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The Hypermodern Woman:
Female Characters and Technology in *Black
Mirror's* “Nosedive”.

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Abstract

“Nosedive” is the first episode in the third season of *Black Mirror*. The episode premiered on *Netflix* on October 21st, 2016 and was directed by Joe Wright. In “Nosedive”, Lacie Pond (Bryce Dallas Howard) lives in a world that classifies people depending on their score in an unnamed app. This society is organized on the basis of one’s ratings, that is, the number of stars on somebody’s social interactions. This essay explores the three main characters of the episode “Nosedive” and their relationship with the rating system in order to understand how the socio-economic status of women in a hypermodern society can be affected by their online (non)validation. It starts with a section on Simon Gottschalk’s *The Terminal Self*, which contextualizes the analysis of the episode. The analysis of the episode classifies the three female characters depending on their rating and their attitude towards it. Since the three main characters are women, the gender implications of the characters’ relationship with technology are also brought to light.

Resumen

“Nosedive” es el primer capítulo de la tercera temporada de *Black Mirror*. El episodio se estrenó en *Netflix* el 21 de octubre de 2016, y fue dirigido por Joe Wright. En “Nosedive”, Lacie Pound (Bryce Dallas Howard) vive en un mundo que clasifica las personas dependiendo de su puntuación en una aplicación sin nombre. Esta sociedad esta organizada en base a la puntuación de cada uno, es decir, el número de estrellas que reciben por cada interacción social. Este ensayo explora los tres personajes principales del capítulo, y su relación con el sistema de puntuación, para poder comprender como el estatus socio-económico de las mujeres en una sociedad hypermodern puede verse

afectado por la (no)validación en las redes sociales. Comienza con una sección sobre *The Terminal Self* de Simon Gottschalk, que pone en contexto el análisis del capítulo. El análisis de este se basa en la clasificación de las tres protagonistas dependiendo de su puntuación y su actitud frente a ella. Sabiendo que se trata de tres mujeres, las implicaciones de género en la relación de los personajes con la tecnología serán también mencionadas.

Key words

Hypermodern society, social media, Black Mirror, validation, women.

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1. Introduction.

Black Mirror is a British science fiction series created by Charlie Brooker. The series premiered on Britain's Channel 4 in December 2011 and was later added to *Netflix* in 2014. It is inspired on a previous series, *The Twilight Zone* (Rob Serling), which premiered in 1959 and ended in 1964. Similarly to *Black Mirror*, *The Twilight Zone* presents daily life situations under the genres of science fiction, fantasy, horror and thriller. *Black Mirror*, which has five seasons up until now, shows the negative side of society, "the way we live now – and the way we might be living in 10 minutes' time if we're clumsy" (Brooker, 2011). As Jenna Wortham puts it: "each episode of *Black Mirror*—named for the way our screens look while powered down—paints a different nightmarescape of a future gone technologically awry" (2015)

Dystopian fiction seems to be a popular trend with spectators right now. According to IMDb, there have been around forty dystopian sci-fi movies and television shows in the last twenty years. *Avengers: Endgame* (Anthony Russo, Joe Russo, 2019), *Alita* (Robert Rodriguez, 2019), *Blade Runner 2049* (Denis Villeneuve, 2017), *Utopia* (HBO, 2013-2014) *Wall·E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008), *Firefly* (Mutant Enemy Production, 2002-2003) are some of the titles of this list. *Black Mirror* is on the number one position, with a rating of 8,8. In the dystopian futures these films and shows portray, technology plays a huge part on the developing of the events. Some of these shows and movies can be closer to our society, others show completely different realities. However, they all address the advantages and disadvantages of society's relationship with technology. In *The New York Times*, Jenna Wortham discusses how *Black Mirror* "falls somewhere in between its predecessors, equal parts horror and wonder, somewhere in the uncanny valley between our world and one dominated by Skynet".

“Nosedive” is the first episode in the third season of *Black Mirror*. The episode premiered on *Netflix* on October 21st, 2016 and was directed by Joe Wright. In “Nosedive”, Lacie Pond (Bryce Dallas Howard) lives in a world that classifies people depending on their score in an unnamed app. This society is organized on the basis of one’s ratings, that is, the number of stars on somebody’s social interactions (a rating system that rings very close to real life sites such as the first version of *Youtube*, or even *Yelp* or *TripAdvisor*). People are constantly putting on a nice façade, since their ratings depend on how others see them. And so does Lacey, the main character, until things take a U-turn when she decides to go to her childhood friend’s wedding.

This essay explores the three main characters of the episode and their relationship social media. It analyzes how the socio-economic status of women in a hypermodern society can be affected by their online (non)validation. A first section on Simon Gottschalk’s *The Terminal Self* contextualizes the analysis of the episode. Afterwards, the three female characters are put into different categories depending on their rating and their attitude towards it. Since the three main characters are women, the gender implications of characters’ relationship with technology are also brought to light.

2. Terminal Selves

In 2018, Simon Gottschalk wrote *The Terminal Self*, a book that explores “how interacting with terminals transforms us as social beings.” (Gottschalk, 2018, p. 1) The ideas developed in this book will be the theoretical background used to analyze the episode “Nosedive”.

Gottschalk’s book is divided into eight chapters — “Initializing”, “Settings”, “Sync”, “Personalize”, “Validate”, “Ignore”, “Submit”, and “Save us”. As it can be seen from the titles, all the sections have to do with processes we do in our *terminals* daily. Gottschalk uses the term *terminal* to refer to devices such as computers and smart phones. He said that “the terminal evokes well the idea of a portal between those two one-distinct domains of experience” — these being the offline and online experiences. Moreover, in today’s hypermodern society, for Gottschalk, the attachment that people have to their phones and computers is starting to erode some of what he regards as the human aspects of humanity. In this sense, “terminal” also refers “to a stage in the life of organisms, objects, and processes” (p. 1) that is near the end. In this essay I will focus mainly on the sections called “Personalize”, “Validate” and “Ignore” since they are the most relevant for the topics that will be explored in the analysis.

According to Gottschalk, “going at least as far back as Socrates, the introduction of new technologies in a society has predictably provoked alarmed pessimism, fervent utopianism, and every nuance in between.” (p. 4) According to Gottschalk, admitting the negative consequences of technology right away is a mistake. Yet, neglecting completely this warning is not the appropriate thing to do either. As he argues, there are still a lot of questions to be asked and some are still waiting for an answer. He argues that we should ask all these new questions and allow ourselves to study them.

In the first section, “Personalized”, Gottschalk explains how attached we are to our terminals nowadays. It brings us some sort of comfort to have a terminal in our pockets or our hands, and “we can feel lost without it and violated when others look at it without our permission”(p. 48). But what differentiates contemporary terminals from the older versions is the ability to customize our experience with it. Our experience in the online and offline world evolves around what we put in our social media. The terminal “collects data about every user and can, on demand, produce a narrative about them.” (p. 23) We customize our terminals to make the world see us in our best self. Moreover, as some sort of escapism from the real world, we prefer to consume content that is happy, perfect and looks nothing like our daily life. Therefore, what our *feed* ends up looking like is a huge billboard for products, websites and other profiles that can “help” you achieve that life you desire so much. This personalized billboard comes, however, with negative aspects. The experiences seems to be so individualized that it keeps the user away from reality since the customized world becomes the user’s own reality.

Our terminal self feels part of a community when their daily posts and comments are being “liked” by others. In the section “Validate”, Gottschalk explores how “hypermodern individuals turn to terminal interactions in the hopes of fulfilling the need for social recognition” (p. 64). All social media platforms—such as *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *Youtube* or *TripAdvisor*—are based on a liking or rating system. The more likes or stars you have, the more your profile is going to be liked or rated, and the better you feel about yourself. The validation of society—or even just a single user— acts as a self-esteem booster. As a result, in today’s hypermodern society, some users need to keep everything updated and to have everyone on their friend list “in the loop”. It might

be an update on whatever is happening in the world or an intimate detail of ourselves—what Gottschalk refers to as ‘extimacy’(p. 66). The non-stop updates on one’s terminal have the user on a constant change of emotions. Gottschalk describes in his book what his *Facebook* feed looks like — a happy *Good Morning* message, a feeling of sadness from a post of a friend who has been drinking again, a feeling of irritation at having to close all the unwanted ad pop-ups, and ending on another joke. (p. 69) All within five minutes. Scrolling down your *Instagram* or *Facebook* feed can be a rollercoaster of emotions. The users are forced into all these feelings, and we are under the effects of each one for a short amount of time —losing the “ability to respond effectively, ethically, and empathically to this situations.” (p. 69)

In the last section, “Ignore”, Gottschalk analyzes how we behave and express ourselves in a certain way depending on the situation or the people involved in it—“we act out a line” (p. 75). According to Goffman, we present a ‘face’—the ‘mask’ we put on that is socially acceptable during an encounter (Gottschalk, p. 75) All the people involved in these encounters are expected to accept this ‘face’, and all the behaviors that happen at the same time. However, this ‘face’ can be ignored, challenged or discredited by others—and, thus, we find ourselves in face-threatening situations. As Goffman claims, “each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices” (p. 76)—these practices are referred to as *face-work* through this section. There are practices that are used to preserve each ‘face’ — *preventive* face-work— or else, we must simply apologize for threatening the ‘face’ — *restorative* face-work. (p. 76) Throughout the section, Gottschalk uses the example of e-mails to show how online communication can work. This way of *connectivity* is, for many people, a fundamental tool in their work place (p. 77) The issue is that these

terminal-to-terminal interactions are only based on words, leaving any social or physical cues out of the conversation. Through the terminal, any negative feeling can be ignored. It “de-faces interactants, de-humanizes them, and obscures the ethical implications of interpersonal encounters” (p. 81). Moreover, the lines between public and private, the present and the future are blurred when we deal with these face-threatening situations a user can experience. Something from the past can be easily brought up online, and sometimes aiming to harm an individual. Because when something has threatened the terminal face, “turning off our devices does not magically erase their effects”. (p. 87)

Gottschalk’s *The Terminal Self* is a critical look on the hypermodern society that relies on their terminals. These ideas that have been summarized above would be the theoretical approach to the analysis of *Black Mirror*’s “Nosedive”.

3. *Nosedive*

A girl trying to “fit in” is a recurrent topic in movies and television series for a long time. A relatable teenager trying to become part of the *cool click* in movies like *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), or a girl that was not like the rest as in *A Cinderella Story* (Mark Rosman, 2004), *The Edge of Seventeen* (Kelly Fremon Craig, 2017), *Lady Bird* (Greta Gerwig, 2018), *Hairspray* (Adam Shankman, 2007) or *Miss Congeniality* (Donald Petrie, 2000). These texts tend to revolve around a similar pattern: a woman or girl trying to fit in a society where they should act a certain way, wear certain outfits and speak like a “proper lady”. The stereotypical female behavior is often the opposite of the main character’s behavior. *Black Mirror*’s “Nosedive” deals with this idea from the perspective of its main character, Lacie Pound, in a hypermodern dystopian society.

The three main female characters can be classified depending on their position in the society described on the series. This position depends on their rating, their access to commodities and the treatment received from other characters. For the purposes of this essay I have decided to refer to them as the wannabe (Lacie), the prime user (Naomi) and the outcast (Susan).

3.1. Lacy: the *wannabe*

“Nosedive” constructs a society in which the value of a person is determined by the rating they have in a social media site. To live in this society with some sort of comfort, you *must* interact with terminals (Gottschalk, p. 24). At the very beginning of the episode, we are introduced to Lacie Pond, our “new girl”—she resembles the main character of every movie about a girl that is different from the rest but wants to just “be like the other girls”. Lacie’s main motivation in the episode is to reach a 4.5/5 rating. In

this society. In order to do so, she behaves like the popular girls would do. She posts meaningless pictures of tasteless cookies and coffee, or recipes a girl with higher rating has suggested, in order to get social recognition. As Gottschalk states “hypermodern individuals turn to terminal interactions in the hopes of fulfilling the need for social recognition, a need to constant and facile visibility”. (p. 64) Lacie goes to see a “Reputelligent” consultant—a company that has access to everyone’s inner circle and statistics about each person’s likability—who tells her how to boost her rating in order to get a more comfortable life (which to her means, among other things, moving to her “dreamy” house)

Lacie lives in loft-type apartment with her game-addicted brother, Ryan (James Norton). She wants to leave this apartment—or rather she has to—and she is on the hunt for a newer one, one that fits more with the lifestyle she wants to have (or pretend she has). Gilles Liposvestsky discusses how personal possessions “gratify us emotionally, physically, sensually” (p. 48). These three types of gratification are what the real estate agent uses to sell Lacie the apartment. As the taxi arrives to the house we see a panoramic shot of the neighborhood. Lacie’s ideal apartment is on Pelican Cove, a suburban neighborhood that seems to have been taken out the set of *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998).

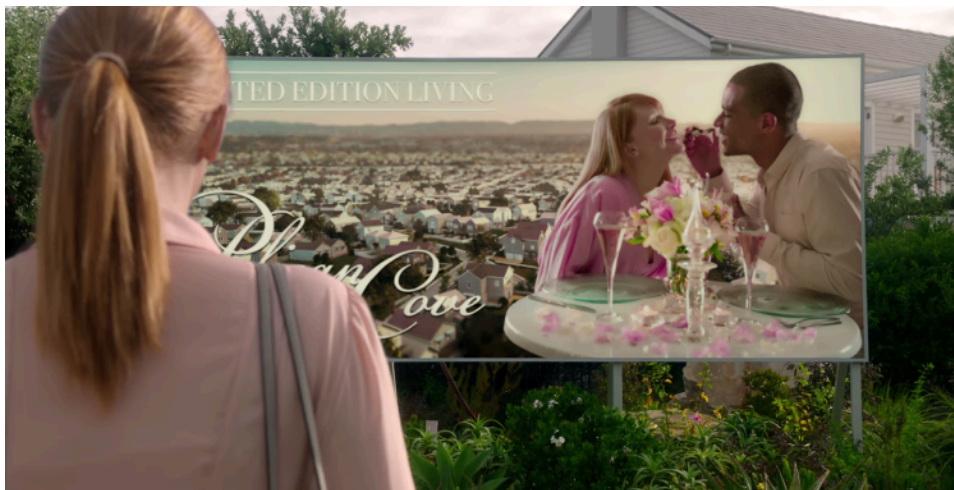


The camera shows a line of two-storey houses surrounded by white picket fences, an empty road that looks freshly painted, and the pristine green landscape with touches of pink and white. In the background one can hear the birds singing. The quietness of the place, and the vibrant colors suggest a type of suburban lifestyle that could only be taken out of a commercial.

We get inside the house to see Lacie take off her sun glasses, walking alongside the real estate agent. She seems right for the place, since she is in perfect color coordination with the colors of the “light space area”. The purple of the woman’s dress matches the curtains of the house. The shade of the color purple resembles the color of a corporation. The panning camera movement, going from the entrance to the kitchen, shows us the open living and dining room space, and a room with gym equipment. The house seems to be targeted at someone that is always surrounded by people, and loves to exercise. These things seem to fascinate Lacie as we see her in the background with a big smile on her face, one the many smiles she was practicing before in the mirror. Then, the camera moves to the kitchen, and with the sound of the agent’s phone, we are shown a hologram version of Lacie inside it. Lacie is seeing a version of herself that she really enjoys, because it has “great hair!”. The house is gratifying Lacie physically, as she associates her having the house with better looks: she knows that living in that place will make her look better.

The simulation of Lacie with a young and attractive black man around her shows how happy she can become if she gets the house. Of course, “it doesn’t come with the apartment”, but as the camera moves closer to Lacie, we can see, from the close-up shot, the excitement in Lacie’s face. She is being sexually and emotionally gratified. Two of the three ideas mentioned by Lipovestky. After she leaves the house, there is a

billboard of her and the same young man sharing a meal. The background is the suburban neighborhood and the phrase “Limited Edition Living”, suggesting that this lifestyle is reserved for just a privileged group. The happiness she feels on her virtual self becomes Lacie’s true motivation in the rest of the episode. It is an act of “one’s own emotional self-fulfillment, a hunger for youth, sports and rhythm”, as Lipovestky notes (p. 49). But, her own desires are not as important in this hypermodern world, because she lives in a society full of people focused on their own selves. High-rate people have “a collective narcissism that prompts individuals to develop networks and connections to hyper-specialized micro-groups that commit to miniature causes and the demand for special recognition.” (p. 49).



After posting a touching photo of her childhood hand-made teddy bear, Lacie gets a call from Naomi (Alice Eve), her childhood best friend. Naomi asks Lacie to be her maid of honor. Lacie’s eyes light up as she finds out that the guest list is full of people with 4.5 and over. The invitation to the wedding of her childhood’s best friend (even if they are no longer close friends) is the perfect opportunity to get to Pelican Cove.

3.2. Naomi: a *prime user*.

Going as far as the feudal system, hierarchies have always defined how societies have been understood. Societies stratify people depending on their economic status. In the hypermodern society of “Nosedive”, where social media is an extension of one’s personality, people are classified according to a cybernetic hierarchy. Those who have more followers, a blue tick next to their names, or have millions of likes in their pictures are part of the *elite* of social media. According to an article from the *Huffington Post* (Joline Buscemi, 2019), a social media influencer can make from \$150,000 to \$200,000 a year only from social media posts. So, popularity in social media gives one access to all sorts of commodities.



In “Nosedive” money is never referred to directly. It has been replaced by ratings: one’s rating becomes his/her credit card. Rating determines people’s access to better cars, flight seats, or even a private island. One of this so-called *prime users* is Naomi Jayne Blestow, Lacie’s childhood “best friend”. She lives in a glamorous, picture perfect world, where nothing is out of place. Unlike her husband Paul (Alan Ritchson)—who is the founder and CEO of a big technological company—Naomi apparently dedicates her life to her social media profile. With a 4.8 out of 5, Naomi keeps updating her friends



and followers on what she is doing, her yoga workouts or her wonderful tapenade. Regardless of the post, she is always top rated.

The rating system in the “Nosedive” society is based around turning people’s lives into spectacle—and Naomi’s life and her wedding are part of that. The first panoramic shot of Naomi’s wedding seems to be taken out of a fifteen-year-old girl’s scrapbook titled “The wedding of my dreams”. In accordance with standard gender stereotypes, girls are wearing pink and boys are wearing blue. The guest list is all A-listers—or as Naomi said to Lacie “they’re all, like, 4.7 or above”. People at the wedding are all attached to their terminals as much as Lacie is. As the camera moves, everyone is smiling and in the background we hear the happy music of five star ratings. Not a single individual is bored, or sad, or crying in this scenario. According to a study done by Gardner and Davis (Gottschalk, p. 67) “young people feel obligated to communicate only positive news about themselves, thereby implying that—like everybody else in their networks—they are living happy exciting, successful, and carefree lives”.

The island where the wedding is taking place can only be accessed by people with, at least, a 3.8 rating. Since Lacie is below that once she manages to get to the island, she has to sneak into it. As she does it, Paul is giving a speech while Naomi is

looking at her phone, keeping track of the event rating. Someone in the crowd screams “the A-team” after Paul speech. They all know they are part of the elite, and that they are there to upvote each other. One can hear “no, thank-you” as a sign of gratitude coming from one of the guests for inviting them to the wedding. When Paul and his best man hug, this last one is looking at his phone in what appears to be showing all fives.

The moment in which Lacie enters the wedding, the mood of this event changes. Naomi tries as hard as she can to keep a smile on her face—or rather keep her ‘face’ up. She whispers to her newly-wed husband to “get rid of her [Lacie]”, since she knows that having a 1.1 individual at her wedding could affect her own rating. Validation is the online important thing in Naomi’s life, and she will stop at nothing to keep her status

3.3. Susan: *the outcast*.

For every hierarchy to exist, there needs to be someone at the bottom of the pyramid. The “high quality” people need to have power and influence over others. Or else, without those at the bottom of the pyramid, there would not be a hierarchy in the first place. In “Nosedive”, the characters try to behave as if they were part of the higher class—like it was seen in the case of Lacie. However, there are many different reasons for which people can be at the bottom of this ladder. People are voted down for their past relationships—as is the case of Chester (Kadiff Kirwan)—behaviors or looks. Bad luck or unacceptable behaviors (swearing, not acting “like a lady” and even “trying too hard”) can make someone end up at the very bottom of society.

Goffman states that in our daily encounters we “act out a line” (p. 75). In other words, whenever two or more people have a conversation, there are verbal and nonverbal acts to show “how we view the situation, how we view those we encounter,

and how we view ourselves”. In order to do so, there is a sort of “mask” or *face* that we put on in order to make the moment, the person and the conversation comfortable and positive. This *face* is accepted in the majority of the scenarios that can be seen during the first half of the episode.



It can become tiring to keep up the *face*, to put on a show whenever there is a conversation happening. Susan (Cherry Jones) has lived the *prime user* life that Lacie so much desires. However, keeping on the *mask* and “playing the numbers game” became unbearable for her. When Susan is presented to the audience for the first time, Lacie’s feelings towards her determine our reaction towards her. Because Lacie has been the focalizer throughout the entire episode, we share her feelings towards uncomfortable scenarios. Susan’s southern accent—the only character with a regional accent of the episode—, the rusty look of her truck and, most importantly, the 1.4 rating next to her name, could make Lacie not want to share the vehicle. The close-up on her face is that of discomfort, however, it is Lacie’s only chance to get to the island.

The dark lighting inside the woman’s truck can be unsettling. For all that Lacie knows, by checking Susan’s social media, she likes to drink. Checking other people’s

feed for “danger signs” has not been a problem for Lacie until now, as it was all cats, skinny blonde girls doing yoga, and little kids with fireman hats. “Gotta be an anti-social maniac” are the right words for Lacie’s—and the audience’s—thoughts. How can anybody trust someone with a 1.4 when all the “quality people” have higher ratings?

When Susan tells Lacie she is not interested in her speech, Lacie is shocked. Susan does not hold back any thoughts. There is no performance, no fake smiles or compliments coming from her, which is something new for Lacie and the audience. Susan used to be a 4.6 but, as she tells Lacie, that rating does not provide one with a perfect life. As the camera moves closer to her face, one can understand that the story behind her low rating is that of tiredness. Susan kept her *face* up for too long, smiling at doctors, behaving like the perfect wife for her husband, who had cancer. The *face* did not help, and neither did the rating, because in this society there is always someone who has a higher rating than you. Therefore, if you are even just a decimal point lower than the other cancer patient, he or she is more likely to survive.

After her husband’s death, Susan started to not care about appearances and ratings. She started saying what she wanted, the way she wanted it and to whom she wanted. In a society in which properness is an essential part of your rating, this was not something people agreed with. When Susan encourages Lacie to try it, to let go of the safety belt and “let loose”, it foreshadows the ending. Lacie, with no stars left, is put in a prison that makes her feel more free than ever before. Lacie exchanges swear words and insults with the man standing in the other cell. It can be interpreted that this prison holds those who had behaved incorrectly, and that they now have a 0 score. The main protagonist gets the contacts removed—those which in this moment we know, allow everyone to see everybody else’s rating. Without them she will no longer judged or be

judged by a number. Before the screaming and yelling, by removing the maid of honor dress, one can understand that Lacie is no longer trapped in the fake world she was living in. The color palette of the scene does not have the pastel pink tones that one can see throughout the episode. The dark and gray toned prison, although sad, allows Lacie to laugh and cry genuinely, as she has never done before. She has left behind the female stereotypes of femininity: politeness, perfect body-image and pink-colored dresses.



3.4. Be a lady.

“Nosedive is about three characters (Lacie, Susan, Naomi) and their relationship with technology. In 2016, when the episode first premiered, research claimed that only 42% of major characters in Hollywood on broadcast network, cable, and streaming programs were female (Lauzen, 2016) In addition, another research from the same year made by Dr. Martha M. Lauzen finds that in Hollywood films “females comprised 29% of all sole protagonists, 37% of major characters, and 32% of speaking characters.” Given the general prevalence of male characters in any audiovisual text, the fact that the three characters are women is relevant because women tend to be more dependent on validation on social media than men. Looking at the data from the beginning of 2016—

the year in which the episode aired—, 32% of online adults claimed to be using Instagram (Greenwood, Perrin, Duggan, 2016). According to Clement (2019) 31% of the women in the United States admit being addicted to social media—in comparison with the 24% of men that agreed to the same statement.

As Turkle has noted “connectivity becomes a craving. When we receive a text or an email, our nervous system responds by giving us a shot of dopamine. We are stimulated by connectivity itself. We learn to require it, even as it deplete us” (in Gottschalk p. 65). In September of 2018, a survey made to teens between the ages of 13 and 17 in the United State (Clement, 2018) showed that females are more likely to feel lonely, depressed and anxious. Whereas men are more likely to feel confident, better about themselves, and popular. One of the ideas behind using women as main characters can be to show the consequences that can have the use, or abuse, of social media on mainly female teenagers. The impact that some of the pictures that *influencers* post on their social media platforms can have on young girls is more likely to be negative. Teenagers’ idealization of celebrities or social media influencers is proved to be one of the many reasons for body dysmorphia, thin-ideal internalization or eating disorders (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013, p. 63).

In the episode, Lacie explains how she had bulimia during her teenage years. Her being a lower rating, and Naomi being a *prime user* is a representation of what many teenagers have to go through when seeing celebrities on their Instagram feeds. Admiration can become toxic when one does not have the other person’s body, money or life. In the episode, all female prime-users abide by the parameters of what is usually regarded as a “perfect body”. For example, during the video-calls of the two childhood best-friends, Naomi is constantly posing for the camera even before Lacie picks up the

phone. Lacie's dream house on Pelican Cove has a fitness area in the living area. Bryce Dallas Howard states how she had to gain thirty pounds to play the part of Lacie. In an interview to *Cinema Blend*, she explained:

Society puts all this scrutiny on women's bodies, which in a way serves to make us go insane and distract us from what's really important. If you allow your spirit to be broken by trying to conform in ways that are not even possible, you will be off track for your entire life and you will lose track of what is important in every area. That's insanity. It was really important for me to show that this insecurity that she feels in the world is because she's not comfortable in her own skin. She's not accepting herself for who she is. I wanted it to be about image, and about how people want to control what other people think about them by trying to control themselves in ways that are harmful. (Rawden, 2018)

The “numbers’ game”, as Lacie calls it, is statistically more dangerous for women, as it can be seen from the data above. Conforming to female standards of beauty is to be rewarded in a society that desires validation from others so much. However, this is not specific to the hypermodern terminal society, as women have always been part of this type of punishment. Every magazine, radio or television advertisement, even before the internet ever existed, presented the ideal woman —“a good wife, a good mother, and an effective homemaker” (Wolf, 1990, p. 64). If you had no intention of having children, getting married or have the desire to work, you were not “a good woman”. And although throughout history, the expectation of this perfect woman has changed, there is still some sort of punishment to those who do not check every box in the list. What makes the hypermodern society different is that the “role models” are everywhere, the need for validation is constant and it is propelled not by an external controlling agent but by the individuals users themselves.

Judith Butler argues that gender is performative, and that institutions reward those who act and support those representative acts, but punishes those who do not (in Cirucci, Baker, Berry, et al. 2018, p. 55) The three female characters are either rewarded or punished for their “lady- or unlady-like” behaviors. Lacie is acting according to stereotypical female standards at the beginning of the episode—she wears pink, she is constantly smiling and being “genuine”, she does not curse, cooks, and posts sentimental pictures. Society rewards her with a high score, therefore she sees the possibility to become part of the elite. Her downfall begins when her behavior at the airport puts her on “permanent damage”. From this moment on, she is not able to have access to anything decent, she had to wait in long lines, hitchhike, and sneak into places—not very “lady-like”.

However dangerous or toxic this representation of femininity may be, any person that has a terminal, and that is part of the hypermodern society—real or fictional—develops what Jauréguiberry calls a ‘connectivity syndrome’ (Gottschalk, 2018, p. 14). No matter the anxiety, stress or frustration, people fear the feeling of missing out something, not being connected at the right time. In the years before terminals, people could go on their lives without an urge to reach into their pockets. However, nowadays, people do it for reasons as simple as to check if they had received a ‘like’. Gottschalk notes how “to participate competently in society, we *must* interact with terminals” (p. 24). As Lacie, and the society she lives in, hypermodern individuals feel obligated to, not only perform the right way in their terminal, but to *just* act. To not act means to be an outsider, like Susan. Gottschalk also describes that “almost a third of a sample of American adults have reported that their mobile devices are “something they can’t imagine living without”.”(p. 25) This addiction, as research shows, is different in male

and female users. According to Chandiramani and Sharma (2018) women use their social platforms in a different manner than men. Women may want to boost their relationships by sharing their personal lives. In contrast with men, women “ [they] value social connections based on intimacy whereas men value social connections based on status and power”.

At the very end of the episode, Lacie is imprisoned for getting a score of 0. She is therefore qualified as a criminal, as someone who should not be part of society for their “dangerous” behavior. Something similar happens to influencers and people that belong to the social media’s culture. Someone who is at “the top of his/her game” can lose everything if they took their freedom of speech too far, or rather made a mistake when they were younger. The idea that *Black Mirror* wants to share with the audience is that, when Lacie is in a cell, she is not repressing her wild and non-lady-like self. It is in that moment when she starts to letting go, and she does not have the society’s gaze on her to behave properly or act the way she is supposed to. Society cannot like or dislike her, the only validation she needs is in herself.

5. Conclusion.

The structure of a hypermodern society is based, as *Black Mirror*'s "Nosedive" illustrates, on one's success on their public and private sphere. The way an individual interacts with strangers, the people they work with, or childhood friends will determine their status on a social-media based hierarchy. The *primer users*, *wannabes* to *outcast* will become the labels to one's online persona depending on their relationship with technology. The score each character from the episode has will give them access to certain commodities. The show gives the audience access to how this society works through the point of view of Lacie Pound. The difference between her and the other characters is based on how much five or one star rating can influenced their lives.

The main idea behind the rating system of this society is that a successful life is linked to whether or not you keep sharing and validating one another. However, this validation from other people is based on the stereotypical female behavior. As the audience does not get to see how men interact with technology, the episode illustrates how women are affected deeply in this toxic relationship with the hypermodern view of the ideal woman. The outcome of a proper behavior, according to the fiction society, will be a quality live-style. Furthermore, these three character's worth is associated with a higher rating, whereas those who do not have a rating higher than 3.6 cannot, at times, access to private islands, work places, or functioning cars.

The episode focuses on the dangerous relationship women have with social media because they are constantly performing acts of femininity (Cirucci, Baker, Berry, et al. 2018, p. 66). Their characters become worthy or worthless if they are portraying the role of the ideal hypermodern woman—good body, perfect husband, great house, and most importantly, *prime user*'s rating. Lacie's character development illustrates the society's

punishment on women who do not fit into a size four, or that curse or say what it is on their minds. The only character that benefits from the society's ideals, gets to experience the perfect life, as she, Naomi, showcases in her social media platforms. Analyzing the mentality of a hypermodern society, helps to understand the toxicity of the social media influence upon women.

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