestly, this is a way of saying that feminism functions as a philosophy and political groundwork when placed within the context of technology.

In *Feminist Theories of Technology*, Wajcman (2010) says that feminist theories of technology have come a long way over the last quarter of a century. In her discourse, which can be considered as a response to the assimilative foreground of feminism posited by Mulvey, she affirmed that various feminist perspectives have significantly shifted our understanding of technology. An essential portion of her discourse on feminism and technology is markedly propelled by her correlation of radical feminism with technology, resulting in it being gendered in nature. In the light of this vista, the actions, ethos, and pleasures of women are seen to be controlled and dominated systematically by men operating through certain ideological apparatuses such as medicine, technology, and militarism. This provides a good springboard to engage the notion that Western technology is viewed as grounded on the project of masculinity, also stirring the very control of women and nature.

In the highly dynamic geography of 21st-century media, motion pictures, series, and even docuseries can all significantly partake in gender and gendered discourses, particularly on topics dealing with systemic biases, advancing structural changes, and even in promoting gender equality in their respective narratives (Simonton, 2004). The gendered impacts that these various forms of media perpetuate became the focus of scholarship on feminist representations in media. In *Feminist Film Theory: The Impact of Female Representation in Modern Movies,* Wilk (2024) demonstrates her mindfulness and critical disposition regarding the impacts of feminist representations, further augmented by certain movements within the vast landscape of 21st-century media. With film regarded as one of the cornerstones of cultural expressions, scholars are still particular about certain inadequacies in representations leading to the rise of movements and initiatives such as the #OscarsSoWhite campaign, #MeToo, and "Time's Up." It is important to note that these are initiatives promoted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (Reign, 2018). Wilk (2024) observes that the formation of such movements is still not enough to adequately represent women on and off the screen.

The post-feminist movement offered a strong counter-discourse to such depictions—a discourse that places a great premium on women's liberation, autonomy, recognition, and mobility in the different facets of life. This post- feminist view is markedly implicit in this statement of Orr (1997) in *Charting the Currents of the Third Wave*. According to her article, post-feminism served as a powerful critical retort to traditional feminism and even anti-feminism. Affirming her definition of the movement, post-feminism is the period responsible for taking care of women's oppressions brought by various ideologies and institutions. It also recognizes the importance of free will and personal choices of women as a tool to reinforce great socio-political changes in the gendered landscapes of existence (Orr, 1997). Because of this post-feminist hallmark, the women represented in films can be

seen as liberated, strong, and independent while also retaining their femininity (Ferris & Young, 2006). With this arsenal of ideas pertaining to female agency and identity, we have to recognize the importance of female representations as a significant element of modern entertainment (Pranian, 2022). The stories of women represented in various media can either subjugate or empower them—a means of saying that their narratives can be intellectualized from either a liberal or radical feminist point of view (Dutt, 2014).

Method

With Mulvey paving the way for the correlation between psychoanalysis and feminism, leading to the opening of other discourses on female political representations in film, we attempt to further expand on how the "gazing" is also influenced by technocultural forces, placing women at the mercy of the watchful eyes of technology. In doing this, we looked at representations of women mingling with technology in *Cam*, *Caught in the Web,* and *Black Mirror's Fifteen Million Merits*.

Using the literature presented as take-off points, we unveiled gender and the technoculture in our analysis by utilizing a socio-constructivist stance, taking into consideration that technology also incorporates within its spheres gender relations and divisions. Technology does this by taking control of the contexts and subjects of creation, as well as its use, further disclosing that gender is part and parcel of shaping technology. This socio-constructivist stance entailed situating the female subjects of the media samples and their technological environs within a heterogeneous system of socio-technical accumulations and meetings. Our analysis recognized how the knowledge of women and their technocultural worlds is gendered.

With this paper capitalizing on the descriptive-analytical research design, we banked on the important hallmarks of Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* that border on political representations of women affirming their depictions as castrated making them the bearer of the technocultural male gaze resulting in their subjugation both in direct and subtle ways, the scopophilia of patriarchal technology, the political configuration of their oppression also shedding light on the complex relationship of their respective female autonomies with technology.

In the analysis, we also looked at the characters from a two-way perspective as a means of critically engaging the theory of Laura Mulvey. In this case, we examined the male and female characters doing the gazing and the one being gazed at, respectively underscoring themes on gendered narrative and spectacle, the male and female dispositions as creative forces that can shape our understanding of technology and technoculture, and the intricacies of technology surrounding the characters and technological representations as extensions of patriarchal ideology (Williams, 2017). In this sense, the term "technocultural" captures the dynamic connection between technology and culture and how the advancements of technology shape and configure ideals, worldviews, behaviors, and values (Penley & Ross, 1991).

We also critically analyzed the technocultural world surrounding the women in the samples. These include the internet, social media applications that make possible chatting, dating, and even online interactions, a futuristic domain that tolerates technology obsession achieved with the help of iPad screens and their consequent elements—lighting, visuals, electricity, and machineries are all the features of the technocultural world where all the female subjects are emplaced. In relation to this, Judy Wajcman's *Feminist Theories of Technology* (2010) and Pujol and Montenegro's *Technology and Feminism: A Strange Couple* (2015) also provided a substantial theoretical groundwork in analyzing the representations of the female characters and their relation to technocultural patriarchy. Looking at the women characters, it is essential to note that the women in these samples are highly mobile and liberated. In the 21st-century world that they are inhabiting, we also

analyzed their agencies that further substantiated the truth of the patriarchal gaze with technology and its functional assemblage of elements, making possible their lack, oppression, and the irregularities between the male and female subjects (Wajcman, 2000).

Findings and Discussion

Analysis

Women in/and technology and capitalism

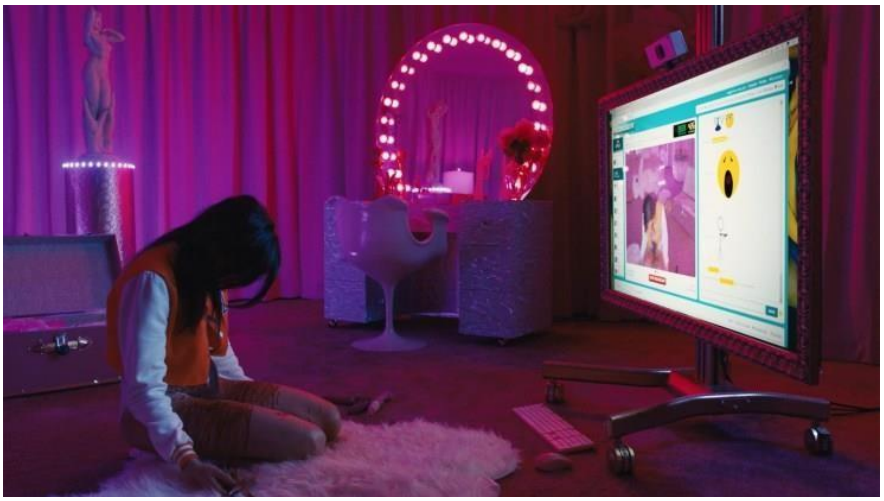


Figure 1: Ackerman virtually performing in front of her male audience –

Directed by Daniel Goldhaber, *Cam* is an American horror film centered on the experiences of Alice Ackerman, a camgirl or webcam model. Highly obsessed with becoming number one in FreeGirlsLive (FGL), the site where she is providing lewd and shocking content, she creatively experiments with her sweet and flirtatious disposition to greatly satisfy her male audience. In this lewd sideline, she performs for her male spectators under the name "Lola_Lola." Correlating Ackerman with the theory of Laura Mulvey, she evidently serves as the bearer of the male looks provided by the World Wide Web. These looks are best represented by her loyal viewers, Arnold, Barney, and Visitor003123, three male viewers whom she consistently engaged with through personal messages on the online platform she uses. The technocultural world in this film is evidently grounded in male ideology, with Ackerman demonstrating that she is supporting the masculine project of dominion and the control of women, their nature, and autonomy (Wajcman, 2010).

Ackerman's agency as "Lola" becomes subjected to a patriarchal labor market that markedly projects the sex segregation as reflected in the human capital of the two different sexes. Armed with their financial capital, the male viewers support Ackerman's spectacles by sending her money depending on the spectacles that she will be offering to her audience. In consonance with the theory of visual pleasure and as supported by the capital of digital currency, it is evident that we can see the affirmation and fruition of the determining male gaze imposing its wild and even unconceivable fantasies onto the female subject. In this case, Alice Ackerman becomes emplaced within the traditional exhibitionist role imposed on women (Mulvey, 1975). As seen in the film, her physical-sexual capital is further reinforced through the way she satisfies her male viewers and clients. Male viewers see her bathing herself, eating her favorite dinner, pleasuring herself with the help of a sex toy, and faking the act of slicing her throat in one of her fabricated bloody stunts— all in front of the camera, the gateway of patriarchal technoculture. Her actions and her yearning for digital currency and top ranking augment her isolation, allure, general sexuality, and showgirl aura.

Her erotic impression becomes subjected to the male inklings of the World Wide Web. Truly, masculinity is markedly embedded in the machinery of the internet in *Cam*. Technology is manifestly shaped by the power of the male viewers and their attendant gazes. The labor at play in this film is highly gendered and grounded in sexual hierarchy and masculine capitalism. With the power relations embedded in the film, with Ackerman being the object and subject of masculine fantasies, the technocultural male world views her as ascertaining the place of her physical-sexual capital, the source of visual pleasure, within the ambit of contemporary capitalism operating within the vast world of the internet. The female body and agency of Ackerman become the very emblems of the capitalist discourse on individualization or even the autonomization of the self into a highly pliable entity—one that is regarded to be fluctuating, adjustable, and supple (Nayak, 2024). The identity and gendered disposition of Alice Ackerman, "Lola" in "FreeGirlsLive", serve as the locus for understanding how a subject becomes capable of stirring engagements and even detachments in the unhinged market and competitive spaces of the World Wide Web.

The former activities are actualized by the identity of her alter ego "Lola" and her creative spectacles and stunts, feeding the pleasure of the internet. The latter detachments mentioned happen because she concealed her racy sideline to protect Lola and her sexual capital from her family, her mother Lynne, and brother Jordan in particular. However, this failed in the film as seen in one of the scenes where her sideline was exposed by her imitator—the fake Ackerman/Lola controlling her FreeGirlsLive account. Her exposure and public humiliation happened in the birthday party of Jordan with his friends owning their own cellphones, giving them easy access to the scandal that Ackerman's imitator created and published online.

In this highly patriarchal and competitive technocultural world, Ackerman, subjected to the male gaze of the internet, is faced with the predicament of limitlessly renewing herself, acquire new skills and practices, retrain, restyle and repackage herself in various means possible and recreate the many narratives of the life of Lola to be able to successfully sell herself and be the object of pleasure to million viewers (Burkitt, 2008). Such a duality transpiring within her female body and existence also paved the way for her to experience a certain level of affective shakiness (Pujol & Montenegro, 2015). The patriarchal information, as well as the masculine power shaping the communication technology captured in the film, act as important key players, making possible her affective labor and its consequences.

With Ackerman presenting herself as an object of visual pleasure, we can also examine how the visual pleasure emanating from her bodily capital also raises the question of how the technocultural male world and Lola herself partake and affect the discourse on regimes of truth shaped and propagated by the internet. This discourse on truth can be further validated with the aid of the visual pleasure cases that viewers can unearth in the cases of the women documented in *Caught in the Web*, a Netflix true crime documentary directed by Astrid Rondero and Fernanda Valadez.

Women's freedom and entrapment: Technology and phallocentric paradoxes

If one considers the visual pleasure cases of Alice Ackerman in the film *Cam* and the women of Zona Divas who experience abuse and become victims of migrant sex trafficking as documented in the docuseries *Caught in the Web*, we can highlight the fact that these women, enjoyed by male audiences, have the ability for self-governance armed with their own autonomous disposition. Despite the misfortunes that they experienced, it is important to note that these women are willing to create their own life-courses with their motivations stemming from their ambitions, dreams of a brighter future, and the availability of realistic circumstances that will make these visions into realities (Pujol & Montenegro, 2015). This

is what we can unveil in the cases of the visual pleasures revealed by the women in the aforementioned docuseries by Netflix.



Figure 2: The women of Zona Divas as presented on the website

Caught in the Web: The Murders Behind Zona Divas is a four-episode true documentary capturing the mysterious and criminal activities orchestrated behind "Zona Divas", a website that offers online escort services. A great portion of the series features the interviews of the former escorts who worked with Zona Divas. We learn that these are Latin-American women who came from the lower stratum of Venezuelan society, trying to escape the poverty in their country. Their solution is to migrate to Mexico in search of greener pastures (France 24, 2024). The series also aims to shed light on how these women managed to survive the patriarchal horrors brought by the problem of sex trafficking, resulting in these women eventually turning their lives around, regaining their bodies and agency. In this Netflix series, the online platform Zona Divas is instrumental in making the women victims of patriarchal visual pleasure technologically framed, leading to their untimely demises. With Ignacio Antonio Santoyo "El Soni" Cervantes heading the online escort service, his crimes and illegal activities become the signifier of the stronghold of patriarchal culture on women. Affirming Mulvey, his creation of the website "Zona Divas" becomes the fruition of the symbolic order where phallogocentric ideologies spring into action in shaping the fates of his victims (Mulvey, 1975).

As defined in the docuseries, Zona Divas is an online platform created for beautiful and alluring women who are tasked to work as escorts and eventually earn a better living. At the surface of the operations of the website, the platform offers easy money, glamor, and prominence to the women. Unbeknownst to the women, Zona Divas is a means for them to get trapped in a criminal network, ultimately leading to their tragic death (Sortiraparis, 2024). Being the subjects of visual pleasures, women mentioned in the series such as Kenni Finol, Karen Ailen, Genesis Gibson, Andreina Escalona and Wendy Vaneska had to flaunt and expose their bodies in the said platform—brashly displaying their show-girl and glamorized appearances to be able to attract escorts who will directly and indirectly possess them as part of the process of technocultural commodification maneuvered by the masculine world. According to "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema":

> The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies (Mulvey, 1975).

Utilizing Mulvey's critical lens, the foregoing women whose tragic stories were documented in the series were all typified by the remarkable penis lack—a means to metaphorically frame their weakness, the fragility of their bodily capital over the financial capital of El Soni and company. As captured in the audio recordings presented in the documentary, Zona Divas was supported by a human trafficking structure with El Soni being the actual fruition of its phallocentric agenda (Shrestha, 2024). It was revealed in the recordings that El Soni was known for demonstrating an unimaginable level of manipulation and violence, which he exercised over the female subjects of his online escort service. The recordings showed that he also threatened women, Kenni Finol in particular, who was also considered one of his main targets of his human trafficking crime. Three months later, it was revealed that Finol had been murdered. The other foregoing women were also threatened in the same way also bringing them to their unfortunate deaths. All their sufferings and deaths were associated with El Soni, resulting in the shutdown of Zona Divas in the year 2018.

The visual pleasures stemming from the women's bodily capital provide a compelling avenue to theorize on how the feminist vantage point intellectualizes technology and its gendered nature. The interactions between El Soni and the women who worked in Zona Divas offer a compelling means to understand how technology is distinctly determined, affecting agencies and relations of production. We can clearly see how the creation of Zona Divas is heavily anchored on the capital accumulation process, with the financial capital of El Soni demonstrating how the dangers of masculinity are entrenched in the apparatus of the platform itself. The visual pleasures of the women of the platform were instrumental in showing how social relations materialized in the apparatuses and techniques of the male gaze and patriarchal ideology. Zona Divas, the online escort service platform, is a perfect example of the paradox of phallocentrism (Mulvey, 1975). It is obviously an escort platform shaped by men to the exclusion of the women who participated in it (Wacjman, 2010). On one hand, it was created to provide better opportunities to Latin-American women who wanted to escape their downtrodden and demoralized lives in Venezuela and look for greener pastures in Mexico, as opined by the series executive producer Laura Woldenberg (France 24, 2024). On the other hand, the creation of the online escort platform further avowed a myopic view of women denying their pluralities and autonomies. Zone Divas, being the symbol of the technology and patriarchy that engaged their visual pleasures, evidently operated on pessimistic heights because it was created to only assert the general agenda of patriarchal ideology—the oppression and invisibility of women. Such a technocultural invention was never about providing possibilities for gender equality.

As seen in how Zona Divas operated and framed the visual pleasure of its commodified female subjects, we can clearly see how the inklings of technological developments worked to further cement the gap and hierarchies taking place between the male and female sexes. Zona Divas certainly erased the possible prospects that technology can offer when it comes to the preeminence that women are looking for to make ends meet. Engaging the presence of technocultural patriarchy in these sample media, the presence of the cameras in *Cam* and *Caught in the Web*—the objects that framed the female subjects' visual pleasures, undoubtedly showed how they went against the goal of valorizing or even revalorizing the female subjects, capturing their alterities and radical transformations. In

this view, we can see how technoculture frames the fact that men are exclusively appropriate for the digital life. We can view this technocultural framing as placing the premium on men, further opening the discourse on the concept of "assemblages" and how it can be beneficial in understanding the construction and correlation of gender and technology. In engaging this concept, we borrow the definition of Landström (2007) in *Queering Feminist Technology Studies*. These assemblages are the result of a certain contouring and configuration. As an offshoot of this configuration, identities are seen to emerge because of certain articulations affecting subjectivity as emplaced in the complex linkage with technology (Pujol & Montenegro, 2015).

Part and parcel of this relationship is the mechanism that makes possible the creation of agencies. This is where the discourse on gender and technology can further lead us to the "material-semiotic spaces" where technological artifacts, apparatuses, contraptions, and gender identities and differences occur (Wacjman, 2010). On one hand, this opens the question of technology and the concomitant relational spaces that it can provide for gender identities. On the other hand, this also brings up the idea that technocultural spaces are anchored on the patriarchal projects espousing sexism and androcentrism—two ideologies that support the exclusion of women, their stance as the second sex, and ultimately the gendered stereotype of being the primary source of cheap and slave labor in various sectors (Hache, 2021). This is where we can see how the feminist view on technology further imagines the consequences and extensions of these complications in a technocultural sense. *Black Mirror*, a British anthology television series, specifically its episode titled *Fifteen Million Merits*, significantly partakes in and critically imagines this discourse on women and their placement in a technocultural patriarchal world.

Feminine identity in patriarchal technological virtual spaces

Directed by Euros Lyn and written by series creators Konnie Huq and Charlie Brooker, *Fifteen Million Merits* is the second episode of the first series of the British science fiction anthology series, aired on the 4th of December 2011. The idea for this episode drew inspiration from Brooker being highly obsessed with technology, actualizing his desire to live in a room covered in iPad panels. *Fifteen Million Merits* brings us to a walled virtual domain where the populace has to continuously cycle on exercise bikes for them to earn "merits"— the one that serves as their currency for them to be able to generate electricity and sustain their lives. It is in this assemblage where the imbalance is created, taking its cue from visual pleasure emanating from Abi being the bearer of the male lenses and the nuanced mechanism of patriarchy shaping the representation of technoculture in this episode. The episode also centers on the romance between Bing Madsen and Abi Khan, with the former convincing the latter to join a talent show, believing that her singing talents will eventually lead her to prominence. Engaging the gendered technocultural element as seen in these features from the episode: with Madsen residing in a room full of screens functioning as a video game console and as a purveyor for advertisements, with the majority of the population being men cycling on immobile bicycles, and with the screens mostly manipulated and configured by the male spectators, we lucidly see how the space adheres to the archetypal masculine culture. Grounded on this kind of culture, technology is framed to become a font and spring of power and pleasure for the majority of the male populace, making the general vista of the story markedly hued by patriarchal ideology (Faulkner & Lohan, 2004). The obtaining of the so-called "merits", the presence of manifold stationary bikes and computers, and the dominance of iPad panels mostly controlled by men are clear affirmations of the technical dexterity and power of patriarchy (Wajcman, 1991). The domain occupied by Madsen and Khan is vividly typified by an ideal of manliness. With all the people required to stationarily cycle on the bikes, and with the populace mostly being men, the means of earning merits is manifestly male driven.

Such a masculinist nature underpins the technologically endowed way of survival in this domain, affirming the nuance that the women are actually and mechanically ineffectual, and nothing but an object of visual pleasure and sexual objectification.



Figure 3: Abi Khan on the screen as a visual pleasure spectacle

In this virtual space, Abi Khan is the object of visual pleasure. Her entrance to this domain opens the avenue for her sacrifice—the surrendering of her feminine identity to androcentric praxes and ideology. In the story, Madsen overheard Khan singing in the toilets. He then convinces her to join “Hot Shot”, a talent show wherein the winner goes home with a life of extravagance. He accompanies her to the audition, where she performs "Anyone Who Knows What Love Is (Will Understand)" by Irma Thomas for the three judges symbolically named Charity, Hope, and Wraith. Before her performance, she was asked to drink a carton of a drink called “Cuppliance.” The judges adored her performance but were convinced that she was not one of the best. As a consequence of their decision, they convinced Khan to join a pornography channel called “WraithBabes.” Madsen wanted her to reject the offer, but with Khan being the object of visual pleasure and the bearer of the androcentric gaze of the space that she is inhabiting, she had no choice but to accept the offer of the judges, with the psychoactive substance that she drank affecting her mood and mindset in the process. Back in his virtual room, Madsen sees the advertisement of “WraithBabes” featuring their new model, Abi Khan, and is heavily agitated by what he saw. Other men and women dwelling in the same space covered with an iPad screen also witness the sexual display of the body of Abi, making her the foremost object of such phallocentric and androcentric space. With Madsen agitated and destroying the screens because of Khan’s initiation into physical disparagement, he becomes the main witness to the heartless nature of the artificial space that they are inhabiting, with all the gazes ascertaining the existence of Khan.

In examining Abi Khan’s visual pleasure in the light of radical feminism, we can see how it markedly extended Mulvey’s view of the camera as being androcentric in essence. In this case, it is no longer just the camera but technology itself. In this domain, women like Khan metaphorically enter this phallocentric domain with a certain lack. The penis lack or envy that she demonstrated as seen in her occupation of the visual pleasure subject is an assertion of her stance of being devoid of autonomy, and placement under the surveilling gendered eyes of the people controlling the technological scene in this episode from *Black Mirror*. In extending the theory of Mulvey, the domain where Madsen and Khan resided became an avenue of gender inequalities with its own androcentric gaze, referring to both the populace and the domain itself, subtly disclosing its intrusive powers,

resulting in the patriarchal exploitation and manipulation of female bodies and subjectivities. In support of the equation that stardom for female subjects like Khan can be associated with sexual objectification (Howard, 2016), the discourse on feminism and technology, complemented by the visual pleasure provoked by female subjects, intellectualizes technology as one of the key players of female oppression and reification, leading to the idea of technological determinism (Wajcman, 2010). Such is the technocultural determinism that cements the undying feminist discourses on sexual hierarchy, the monopoly of technology by men, the commodification of female agencies, exclusion in the project of technology, and one that makes possible their reified realities by virtue of the visual pleasure that they are prompting through their bodies—one that is markedly different from the potency of the subduing reality of the prevailing technological order asserting the image of women as the victims of the changes and innovations created by the advancements of an a greatly androcentric technological world (Haraway, 1987).

Conclusion

Taking our cues from the media samples analyzed, namely *Cam*, *Caught in the Web*, and *Black Mirror*'s *Fifteen Million Merits*, we conclude that women being the subjects of visual pleasure can also be extended to the discourse on gender and technology. In the light of the tradition of feminism and technology, women being the subjects of visual pleasure, as framed by technology in the foregoing samples, critically opened the discourse on technology being grounded on the male gaze and power. This anchorage on androcentric ideologies is instrumental in understanding how the samples examined partook in the manifold correlations of visual pleasure, feminism and technology with them exploring the political specificities of sexual hierarchies and their emplacements in a technological capitalistic world, the political shaping of technology espousing the exclusion of women, the compartmentalization of their bodies and autonomies by technology leading to their pessimistic and subjugated portrayals affirming the image of men becoming the forerunners of technological control.

These are the compelling reasons why the female representations coming from the samples were critically intellectualized in the light of radical feminist discourse steered by the dynamism of the feminist theories of Laura Mulvey, Judy Wajcman, Joan Pujol and Maria Montenegro complemented as well by the varying degrees and faces of oppression experienced by the female antagonists Alice Ackerman, Kenni Finol, Karen Ailen, Genesis Gibson, Andreina Escalona, Wendy Vaneska and Abi Khan. Mindful of their own oppressions as female subjects, we can conclude that they are the women entrenched in gender power relations framed within the purviews of technology. In reference to the literature, the feminist issues that they faced clearly opened the subject of technology as a gendered culture and entity heavily shaped by phallocentric ideologies, conveying its intricacies navigated by the power of maleness—the ideology that supported the cultural construction of women as commodified, compartmentalized, and castrated subjects in radical gender theory.

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