

Abstract

This thesis presents a work of research that explored the textual representation of advanced technology and artificial intelligence in the anthology of *Black Mirror*, in which it was additionally relevant to analytically work with how the anthology satirically textualizes the concept of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness*, and reflect upon how the genre of this postmodern work of fiction could be determined as *hi-tech horror*.

The methodical approach of this thesis was to present a homogenous group of texts that provided the theoretical framework with a substantial amount of research material that made it possible to conduct a thorough and qualitative analysis, in which the main desire was to illustrate to the reader how the anthology incorporates the theories included in this thesis.

This study discovered a correlation with how the narratological structure of *Black Mirror* incorporates the theories of *postmodernism*, *satire*, *horror*, and *black humour*, and thereby constitutes the illustration of their theoretical functionality in a literary context.

The findings of this work of research indicated that *Black Mirror* is conclusively a postmodern work of *hi-tech horror*, in which the satirical criticism of societal interaction with advanced technology and artificial intelligence, is a manifestation of the inevitability of technological progression. Additionally, this study found that the textualization of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness* functions as literary horror, in which a concern towards the ability to make a distinction between natural and unnatural is visually articulated through the emotions of anxiety and fear.

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The Inevitable Dystopia

A study of *Black Mirror* as a postmodern work of hi-tech horror



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Introduction

The primary focus of this thesis concerns the satirical portrayal of modern technology, as it is being visualized in the anthology series, *Black Mirror* (2011), created and written by Charlie Brooker and Annabelle Jones. The main ambition of this thesis is to present a thorough analysis of an organic group of episodes from the anthology, which textually represents an exaggerated concern regarding societal developmental issues, by critically reflecting upon contemporary cultural ideals and social structures. By theoretically working with the narrative of the chosen episodes, this thesis wishes to clarify and define why the anthology of *Black Mirror* must be considered a literary production of hi-tech horror, with a satirical approach towards fundamental aspects of sociocultural conception of consciousness and human existence, whilst critically reflecting upon the influence of advanced technology in a literary postmodern context. The main target of the analysis will be to focus on how the anthology incorporates a diverse theoretical approach regarding the fictional textualization of satirical criticism pointed towards the societal engagement with advanced technology, digitalization, and artificial intelligence, in which playful ridiculing imitates an ambiguous concern expressed through a postmodern literary form.

This thesis intends to bring forth a concessive in-depth study of *Black Mirror* that provides the reader with enlightenment on how the anthology must be readerly interpreted, in terms of theoretical approach and literary comprehension. In order to complete and present a thorough work of academic research on this particular subject, it is considered essential to answer the following thesis question; how does the anthology of *Black Mirror* textually present the consequential affections of technological influence on the individual and society in relation to the conception of consciousness, and thereby present satirical criticism articulated through a postmodern literary form? Furthermore, it is relevant to work with how the anthology represents a thematic inclusion of horror to express emotions of anxiety and trauma, which constitutes the textual environment as *hi-tech horror*.

The theoretical section of this thesis represents theoretical terminologies, such as *satire*, *black humour*, *postmodernism*, and *horror*; to clarify and support the academic work of research in the analysis. The aforementioned theories are based on the theoretical dispositions and work of several scholars and commentators, who provides this thesis with a profound and critical attitude towards the main subject of *Black Mirror*. The theoretical section of this thesis is meant as an explanatory

foundation concerning the main intention of representing a qualitative analysis of the anthology, but additionally, it is considered a supportive tool of academically categorizing the textual portrayal of satire, black humour, postmodernism and horror within the anthology. The criteria for selection, in regard to the chosen episodes, is primarily based on textual representation and thematic conception of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness*, and how the selected episodes academically provide the analysis with a sufficient amount of research material, in order to enlighten the reader of this thesis with a comprehensive work of analytical research.

In accordance with the aforementioned thesis wish to analytically concern how this anthology must be interpreted as a postmodern production of fiction, whilst providing an analysis on how it textually incorporates the genre of horror concerning the digitalization of individual consciousness and present an analysis of the literary functionality of employing social satire. In addition to the analytical section of this thesis, a discussion of the authorial position is presented to the reader, in which the authorial intentions regarding the textual representation and rhetorical articulation of a societal concern will be discussed. Taking into account that the series of *Black Mirror* is an anthology, which differentiates in narrative structure in each episode, the author of the series must be considered to have a large amount of critical concern towards human interaction, enhanced by modern technology. The diverse representation of narrative structure in the series is interesting, since it provides the reader with an alternative perspective on life and human existence in general, which additionally could be reasoned in the writer trying to reach the morale of the reader, by presenting a wide range of critical perspectives towards technological influence on societal and cultural matters. Additionally, it is highly relevant to discuss the authorial notion of cynically juxtaposing a satirical multiplicity of possible outcomes to the increasing digitalization of society.

Key words

Satire, technology, artificial intelligence, postmodernism, absurdity, horror, grotesquery, science-fiction, individualism, independence, consciousness

Can *Black Mirror* be considered important?

As a television series that is still in its productional phase, the anthology of *Black Mirror* must be considered a quite innovative production of contemporary literature. The anthology had its debut on British television, *Channel 4*, in 2011 and then purchased by Netflix in 2015, which inarguably facilitated the potential of reaching a larger range of viewers on a global scale and thereby having the capability to communicate to the masses. By presenting a variety of narratives that do not coincide in narrative structure nor demonstrate any lineage of continuity in between the episodes, the creators and executive producers of the series, Charlie Brooker and Annabelle Jones, have established a distinctive form of television entertainment, which has gained unquestionable popularity since its premiere.

Why this particular anthology has grown to become one of the most significant works of contemporary fiction, is thought to be reasoned in the opportunities of progression in terms of creative development and artistic opportunities, ever since *Black Mirror* was purchased by Netflix. Following an article, written by Robin Parker, it was stated that Netflix enabled the opportunities of artistic progression, both in terms of textual conceptualization, but additionally concerning the progression of visual creativity (Parker 2016). The literary concept of *Black Mirror* has been characterized as an anthology that appears quite similar to *The Twilight Zone*, which first time aired in 1959 and up until 1964 (IMDb) when speaking in terms of themes, genre, aesthetics and episodic structure. Although, the anthology of *Black Mirror* has a more intensified focus on contemporary immediacy, in terms of societal and cultural struggles of engaging with technological advancement, as in opposition to *The Twilight Zone*, which is considered more attentive to the literary tropes of the fantasy genre.

The term of immediacy is outmost applicable to the anthology *Black Mirror* and its extensive focus on actuality, in terms of representing a contemporary concern regarding the unconscious societal reliance and addiction of advanced technology. The anthology of *Black Mirror* could be interpreted as a postmodern literary production that ignores the necessity or relevance of constituting its genre, alternatively, there is an increased focus on articulating the central meaning of each episode. However, in terms of contextual relevancy, the urgency of establishing a concretized meaning considerably serves the purpose of enabling readerly comprehension of the text. The creator, Charlie Brooker, has manifested that the anthology is meant as a warning against the societal interaction with technological advancement and artificial intelligence, but Brooker additionally emphasizes the consequential inevitability of technological development in contemporary society (Shepherd 2019).

Advanced technology in postmodern literature

Within this thesis, the primary concern is the literary production of *Black Mirror*, in which it is textually exaggerated that the fictional conception of advanced technology has gained a more influential position in contemporary literature. Not only have the adaptation of advanced technology become more apparent in the production of feature films, but correspondingly in television series as well. It is suggested by Alex Goody that technology became a more visible topic of interest in the literary conventions of modernist writing, although Goody puts a significant emphasis on how the issue of advanced technology was adapted into the literary productions of postmodern writers, in which technological development became a central and unavoidable theme (Goody 2011, 14).

Taking the aforementioned into consideration, the assumptions made by Goody appear relatively substantial in regard to the thematic adaptation of technological advancement in contemporary postmodern writing, which additionally could be applied to a significant range of postmodern literary productions, such as feature films like *Terminator* (1984) and *Back To The Future* (1985), accompanied by television series, such as *Rick & Morty* (2013) and *Love, Death & Robots* (2019). According to the authorial statement posed by Charlie Brooker, it suddenly becomes relevant to reflect upon the constitution of technology as an inevitable thematic terminology within the artistic sphere of contemporary writing. The exploration of the possibilities of technological development does appear to be accompanied by artistic exploitations regarding the progression of postmodern fiction. It is theoretically suggested by Hutcheon that postmodern fiction is ahistorical, which conclusively emphasizes the explorative ambiguity of postmodern literature and thereby constitutes the postmodern literary conventions of contesting past sociocultural structures by advocating the necessary progression of literary conventions (Hutcheon 2004, 87).

The literary productions mentioned above are, in comparison to the structural functionality as it is presented in the anthology of *Black Mirror*, breaking with the conception of contemporary society and culture, in which the possibilities of technological advancement is explored and naturalized in each their narrative form, whether it concerns artificial intelligence, human digitalization, communicative interaction or scientific exploration. The authorial perspective articulated through the narrative structure and characters within the postmodern productions appears similar in their expression of concern regarding technological advancement when reflecting upon the narrative function and semiotic structure, which emphasizes the profound meaning of the texts.

Criteria of selection

This section of the paper wishes to describe and provide the reader with a comprehensive insight on the criteria for selection regarding the included episodes of the television anthology, *Black Mirror*, in which it additionally will be elaborated why these episodes apply to the theories that have been chosen for this thesis.

The reason why *Black Mirror* is the primary concern within this assignment is because it is considered to be one of the most significant and substantial contemporary productions of literature, which contains critical commentary on societal structures, and culturally established ideals. Speaking in terms of the increasing incorporation of technology and artificial intelligence regarding the debatable issues of sociocultural progression, the television anthology has been categorized as a reliable portrayal of science-fiction dystopia (Hill 2017).

This thesis intends to concern the fictional portrayal of human existence and the subject of human consciousness as conceptualized in the anthology of *Black Mirror*, wherein the issue of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness* will be the main objective of research, which concretizes the necessity of presenting theoretical perspectives of *postmodernism*, *satire*, *horror* and *black humour*. The episodes of *Black Mirror* concern diverse aspects of life and social behaviour influenced by technological advancement. Although, the episodes incorporated in this thesis are considered most valuable regarding the issue of individual consciousness and the affections of advanced technology, which concretizes the deliberate choice of presenting an organic selection of episodes in the analysis.

The criteria of selection, in regard to the episodes of the anthology that have been included in this thesis, is based on the thematic contents of the individual narratives, which means that it is highly essential to the analysis of this thesis that the incorporated episodes, in fact, concern the matters of human consciousness influenced by advanced technology.

This section of the paper additionally serves the purpose of clarifying the reason why this thesis concerns the anthology of *Black Mirror* since there is a considerable large variety of postmodern fictional productions that could be categorized as *hi-tech horror*. In opposition to other fictional productions of *hi-tech horror*, such as *Love, Death & Robots* (2019), it appears that *Black Mirror* has a significant contemporary value regarding the contextual reflections of concern towards sociocultural progression, which constitutes its momentary relevancy. The anthology of *Black Mirror*

additionally represents a contextual of human inadequacy in opposition to the progressive capabilities of artificial intelligence, which is inarguably constructive concerning the analytical approach within this thesis.

The main intention of working with the anthology of *Black Mirror* is reasoned in the desire of academically exploring the thematic and theoretical assessment of the television show, in which it is additionally relevant to study the fictional perception of sociocultural affections instigated by the increased interaction with advanced technology and engagement with artificial intelligence. The anthology provides its viewers with a varied range of possible outcomes of unconsciously integrating unexplored capabilities of advanced technology into societal structures, in which the various narratives of the anthology portrays an explicit inconsideration regarding the sustainability of sociocultural ideals.

In the analytical section of this assignment, it is desired to provide the reader with a qualitative analysis, which is reasoned in the presentation of an organic group of episodes instead of including the entirety of the anthology, to academically demonstrate a thorough and detailed analysis. The methodical approach of narrowing down the number of episodes presumably supports the theoretical work within the analysis of *Black Mirror*, which conclusively constitutes the congruency of purposefully presenting a qualitative analysis to the reader.

The fundamental aspects of *Black Mirror* that are interesting to work with throughout this assignment are the authorial articulation of concern, the supposed affection of sociocultural structures through interaction with advanced technology, the textualization of individual and social digitalization, and lastly, the conflictual illustration of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness*. The aforementioned aspects of the anthology establish fundamental relevancy regarding the criteria of research in the analytical section of this thesis. This assignment is concentrated on critically reflecting upon the issue of human interaction with advanced technology and how human existence is presented in postmodern literature.

The relevancy of presenting an elaboration of the criteria of selection regarding the incorporated episodes is significantly important in terms of methodical applicability regarding the analytical approach of *Black Mirror* since these criteria serve the purpose of conclusively providing the thesis statement of this assignment with a profound answer. It is considered a necessity to the structure of

this assignment to incorporate a stringent arrangement of criteria, in order to highlight a specific inflexible consistency regarding the desire of creating an academic framework of research design.

The incorporation of research criteria indicates the academic area of interest, whereas the assignment is exceedingly reliant on these criteria in connection to the intention of establishing a distinctive framework of research design. Presumably, there is an indefinite probability of incoherent diversity without incorporating a set of criteria that supports the academic framework within this assignment, which only will cause unexplainable incongruency with an imprecise ambiguity.

In order to provide the reader of this assignment with fundamental argumentation regarding the desire to accomplish a qualitative analysis, the criteria of selection are incorporated due to the determination of narrowing down the research material and presenting a homogenous group of texts that corresponds to the theoretical framework of the assignment. The immediate necessity of presenting a qualitative work of analytical research is reasoned in the desire of providing the reader with a comprehensive clarification regarding the issues represented in the thesis statement.

Theoretical section

This section of the assignment is the theoretical framework from which the analysis of *Black Mirror* will rely on, in terms of providing the reader of this thesis with a thorough work of analysis, in which this work of theoretical argumentation must be interpreted as a supportive tool in concretizing the analytical perspectives. This section provides the reader with insight on theoretical commenting, perspectives and suggestions, from the appointed theories that are mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, which was *postmodernism*, *satire*, *black humour*, and *horror*. The main intention of incorporating this particular selection of theories is to fulfil the desired ambition articulated in the thesis statement, which will be conducted throughout the analytical work of this assignment, strengthened by the inclusion of the aforementioned theories.

Postmodernism

In this section the main intent to explain and elaborate several theoretical perspectives and commenting on the theoretical concept of literary postmodernism, by including theoretical commentators and perspectives posed by scholars on this particular subject, who have provided a substantial work of research that is exceedingly valuable to this study. The main target is to provide the reader of this thesis with enlightenment on how the terminology of postmodernism functions in a literary context, which additionally will support the analytical section that concerns the postmodern aspect of the television anthology, *Black Mirror*.

As a theoretical term that has gained an influential significance in a significant variety of literary art forms, the definition of postmodernism is deceptively unexplanatory and simultaneously a constituted terminology that functions in contemporary works of art. From a theoretical perspective, which is reasoned in the thoughts of Linda Hutcheon, the literary conception of postmodernism is considered a de-naturalization of what is perceived as ordinary, both in terms of artistic and sociocultural contexts (Hutcheon 2002, 1). Postmodernism is a theoretical term that expresses new features in the comprehension and perception of existentialism and intentionally interferes with conventions that are interpreted as both *natural* and *cultural*, which postmodernism strives on making a comprehensive distinction between (Hutcheon 2002, 2). Although, Hutcheon has additionally argued that postmodernism is not a completely descriptive term of contemporary arts, and it must not be categorized as an international literary phenomenon since it has primarily influenced the literary and

artistic production of the western civilization (Hutcheon 2004, 4). With this presentation of postmodernism as a theoretical terminology within the production of literary arts, Hutcheon implies that this theory may not apply to all aspects of artistic production in society on a global scale, although its relevance in contemporary literature is considered indispensable. An extension of that statement, Hutcheon additionally argues that postmodern literary production should not be limited only to the artistic forms of western civilization but cultivated as a global concept of literary creativity.

According to Brian McHale, postmodernism is not a theoretical term that intends to break with the literary conventions of modernism, instead postmodernism has to be thought of as a term that derives from modernism, as if postmodernism was an extension of it, although postmodernism involves with terms such as *historicity* and *consequentiality* (McHale 2004, 5). To go even further into depth with what postmodernism derives from, it is essential to take the thoughts of Angela McRobbie into account, since she suggests that postmodernism is not only an extension of modernism, but it is the defender of its theoretical meaning. McRobbie states that modernism clears a path for a discourse of freedom and equality, in which postmodernism is the main tool of expressing this particular progression of discourse in society and culture. Additionally, this theoretical perspective urges a postmodern confrontation regarding conventions of social criticism (McRobbie 1994, 6-7). In addition to the aforementioned statement made by McRobbie, there is a notion of agreement from Hutcheon when gazing upon the progression of postmodern art, in which Hutcheon implies that postmodernism is contradictory in its artistic expression since it intentionally seeks to provoke social changes from within (Hutcheon 2004, 7). In accordance with how Hutcheon emphasizes that postmodern literature urges for change, in a provocative fashion, it is relevant to reflect upon how the writers of *Black Mirror* embrace this particular feature of postmodernism, since it could be suggested that the narrative structure of *Black Mirror* deliberately appears provocative to the receiver, in order to force a desire for change.

What is essential in the definition of postmodernism is that postmodern arts are ideologically influential, since postmodernism ironically involves itself in both social and political relations, which means that it constitutes itself as an influential and ideological term in regard to cultural structures, whether it concerns feminism, ethnicity, capitalism, nature, etc. (Hutcheon 2002, 3). Hutcheon urges that postmodernism is exclusively political in its representational form since the artistic function of postmodernism is never presented in a notion of artistic neutrality. As posed by Hutcheon, then

postmodern artists are inarguably self-reflective in terms of vocalizing and expressing the inevitable political contexts, from which their works of art derive (Hutcheon 2002, 3-4). What is meant with this theoretical statement is that postmodernism has to be interpreted as a theoretical tool of breaking with past artistic forms and cultural dispositions that are contested and critically reflected upon by postmodern conventions. To elaborate on how postmodern art is politically self-reflective, it is relevant to observe how postmodern writing comments on itself in terms of recognizing the issues of difference in social class, or even concerns of societal acceptance concerning race and gender.

From an explanatory perspective, suggested by Hutcheon, then postmodernism is the correlation and collision of historical actuality and fictional liberty, in which artistic conventions of postmodernism is expressed through formalist self-reflexivity. The conventions of postmodern forms of art are eager to express the notion of self-exploration and representation of the societal structure, both in past and present tense (Hutcheon 2002, 7). In an elaborating extension of the aforementioned, Hutcheon proceeds to argue for a significant representation of reality in television, in which postmodernism is defined as paradigmatic in its form, although the element of critique is essential to postmodernism since it, in a historical context, does reveal a notion of distrust towards the ideology of power and equally presents a disbelief in the power of ideology (Hutcheon 2002, 9-10). By depending on the actuality of history and immediacy of reality, whilst simultaneously including artistic liberation of fictional production, postmodernism does present itself as a highly self-reflexive and self-critical terminology, in which societal ideals are disrupted and reinterpreted by postmodern artistic conventions. The conceptualization of representation within postmodern art is simultaneously depending on the readerly interpretation of what is considered *real*, since the reader is additionally depending on how descriptive the postmodern writer is, in his/her representation of *real*.

Additionally, an essential feature of postmodernism is, that it consistently rejects the belief in the urgency of establishing only one genuine meaning with the text, in which the position of the author is ultimately neutralized. Postmodern literature opposes the values of modernism and devaluates the conception of *grand narratives*, whilst a desire to dissolve the barrier between high and low art is represented through the embracement of terminologies, such as ambiguity, contradiction, and complexity (Baker et al. 2011, 97).

Another theoretical perspective from which it is efficient to observe and determine the meaning of postmodernism is by going into depth with the thoughts of McHale, in which he suggests that postmodern fiction is relying on artistic progression. Not only does postmodernism embrace the

present and actuality of fictional writing, but most significantly there is a rather high appreciation of literary improvement. In addition to the dispositions made by Hutcheon, it appears that there is a significant theoretical agreement from McHale, in which he determines one of the most important signifiers of postmodern fiction as the criteria of *self* (McHale 2004, 4). McHale argues that postmodernist fiction is the literary production of historical fiction, in which it is difficult to determine as readerly or writerly constructions, ever since no postmodern production of fiction is less true nor less fictional because all postmodernist art is *fictional* (McHale 2004, 4). This theoretical disposition presented by McHale does indeed apply to how a television show, such as *Black Mirror*, should be perceived by the reader, since this particular literary production provides its readers with subjective and self-reflexive insight on issues concerning actuality, societal evolvement and cultural progression, which must be interpreted as a fictional *word of warning* from the writer.

Taking this theoretical statement of McHale and comparing it to the theoretical thoughts of Hutcheon, it is clear that the two scholars largely agree in terms of how postmodernism draws on textually representing realism, since it is suggested by Hutcheon that postmodern fiction refuses to break with its literary convention of being ahistorical (Hutcheon 2002, 51). This theoretical perspective emphasizes the readerly position of postmodern literature, in which the receiver of the text is challenged to establish a comprehensive understanding of the conventional and ideological representation of culture within the narrative.

In addition to the theoretical statements from McHale, it could be interpreted that Hutcheon generally agrees with McHale's disposition of the criteria of *self*, in which Hutcheon implies that postmodernism primarily intends to present itself as a self-conscious literary term when speaking of its historicity and reflexivity (Hutcheon 2002, 13). Furthermore, Hutcheon implies that the self-reflexive historicity of postmodernism must be perceived as a conflictual response to literary modernism, in which postmodernism challenges the ideologies of modernism with the employment of irony and parody as literary tools, which is expressed through self-referentiality (Hutcheon 2002, 14). This theoretical perspective posed by Hutcheon is rather interesting since it appears that there is a fundamental agreement with McHale, in terms of how postmodernism, as a literary term, is the theoretical concept of expressing *self* in literature. When speaking in terms of how *Black Mirror* must be interpreted as postmodern fiction, it is relevant to go into depth with the self-critical approach towards humanism and self-reflexive distrust in societal and humanistic progression, concerning the literary presentation of advanced technology.

In opposition to Hutcheon and McHale, it appears that McRobbie suggest a regressive notion concerning the evolution of postmodernism, in which the writer and reader of postmodern art is drawn towards historical nostalgia and denies sociocultural development, but instead the postmodern artist is recycling artistic forms and conventions of the past, which emphasizes the desire for nostalgia (McRobbie 1994, 142). This perspective, as posed by McRobbie, presents a theoretical concern towards an artistic development of the postmodern, in which the main target of the artistic environment is to be nostalgic and revise artistic forms of the past. This perspective could be taken into use as an oppositional rhetorical view on what is visually expressed in the different narratives of *Black Mirror* since there is an authorial desire of expressing what technological features society will be influenced by in the future. Although, this fictional presentation of futuristic advancement may have a negative effect on the reader and instead urge a readerly repulsion of progression and discourse in general, which ultimately emphasizes the desire for nostalgia.

The theoretical suggestion made by McRobbie is challenged by Hutcheon, in which she points to the representation of history in postmodern art and emphasizes that postmodern artistic representation of history, is meant to challenge the traditions of representing history in the production of literature, in which postmodernism should be considered ahistorical. The conventions of past literary forms of representation are simultaneously explored and critically discussed in postmodern art, although the textual approach is habitually ironic and parodic (Hutcheon 2002, 55). Hutcheon implies that the desire for nostalgia is not an essential ideology within postmodern conventions of representing history, which opposes the theoretical perspective of McRobbie, instead, there is a desire to break with past literary forms of representation and explore the possibilities of reinterpreting artistic conventions in terms of transforming the historicity of fiction. Furthermore, Hutcheon has also made a theoretical disposition of postmodernism, in which she urges that the production of postmodern arts must not be interpreted as a return of nostalgia, but instead it must be categorized as self-reflexive revision, in which a dialogue with an ironic attitude of neutrality towards the present is the main desire of representation (Hutcheon 2004, 4). This theoretical approach regarding the transformation of representing history in contemporary postmodern art highly applies to the artistic desire of literary progression, which additionally constitutes the critical attitude and distancing towards past literary forms of art, such as modernism. Although, in terms of how postmodernism is essential to this particular study of *Black Mirror*, it is relevant to gaze upon how characters within

the selected episodes are narratively represented concerning the contemporary issue of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness*.

Concerning the postmodern position of representing reality and equally portraying the assertion of what is considered real. Hutcheon appears to disagree with Baudrillard in terms of how postmodernism rejects reality in its representational form, in which Hutcheon emphasizes that postmodernism does not dismiss what we comprehend as real in relation to artistic portrayal. Instead, she suggests that we can only provide reality with interpretational meaning by making use of a signifying system of signs (Hutcheon 2004, 229-230). In the theoretical thoughts of Hutcheon, postmodernism must not be a theoretical or artistic term that seeks to denounce history, but ultimately reinterpret history in its representational form (Hutcheon 2004, 225). Hutcheon comments on the theoretical dispositions of Baudrillard and critically defines his perspectives as radical concerning the theoretical interpretation of postmodern art. Additionally, it appears important to Hutcheon to emphasize that postmodern art is intended to be represented as the presence of the past, in which it deliberately positions itself with a notion of neutrality towards portraying the future.

To elaborate, the theoretical approach throughout the analytical work of this assignment will primarily be based on the thoughts and work of Hutcheon, since her theoretical work on this particular subject is considered the most academically valuable, in terms of completing the analysis. In terms of the general approach within the analysis, when thinking of postmodernism, the theoretical work of Hutcheon does additionally appear more accessible and applicable to the main subject of *Black Mirror* and the literary portrayal of advanced technology, when thinking in terms of how this particular topic is becoming more influential in modern society.

Horror

This chapter of the theoretical section concerns the terminology of horror, which additionally will be taken into use throughout the analytical work with *Black Mirror*. The theoretical inclusion of horror is important to the analysis since *Black Mirror* is an anthological television series that highly contains elements of horror in its portrayal of human emotions and visualization of advanced technology. By working with the theoretical aspects of horror this thesis will be provided with an explanatory congruency as to how the writers of *Black Mirror* textually incorporate the genre of horror into this contemporary work of fiction.

The literary term of horror traces back to the gothic writings of the 18th century, in which scholars suggest that it has its origin. The variation of writing horror and the aesthetic determiners of horror varies from writer to writer, although the creative style of most horror writers appears similar, regardless of what period they wrote their works, such as Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King (Hantke 2004, vii). In this thesis, it will be rather relevant to take a closer look at the terminology of *abjection*, which is a post-structural term, coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1980's. The theoretical concept of abjection is, that the term disrupts conventional and cultural conceptualization, and goes beyond the boundaries of recognition of *self* and *others* (Hantke 2004, 21). From a theoretical perspective, an abject intends to force an emotion of fright or disgusts upon the reader of the horror text. The signifier of the terminology concerning horror literature is the desire to interrupt social order and exposing itself as a contamination as if it does not have an influential quality other than deconstructing the symbolic order (Hantke 2004, 21-22). The theoretical perspectives on abjection, as it has been posed by Kristeva, appears to be of great relevance in this thesis, since one of the central issues of the analysis will be how advanced technology has gained significant influence in contemporary society. The element of horror in *Black Mirror* is not exclusively focusing on the actions of the characters presented, but additionally the contextual portrayal of technological advancement, which in some instances could be comprehended as the abject of the text, in the form of infectious contamination of society.

In the theoretical thoughts of Kristeva, the terminology of abjection is described as *boundary-subjectivity*, which is what determines the suffering thematic of horror (Kristeva 1982, 141). It is essential to comprehend that the literary function of abjection is a rhetorical tool, that not distinctively defines the thematic structure of the narrative, but additionally, it is a representational

approach towards the expression of poetic sorrow and violence in horror literature (Kristeva 1982, 141).

Although, Beckler-Leckrone makes a further effort to theoretically categorize what determines the literary function of abjection, since it is argued that a central feature of literary abjection is objectless negativity, in which it is implied that abjection reveals a notion of breaking with the perception and understanding of self. Becker-Leckrone additionally suggests that abjection has an affective function in more than one aspect, in which it is implied that abjection can be experienced in different stages; which is either, a moment in life or personal history, an experience of extreme crisis, or a mutual condition of humanity (Becker-Leckrone 2005, 151). This theoretical conceptualization of abjection, as posed by Kristeva and Becker-Leckrone, is highly applicable to the literary tool of expression within the anthological narratives of *Black Mirror*, in which the consciousness of the characters is constantly contested by emotional issues concerning the portrayal of human interaction with advanced technology and artificial intelligence. By applying this theoretical view on abjection to the analysis of the anthology, it is interesting to study how the existential issues of the characters are presented, in which the portrayal of personal experiences of horror and crisis is essential to go into depth with.

It is suggested by Gwyneth Peaty, that technology has gained significant influence in horror writing and become a key element in defining the human emotion of fear of the unknown. The fear of technological capabilities has grown, although the mystical feature of technological development traces far back in history (Corstophine 2018, 301). The relation between human beings and the development of advanced technology is an unstable matter since it is only a small fraction of society that has a sufficient amount of knowledge to create the technological devices that society has taken into use. This societal arrangement has made a quite transparent boundary between fear and desire, which not only appears as a societal incongruity in relation to the evolution of advanced technology but also the discourse of narrative in contemporary literature (Corstophine 2018, 302). The portrayal of technology, and the evolution of it, in contemporary literature, has made the ideals of society appear disturbingly dystopian, since technology has gained a significant impact and influence in terms of spheres concerning privacy and intimacy (Corstophine 2018, 302). When reflected upon, the statement made by Peaty does have significant relevance for the contemporary position of *Black Mirror* and its textual treatment of the progressive development of advanced technology, which is narratively portrayed in a way that may affect the audience in the same ways as gothic or monstrous

horror. A reaction of fright and terror is desired from the writers, although the reason to implicate advanced technology as the abject within the episodes of *Black Mirror*, may be reasoned in triggering the consciousness of the individual watching.

As posed by Peaty, the more frightening aspect about the development of advanced technology, is the human state of unawareness or the desire to explore the unknown, since the boundaries of technologies do not appear to have been reached yet. She argues that human beings are challenged in their general interpretation of the natural world, exclusively influenced by the interaction through and development of technology, which could have an impact on certain aspects of ordinary life, such as culture, economics and health care (Corstophine 2018, 302). Furthermore, Peaty argues that advanced technology manipulates the borders between the natural and artificial, in which the boundary between life and death is contested, since technological development has the advancement of sustainability, in terms of artificial immortality (Corstophine 2018, 303). This theoretical perspective urges to think about how writers of horror and their textual warnings, in which they suggest a societal change in behaviour or attitude of uncertainty towards advanced technology, or perhaps the different writers try compelling the reader to explore the unknown. This is additionally interesting to go into depth with, since *Black Mirror* fictionally portrays several instances of the immortality of consciousness, with a presentation of *downloadable* and *uploadable* consciousness, which is highly applicable to the contemporary societal interaction with technology and social media behaviour.

A term that is interesting to apply to the definition of horror concerning modifications of technology, is the term of *techno-anxiety*, as Peaty puts it since it assists to comprehend the human emotion towards technology and the unknown aspects of its influential capabilities. The visibility of this term within horror writing is unquestionable and a variety of writers puts a certain emphasis on electrical empowerment, especially when speaking of communication through technology (Corstophine 2018, 307-308). This theoretical perspective of how advanced electrical devices are gaining a disconcerting influential position in matters of cultural development and human interaction is significant to this thesis, since the analytical approach additionally wish to put a certain emphasis on human interaction and communication, which could be considered to have a more conflictual effect on the functionality of society in general.

To provide this section of the paper with a different theoretical perspective on horror, Brian N. Duchaney states, that *science-fiction* could be interpreted as a metaphorical subgenre of *hi-tech*

horror, in which the desire for the unknown and anxiety of technological supremacy is narratively expressed as horror (Duchaney 2015, 120). Duchaney argues that horror narratives which contain traces of the science-fiction genre, often is based on fictional assumptions of superstition or the supernatural, but additionally, it could reflect upon societal or historical matters, such as governmental control or global affection influenced by technological advancement (Duchaney 2015, 121). In addition to the aforementioned theoretical suggestion by Duchaney, there is an accommodating statement posed by Fred Botting, in which it is exemplified that horror writing has undergone a significant shift by not exclusively moving from past to present, but instead exploring the horrifying traumas of a digitalized future (Botting 2013, 176).

The argument concerning the development of advanced technology on a global scale raises the question of the authorial expression of insecurity or uncertainty, by textually questioning and contesting the morality of continuing to explore the development of technology. Duchaney suggests that advanced technology and the scientific aspect of its development, especially in horror/science-fiction literature, has moved beyond or even broken the barrier between the order of natural and unnatural occurrences when speaking in terms of medical/biological issues and human mortality (Duchaney 2015, 123). The theoretical disposition, which concerns technological advancement and simultaneously questions the morality of altering what society may perceive as natural, appears to be quite essential in horror narratives, in which technological conventions of science are incorporated as the contextual determiners of terror and suffering. The theoretical suggestion is additionally applicable to the fictional realm of *Black Mirror*, since the narrative of the episodes inarguably contests several substantial issues of human existence by fictionally articulating a disruptive concern towards the advancement of advanced technology, consequently upheld by breaking the barrier between natural and unnatural, and thereby applying a notion ambiguity to the narrative structure.

There is a notion of an agreement between Duchaney and Peaty in terms of how influential advanced technology and the advancement of it has become in horror literature, since both of the theoretical commentators argue that advanced technology has dissolved certain boundaries of ordinary aspects of life. Peaty argues that the development of advanced technology has inflicted with the interpretation of what is natural and thereby adapted as a dystopian term in the sense of textual portrayal and Duchaney states that technological advancement has reached an influential role of societal supremacy. These theoretical perspectives appear to have a specific congruence when speaking in terms of scientific inclusion within contemporary horror writing. Furthermore, Peaty agrees more

with Kristeva, when speaking in terms of how literary horror productions intend to portray revolutionary technology as the central object of a horror text in the form of abjection, rather than focusing on an individual or a specific character. In opposition to the aforementioned, Duchaney suggests that the scientist, developer or user of the given abjection is the source of expressing terror and fear since it is more likely that this representation will resemble the readerly interpretation of monstrous/horrific existence in the form of a human being (Duchaney 2015, 131). This perspective of how readers of the horror text may interpret and engage in technological struggles that are presented throughout the narrative in the form of scientific horror does indeed support Duchaney's theoretical dispositions of how science fiction and horror have blended into a genre of *science-horror*.

Throughout the analysis of this assignment, it is interesting to observe and work with how the theoretical views of this section could be applied to the different narratives presented in the anthology of *Black Mirror*. Additionally, the theoretical approach within the analysis will be to observe, if there is a correlation between the audio-visual portrayal of horror and the theoretical anticipations concerning advanced technology that is made by the aforementioned commentators. The theoretical commentators who must be considered the most significant, in terms of applying this theoretical terminology to the analysis of this thesis, are Duchaney and Peaty, which is reasoned in their concessive arguments on the topic of literary horror. Although, Kristeva's theoretical views on abjection in relation to literary horror is equally applicable to the study of how human beings comprehend experiences of fright, sorrow, terror, and trauma.

Satire

As it has been articulated in the introduction of this assignment, one of the primary points of focus in the theoretical section will be the literary functionality of satire, which will be theoretically elaborated throughout this section. The main intention of this theoretical chapter is to provide the reader with a distinctive overview of satire and its function in relation to literary production. Additionally, this section is contributed by several theoretical perspectives that have been conceptualized by scholars and theoretical commentators, such as Northrop Frye, Paul Simpson, and Arthur Pollard.

As a concept of discourse that functions within the theoretical realm of humour, the terminology of satire must be considered *multifunctional*, according to the theoretical thoughts of Paul Simpson, in which he defines satire as an intellectual practice that depends on linguistic means of creativity (Simpson 2003, 3). According to Simpson, satire is considered the most common humoristic term that interactively functions in society, which additionally emphasizes satire as the most recognizable practice of humour (Simpson 2003, 4). When categorizing the discourse of satire, there is a specific triad practice within the function of satirical embodiment, in which the three subject positions are named as; *the satirist*, *the satiree*, and *the satirised*. The different positions in the function of satire is that there is a producer/writer of satire [satirist], there is a receiver of satire [satiree] and a target of the satirical discourse [satirised]. The satirist and the satiree engage in a dialogue, in which the third party, the satirised, is excluded from since the satirised conclusively has the position of being the target of satirical humour (Simpson 2003, 8).

In terms of language and communication, Simpson puts a specific emphasis on the employment of humour and its function in ordinary life and society in general, in which the forms of communicative interaction between human beings are predominantly influenced by the engagement of humoristic expressionism, such as commentary, remarks, jokes and puns (Simpson 2003, 16). Regarding the aforementioned theoretical suggestion by Simpson, it is essential to reflect upon the necessity of communication, in terms of expressing satirical humour, in which the communicative engagement by both writer and reader is determined as the most significant characteristic of satirical writing. In accordance with this theoretical perspective and how it is considered applicable to this particular study of how *Black Mirror* includes satire as a form of humoristic intent, it is relevant to reflect upon how the writers of the anthology articulate a notion of critique towards societal norms and ideals concerning the embracement of advanced technology.

Observing the linguistic attitudinal intent of humoristic utterances, it is essential to take several considerations into account, when thinking of how the humoristic remark is communicatively articulated. The intention of the speaker could be to deliberately utter a humoristic remark and thereby be comprehended as accordingly by the listener; although the speaker could, in opposition to the aforementioned, have no intention of employing humour, although the remark is still perceived as humoristic (Simpson 2003, 17).

The difference of humoristic production and deliverance in verbal or textual communication could both be defined as conscious and unconscious, when reflecting upon the attitudinal intent. However, as posed by Pollard, there is a similarity between a satirist and a preacher, although the satirist has a more complex and problematic position in relation to whom the satirist addresses (Pollard 1970, I). This could, in the shared perspectives of Simpson and Pollard, force a reflection of attitude and enthusiasm in deliverance upon the satirist, in which (s)he is obligated to take the contents of the satirical remark into account, in order to make the receiver interpret the satirical production as art. In relation to how this theoretical perspective on satirical humour applies to the analytical work concerning *Black Mirror*, it is relevant to observe how the writers of the anthology artistically articulate comprehensible criticism regarding the representation of societal and cultural concerns.

To provide a more specific definition of how satire must be categorized within the functional sphere of literary humour, Simpson mentions that satire is not subsequently a genre of discourse, but considerably interpreted as a discursive practice, which functions within the theoretical discourse of humour (Simpson 2003, 76). To elaborate the statement above, posed by Simpson, it is highly relevant to comprehend the terminology of satire as an assimilative rhetorical tool, in terms of its ability to imitate ideology. Although, in a more concretized elaboration, Northrop Frye defines satire as a militant branch of irony, in which the satirical remark is expressed with emphasis on grotesquery and absurdity. Additionally, Frye categorizes the position of the reader as outmost prominent, in which it is essential to restrain the ability to comprehend the notion of exaggerated grotesquery within the text. This determination of readerly positioning also provides a further distinction between irony and satire, in which irony is reliant on realism within the text and satirical texts deliberately contain elements of fantasy (Frye 1957, 223-224). The aforementioned theoretical thoughts, posed by Frye, do appear to have significant depth when considering the readerly position in relation to the narratology of *Black Mirror*, in which the reader is presented to a fictional reality that is considered grotesque in its representational form. This textual representation of sociocultural absurdity could

additionally challenge the reader's ability to establish a comprehensive distinction between fictional and nonfictional.

In relation to the theoretical thoughts, as posed by Simpson (2003), Frye agrees upon the relation between writer [satirist] and reader [satiree], in which there has to be a common understanding of the contents of satire, which Frye defines as an agreement of what is undesirable. The contents of the satirical text could be aimed towards political ideologies, national mockery, cultural criticism, or prejudice, which is carried out in an attack of humour, although the impact on the reader is not as effective (Frye 1957, 224). Frye is simultaneously supported by Pollard in his statement, although Pollard suggests that the satirical writer may have the intention of employing outrage in the reader or audience, since the subject of the satirical text, may be the behavioural seriousness of the reader, which is either articulated directly or indirectly, depending on the communicative relation between writer and reader (Pollard 1970, 10). In this assignment, it is highly relevant to gaze upon the satirical mockery of societal ideals and human interactions, in which several aspects of life, enhanced by the influence of advanced technology, is presented in a dark and horrific work of fiction that could be considered a satirical imitation of contemporary society. Although, the textual projection of societal structures could simultaneously be considered insignificant in opposition to the authorial attitude of satirically exposing the individual in a fictionally presupposed example of cultural misconception of individualism and consciousness.

Within the terminology of satire, there is a specific notion of cynicism, rather than scepticism, since scepticism is more or less a dogmatic attitude, in which evidence is put in doubt through the employment of humour. Cynicism is considerably relevant to apply to the functionality of satirical humour since it intends to impose over-simplified ideals (Frye 1957, 230). It is interesting to categorize satire as cynical because there is a correlation between satirical cynicism and logical aspects of life, in which the philosophical perspective of satire is irrelevant. The notion of cynicism in satire may help the reader reach a sense of enlightenment on certain perspectives regarding what defines human existentialism, such as the inevitable occurrence of death. This additionally provides the aforementioned disposition, as posed by Frye, with a distinctive notion of categorizing satirical humour and the cynical aspect of it as black humour. Both Frye and Simpson agree upon determining satire as ideological, although according to the arguments of Simpson, satire is not only a term that should be observed as a genre of discourse, as in opposition to parody, but as a discursive practice that interacts and interferes with genres of discourse (Simpson 2003, 76).

From an elaborative perspective, Simpson emphasizes that satire is categorized as a multifaceted and multi-modal discursive form that embodies numerous functions of lexico-grammar (Simpson 2003, 113). By stating the aforementioned, Simpson determines the functionality of satire as a theoretical term that is not limited to just written production of art, but conclusively functions in several facets of artistic production and performance, whether it is audio, video or even audio-visual. This considerably applies to the observance of how the writers of *Black Mirror* wish to not exclusively verbally articulate a notion of satirical criticism, but conclusively present multimodal disregard of societal reliance on technological development.

In accordance with the theoretical suggestions posed by Frye, there is a notion of reaching an agreement between satirist and receiver, in order to produce a satirical humoristic remark. It is essential to agree upon the undesirability of the subject that is attacked in the satirical text, which is presented to the reader (Frye et al. 2006, 43). Frye proceeds to define the terminology of ironic comedy, as a dramatic form of satire, in which sociocultural aspects are ridiculed and generally made a fool of. This emphasizes the position of moral judgement presented in the text, although it highly depends on which types of characters that are presented to the reader, and to which degree they are ridiculed (Frye et al. 2006, 110). Concerning the main topic of this assignment, the aforementioned statement by Frye correlates with how the analytical section of this assignment will be carried out, theoretically speaking. The main topic of *Black Mirror*, which also is the primary subject of the analysis, does portray societal issues and cultural struggles in an exceedingly satirical fashion, which serve the purpose of provoking a specific reaction from the audience that is intentionally desired by the writer, although what is portrayed in the text is deliberately emphasized as undesirable.

When reflecting upon the authorial position, the production of satire in relation to the theoretical assumptions on satirical discourse appears to be depending on the desire of addressing the reader by communicating a particular issue or criticism. The assessment of communicative authorial intention within satire is essential to the readerly interpretation and understanding (Simpson 2003, 155). Contradictive to the aforementioned point, the authorial intent could additionally be focused on identifying the object of satire, in which the receiver is required to comprehend the constituted target of the satirical text (Simpson 2003, 155). To elaborate, then the reader of satire must restrain the ability to comprehend and interpret the authorially articulation of the object within a satirical text, in order to understand the textual conventions of satirical discourse.

Observing satire as a theoretical term that functions in several literary modes and forms, it appears to be constituted with a specific sense of consciousness, which constantly intends to emphasize what things are and what they could be perceived to be (Pollard 1970, 3). Within the production of satire, there is a notion of wishing to reveal the difference between the impression of appearance and reality (Pollard 1970, 3). The aforementioned statement made by Pollard, highly applies to the main topic of this thesis, since the subject of analysis, which is *Black Mirror*, does portray the negative discourse of a reality that is repulsively influenced by advanced technology. Although, the narratives of the episodes included in this thesis, must be interpreted as overexaggerating the dramatic structure and narrative function of suspense regarding the readerly comprehension of the text.

Black Humour

Lastly, this theoretical chapter intends to concentrate on the theoretical perspectives of black humour, in which the intention is to go into depth with its literary functionality and include theoretical commentators and scholars who have provided insightful work on the subject of black humour theory. This chapter intends to make an explanatory overview of how black humour functions in relation to audio-visual fiction, since the anthology of *Black Mirror* is the main target of the analytical work presented in this thesis.

As posed by Harold Bloom, there is not a decisive nor concrete agreement on when black humour was first conceptualized, nor what it conclusively determines its functionality, as in relation to the realm of humour in general, which is just as difficult to define (Bloom 2010, 80). The concept of black humour is thought of as a term that involves itself with terminologies such as grotesquery, morbidity, satire, and absurdity, and textually combine these concepts into a humoristic context. The methodology of applying black humour to a literary context contains a wide range of opportunities, in which it could both be applied to a specific period in time, and in opposition to that, the concept could also be interpreted as a quality of human nature (Bloom 2010, 80). It is suggested by Bloom, that black humour must be considered as having no intention of exaggerating itself in relation to the traditional concepts of comedic expressionism, although the primary intent of black humour is to interpret the concept as a branch of comic literature, but conclusively not humorous in its execution (Bloom 2010, 81). There is a correlation between this particular statement by Bloom and the textual

inclusion of humoristic grotesquery in the narrative of *Black Mirror*, because if the narrative function of an ordinary episode of *Black Mirror* is not meant to be comprehended as comedy, then its humorous inclusion certainly must be determined as dark or black. Objectively the humoristic intent is highly depending on readerly interpretation and engagement since the concept of dark humour is not to emphasize itself or exaggerate its function within a narrative, its humoristic effect is determined by how it is interpreted, whether it is determined by the reader as bizarre, morbid, satirical, or obscure.

As a theoretical concept, black humour is interpreted as a trope within the realm of humour, which urges the element of social satire and emphasising absurd aspects of society and culture, by presenting literature that makes the reader insecure and unable to comprehend differences between fiction and non-fiction, in which the term of absurdity is presented (Bloom 2010, 82). According to Bloom, the literary expression of black humour does exclusively contain an element of satire and typically have a controversial subject matter, which in terms of the humoristic effect on the reader, will result in ironic laughter or in opposition to that, produce a reaction of horror (Bloom 2010, 84). The effects of black humour can be observed, as both making the reader grasp the emotion of amusement and repulsion, regarding the contents of the text, whether it concerns satire, irony, perversion, inhumanity, grotesquery, etc. There is a notion of challenging the consciousness of the reader, which may also urge a questioning of individual morale regarding what is conclusively considered appropriate, according to the reader.

Taking the terminology of black humour and observing it in opposition to horror; the German anthologist, Gerd Henninger, has stated that 'black humour' functions as a defence mechanism against the literary term of horror (Bloom 2010, 85). Henninger argues that black humour has the literary quality of channelling the feeling of guilt through *playful revelations* within the text, in which the effect of the emotional combination of pleasure and guilt constitutes the expressive functionality of black humour (Bloom 2010, 85). According to Bloom, it is not possible to define the terminology of black humour based on its subject matter exclusively, but the interpretation of what is popularly considered *black* must be defined on a scale that opposes black humour in relation to other modes of humour (Bloom 2010, 88). Furthermore, the concept of black humour highly appears to be influenced by the terminology of parody, although the most iconic mode of parody that involves with black humour, is the term *metahumour* which functions as a tool of expression in terms of self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, and self-critique (Bloom 2010, 96). In opposition to the aforementioned, Bloom argues for a distinction between black humour and metahumour, in which black humour is the concept of disorientation and metahumour functions as the parodic re-orientation

(Bloom 2010, 96). Additionally, Freud perceives the dark aspect of humour as a dysfunctionality of an individual's psychic energy, in which unpleasant emotions of terror, fright, horror, and sorrow are replaced by the pleasurable expression of humour, although the humoristic remark made does not contest or interrupt the course of reality (Colletta 2003, 25). It is suggested that the reasoning for expressing a humoristic remark in relation to an occurrence that eventually would have a fatal outcome, is grounded in the disregard of realizing circumstances of severity or seriousness, in which emotional expressions are playfully denied by the joke-maker. The means of expressing black humour may conclusively be interpreted as a mechanism of defence, which could also present a notion of invulnerability and thereby be reasoned in triumphal narcissism. Although, in accordance with how the writers of *Black Mirror* implies notions of literary black humour, it is relevant to reflect upon the position of the writers, in which it could be interpreted that the employment of black humour functions as a rhetorical mechanism of denying the severe circumstances of contemporary reality.

A rather disconcerting perspective on black humour could be to observe the term as a category of humour that presents violence and trauma, which has the intention of questioning the morale of the reader, alongside its humoristic contents (Colletta 2003, 2). In the thoughts of Colletta, black humour and satire do have similarities in terms of literary characteristics, since there is a correlation in the object and the purpose of its target within the text, although black humour tends to have an increased focus on hopelessness and absurdity (Colletta 2003, 6). It is suggested that the essential quality of black humour, is the rejection of suffering and strengthening of ego, as it has been posed by Freud who mentions that black humour is the celebratory, or even triumphal, mechanism of narcissism, ever since black humour has the ability of making an individual refuse the realization of death and pain, by finding joy and laughter in traumatic instances instead (Colletta 2003, 7).

In addition to Colletta's theoretical disposition of expressing black humour in relation to traumatic or violent experiences, there is a contributing statement from Buccaria, in which their theoretical view concerns the female gender and ethnic minorities, and suggests that the use of black humour could be interpreted as a mechanism of managing stressful or traumatic experiences of the past (Buccaria et al. 2016, 6). Furthermore, it is suggested by Buccaria that black humour is provocative in its expressive form, since the desired reaction is not targeted to be superficial or briefly, but evoke a readerly emotion that has the resemblance of a traumatic experience (Buccaria et al. 2016, 55). In accordance with the aforementioned theoretical statements and how they eventually would apply to the analytical contents of this thesis, it is relevant to focus on how *Black Mirror* wishes

to force a reaction from its viewers, which conclusively urges a higher level of engagement from the reader. Although, the contents of the different episodes contain different aspects of black humour, concerning the textual display of trauma, anxiety, violence, or terror, whether it is based on issues of gender, ethnicity, religion or sexuality.

According to Colletta, the concept of black humour and the dark aspects of the terminology is equally influenced by satire, since satire wishes to inflict with the social perspectives of how black humour is carried out. The satirical influence in the production of black humour is targeted at the construction of social identities and examination of individuality, which means that satire wishes to undermine social experiences and instead emphasize the identity struggles of the common individual (Colletta 2003, 8). This perspective on the satirical influence on black humour, as provided by Colletta, does appear to be beneficiary to this study, since *Black Mirror* often tends to focus on the emotional portrayal of the individual, in relation to the public in general, but the television show equally tends to have an increased focus on how the primary subject of the common episode behaves socially or reacts to traumatic circumstances.

It is a common trait of black humour, that the reader is manipulated into thinking that they understand the characters that are portrayed in the text. The motives and actions of the characters are constantly misdirecting the reader, which urges a rather severe uncertainty about more philosophical terms, such as meaning and existence (Colletta 2003, 10). It is suggested that black humour thrives on incongruity in its humoristic form, which applies to the conception of authorial misdirection of the reader. The writer of black humour is constantly seeking to display a fractured consciousness of the individual characters presented, to cause an effect on the reader (Colletta 2003, 11). An attribute of literary black humour is, that it admits to disorder and incoherence, in which it wishes to restrain these tropes and thereby produce a humoristic remark in the form of a joke, based on meaningless devastation (Colletta 2003, 13). Furthermore, the emotion of superiority and self-satisfaction is the most significant and oldest perception of humour theory there is. It is central to the concept of humour that the misfortune of the targeted victim of a joke, is laughed at to make the audience or the joker perceive the emotion of superiority, although it is just as important to keep in mind that it could have happened to anyone (Colletta 2003, 18). This makes a large part of the interpretation of humour seem paradoxical, since the emotion of superiority is connected to the production of humour and reaction that is laughter, but simultaneously having in mind that being the target or victim of a joke could happen to anyone, then no one is superior and just as inferior as the victim of the joke.

It is suggested that mechanization is a central theme of how social order and naturalization of society is disrupted, since the human desire for laughter, entertainment and humour appears to be more influenced by developing mechanization, which interferes with societal structures and social development (Colletta 2003, 19). The notion of mechanical repetition does inflict with social congruency and societal development, which additionally conflicts with the human instinct of laughter since an individual is not intended to be affected by mechanization, which only reduces the individual to become as mechanized as the machine itself (Colletta 2003, 19). To elaborate the aforementioned statement, it is inarguably a theoretical view on social satire, in which the dark humoristic aspect is focusing on the bizarre occurrence of human mechanization in repetition that additionally ridicules the discourse of humour. There is additionally a specific emphasis on human laughter, and amusement in general, in which it is explained as transcending into an exercise of repetition, rather than a natural physical occurrence. It is essential to this study of *Black Mirror* to reflect upon the humoristic mechanization of the individual, since the included episodes of the anthology within this thesis consequently represents the issue of human mechanization with a humoristic approach.

This theoretical section provides this thesis with a proper selection of theoretical work, which is highly relevant to draw on throughout the work of the analysis. The academic dispositions that are brought forth by the scholars and commentators mentioned above, enlightens the theoretical concept of black humour regarding its literary functionality. The theoretical commentator that will be the most influential throughout the analysis, will be Colletta (2003) since her work concerning black humour appear most valuable to this particular study of *Black Mirror*. This is reasoned in the desire to provide the reader of this thesis, with an explanatory view on how *Black Mirror* textually incorporates black humour as an integrated part of the narrative structure.

Analysis of *Black Mirror*

In this section of the paper, the analysis of this thesis will be presented, which primarily intends to provide the reader with a concessive literary examination of the selected episodes of *Black Mirror* incorporated in this paper. The methodical approach of the analysis is to provide an elaborative subdivision of chapters that contains each their theoretical approach towards the main topic of *Black Mirror*, which consequently constitutes why not all of the selected episodes will be represented in each of the analytical sections, but ultimately concluded as a whole.

The general purpose of the analysis is concentrated on going critically into depth with how *Black Mirror* textually incorporates theoretical practices when thinking of how this anthology artistically embraces the terminology of literary postmodernism and textually represents issues of satirical criticism towards sociocultural aspects within the narrative structure. Additionally, the analysis concentrates on providing the reader with certain enlightenment on how genres of black humour and horror represent a thematic presence of advanced technology and artificial intelligence, in terms of literary portrayal.

Black Mirror embraces postmodernism

When speaking of *Black Mirror* as a contemporary work of fiction, it is of exceeding relevance to gaze upon how the writers have a significant postmodern approach regarding the literary structure within the different narratives of the anthology. In accordance with Hutcheon, then postmodernism theoretically represents and express innovative features in terms of societal comprehension and interpretations of life, society and culture, which is why this chapter of the analysis concerns the episodes “*San Junipero*” and “*Hang the DJ*”.

Postmodern disbelief of culture and consciousness

The episode, “*San Junipero*” (2016), concerns the human engagement with advanced technology in connection to matters of life, death, immortality and the perception of reality, in which human beings have the ability to be consciously uploaded to an artificial reality that could be considered a technological utopia. In terms of how this episode must be interpreted as a postmodern literary production in regard to its narrative form, it is essential to mention the visualization of pop-cultural aesthetics in relation to semiotic structure, in which video-arcades, iconic music with a diegetic

function, and fashions tendencies of clothing, are central to this particular textual tool of expressing literary postmodernity (Brooker et al. 2016).

Reflecting upon the theoretical suggestions, as posed by Hutcheon, this episode appears to draw on cultural representation, in which there is a notion of an authorial attitudinal desire regarding the textual portrayal of history and reality. The refusal of breaking with historicity and illustrate a fictional impression of realism is emphasized by Hutcheon as a trope within the literary sphere of postmodernism, in which the reader is contested in terms of interpreting and construing an individual comprehension of meaning towards the representation of culture (Hutcheon 2002, 14). In relation to how people are visually depicted in the episode, it is noteworthy to examine how physical appearance is textually expressed in connection to the fictional establishment of culture, in which a notion of critique towards social and cultural ideals of superficiality is revealed, which is additionally presented with an attitude of self-reflexivity in an ironic literary form. In an oppositional view, there is also an indirect reflection upon the period of time, in which the self of the individual is the primary concern, since the functional conception of time within the narrative is associated with how people physically appear, ever since San Junipero must be interpreted as an artificially constructed reality, in which people have the ability of taking the physical form of that particular part in their life, that they found themselves most comfortable in. Additionally, it must be considered that the textual representation of individuality, is the visualization of enabling the consciousness of the individual to reach an idealized perception of self in relation to what is consequently interpreted as real, which applies to McHale's theoretical thoughts on how postmodernism concentrates on a conflictual representation of self, and how the text challenges the readerly comprehension of fictional reality (McHale 2004, 4). The interrelation of presenting a specific connection between time and physical appearance could be questioned a break with how postmodernism rejects the establishment of meaning when considering how this text visually implies a correlation between time and physical appearance and transpositions it into a textual conception of an individual interpretation of an idealized self.

In order to discuss the aforementioned in a further extent, it could be argued that there is a conflictual representation of identity and consciousness, in which it interesting to reflect upon how the textual establishment of identity appears to developmentally thrive on how the textual progression of consciousness is presented, by narratively presenting the consciousness of the individual as the constant in relation to the artificial reality of San Junipero. The text additionally articulates a notion of a profound correlation between identity and consciousness, by consequently constituting consciousness as the determiner of reaching a fundamental understanding of personal identity. This

analytical suggestion is supported by the theoretical thoughts of John Locke, since he has argued that there is a distinction between the constitution of consciousness and identity to be made, in which consciousness is developed through actions of the past and the establishment of identity can only progress by acts of consciousness, which therefore constitutes the mental development of individual consciousness as a necessity in the discovery of personal identification (Thiel 2011, 122).

By applying this theoretical assumption, posed by Locke, to the textual representation of consciousness and identity within the narrative of "*San Junipero*", it is highly relevant to gaze upon the conflictual relation between the development of consciousness and struggle of maintaining individual identity. The characterization of developing an individual consciousness is portrayed as an element of personal progression reflecting upon specific aspects of an individual's past, whilst the sustainability of personal identification of self, is textually presented as a fundamental characteristic of the individual, which vocalizes how the characters of the text express the uncertain interpretation of self and thereby manifests the conflictual self-reflexive character representation in postmodern literature.

Besides depicting the enablement of how an individual engages with a virtually established reality and advanced technology, it could be understood that the portrayal of individualistic consciousness simultaneously reflects a postmodern attitude in regard to the desire of nostalgia. The main intent is expressed through a desire of capturing a specific point in an individual's consciousness and continuing to live in that particular moment inside an artificially developed reality, which could be considered to be based on individual interpretation of reality. When going into depth with how the desire of nostalgia is expressed, it would be beneficiary for this analysis, to reflect upon the theoretical dispositions posed by Hutcheon and McRobbie, in which they discuss the comprehension of history and sociocultural development. It is suggested by McRobbie (1994) that postmodern writing is nonprogressive in its literary presentation of history and denies societal development, and McRobbie thereby presents a critical concern towards the textual representation of consciousness in postmodern literature, which additionally applies to the textual portrayal of individual consciousness in regard to semiotic structure in *Black Mirror*. In opposition to McRobbie, it appears that Hutcheon (2004) wishes to emphasize that postmodern literature wishes to challenge and re-establish literary conventions of the past, in relation to historicity, which concentrates on reinterpreting and exploring new forms of historical representation. This theoretical perspective does apply to how *Black Mirror* narratively represents the conflictual progression of consciousness and put it in relation to advanced

technology and artificial intelligence, in which the representation of self is central to certain issues of societal criticism and technological advancement. Furthermore, the postmodern expression of contradicting negative turns in cultural discourse has been textually reinterpreted and made into a fictional portrayal of self-reflexive consciousness that transpositions into an artificial reality of individualism, which emphasizes the postmodern notion of historical fictionality and denaturalization of society, in regard to the issue of uploadable consciousness.

While gazing upon the conceptualization of downloadable and uploadable consciousness, it is essential to focus on how "*San Junipero*" presents a notion of self-reflexivity and -exploration, in regard to the postmodern approach towards the thematic structure, when speaking in terms of naturalizing advanced technology, in which the artificial reality of San Junipero is textually categorized as "*nostalgia therapy*" (Brooker et al. 2016). When analytically reflecting upon the theoretical term of postmodernism and how it is substantially relevant to discuss in relation to the textual portrayal of advanced technology, artificial intelligence, and human consciousness, it is considerably beneficiary to focus on the issue of articulating naturalness and its fictional function, since the reality of San Junipero is textually described as a disassociation of mind from body, which means that there is a perspective of salvation, regarding the individual consciousness of a human being. It could be argued that the textual representation of social media, articulates a delusional ironic exemplification of how digital social platforms could be interpreted as a conception of human salvation (Hutcheon 2004, 4).

Instead of embracing the course of life and the naturalness of death, the characters presented in this episode express a desire for nostalgia, by engaging their individual consciousness with advanced technology and artificially construed reality, in order to explore their personal identity (Brooker et al. 2016). Additionally, the readerly interpretation of this literary instalment could be perceived as a postmodern perspective of spiritualism and religion, in which postmodern artistic progression surpasses and reinterprets past literary conventions of religious writing. Hutcheon argues that postmodernism critically discuss the artistic conventions of the past with an attitude of irony, which appears significantly relevant to reflect upon in terms of how human consciousness is textually constructed, in the case of "*San Junipero*", since the terminology of consciousness is depicted as an independent part of a human being, which can be downloaded and uploaded to an artificial reality through the enhancement of technology. In terms of how *Black Mirror* clears a contextual path of fictionally implementing advanced technology in relation to societal ideals, a notion of unnaturalness occurs, since the technological influence on society conflicts with how we comprehend natural

occurrences, when thinking of “*San Junipero*” textually denounces laws of nature or even avoiding the naturalness of death (Brooker et al. 2016).

Taking the terminology of consciousness and naturalness into consideration, there is an authorial attitude of textual emphasizing the actuality of technological development and its influence on society, in which the text expresses a societal concern, by depicting a textual desire of fictionally altering aspects of human mortality and the concept of *afterlife*. In terms of artistic liberations in relation to postmodern conventions, the writers of *Black Mirror* establish a reality, in which the terminology of salvation and spiritualism is correlated with advanced technology that dissolves the mystery of what happens after the occurrence of death. The opportunism and possibility of uploading people’s consciousness to an ‘*artificial graveyard*’ concretizes the denaturalization of the natural, and simultaneously, the receiver may interpret that the writers intend to articulate a notion of criticism towards human interaction with advanced technology and artificial intelligence, since it could be comprehended as a conflict between technological development and laws of nature. This analytical suggestion is additionally supported by Hutcheon, who has stated that postmodernism intends to interfere with and denaturalize what we as a society perceive as natural, in which culturally established norms and ideals are deconstructed by postmodern literature. Hutcheon suggests that postmodernism has had a rather significant impact on studies of religion, in which postmodernism has redefined and critically influenced the theological perception of life (Hutcheon 2002, 170).

Although, by culturally embracing the engagement with technological development and implication of artificial intelligence, the virtual reality of *San Junipero*, could be categorized as a platform that imitates the concept of social media, in which people are encouraged to behave and appear as the person they desire to be. This consequently denaturalizes the general perception of human engagement in communicative interaction, culturally affected by advanced technology, which means that this instalment additionally could be perceived as an authorial expression of concern towards a negative turn in cultural discourse by narratively communicating this particular issue to the reader.

Technological limitation of consciousness

In the episode “*Hang the DJ*” there is a presentation of an authorial concern in matters of technological influence on cultural discourse, which is textually vocalized with a notion of criticism and negativity when thinking in terms of how individualism, independence, and social interaction is

depicted. The reader is presented to a reality, which in opposition to “*San Junipero*”, appears to be quite dystopian and obscure since human beings engage with advanced technology and artificial intelligence on a submissive level that represents a *master/slave relationship*. The narrative structure of this episode additionally provides the receiver with a critical reflection upon issues that are relevant to contemporary society as well, since it is indirectly suggested that the societal presentation within this particular narrative is influenced by technologically developed algorithms, which must be interpreted as a critical reference towards the distancing interaction through social media.

The authorial attitude in relation to the narratological representation of society could be considered an anticipation of the negative effects of technological influence on several cultural and humanistic aspects, which in this episode are terms, such as love, romance, natural selection and independency of consciousness. Even though the aforementioned is considered culturally established ideals, the fictionality of the narrative does reveal a specific notion of criticism, when thinking of how human behaviour and consciousness are textually characterized as inferior in opposition to artificial intelligence. By textually presenting technology and artificial intelligence as a dominant feature within a dystopian society, in which the consciousness of a human being is depending on instructions communicated through artificial intelligence, there is a visualization of a postmodern theoretical function applied to the narrative. It could be interpreted that the writers of the text wish to break with a presupposed negative turn in cultural discourse regarding technological development and matters of love, romance, and natural selection. In accordance with the theoretical thoughts of Hutcheon (2004), it appears that this text wish to interfere with and provocatively present a desire for social changes, in which the postmodern perspective is presented with a notion of emphasizing the consequentiality of human engagement with advanced technology, although this particular instance of postmodern fictionality could be comprehended as a contextual over-exaggeration. In accordance with how this episode articulates an ironical attitude regarding the issue of love, there is a notion of criticism towards human dependency on advanced technology, in reference to the satirical exaggeration of calculated compatibility.

Additionally, it could be argued that this text represents societal development with an attitude of self-criticism and self-irony, in which culturally established ideologies, such as the naturalness of human independency, are ridiculed in a notion of emphasizing the obscurity of cultural development and societal progression. The portrayal of human engagement with advanced technology could be interpreted as infectious concerning the independence of consciousness, when thinking of how artificial intelligence alters and negatively affects the development of consciousness,

in which the text presents a reflective instalment of how artificial intelligence dominates the consciousness of humanity, by constituting a *master/slave-relationship*, which additionally establishes a notion of postmodern parodical incongruity in terms of the perception of *self*. Additionally, there is a significant articulation of postmodern fictionality, in which self-reflexivity is highly applicable to the readerly interpretation of this text and its determination of actuality. This analytic view is theoretically supported by McHale (2004), in which he suggests that one of the most significant criteria of postmodern writing, is the articulation and expression of *self*. Although, the theoretical disposition presented by McHale is equally supported by Hutcheon since she puts a certain emphasis on how postmodern literature reveals a contradictory notion of self-exploration regarding the conventional inclusion fictional realism and desire for societal progression, which consequently contests the readerly perception of reality (Hutcheon 2002, 51).

In terms of how the text expresses an authorial concern in regard to cultural discourse, it appears that there is a notion of self-reflexivity, which is presented as a rhetorical tool of satirical criticism towards the portrayal of human engagement with artificial intelligence. This analytical perspective is additionally supported by Hutcheon, since she has stated that postmodern literature has a tendency of critically commenting on culturally established ideologies and reinterpret conventions socially constructed norms, in a self-reflective fashion (Hutcheon 2002, 9-10). Taking this theoretical disposition and applying it to this particular episode of *Black Mirror*, there is a correlation of how the text restrains a notion of self-reflexivity in terms of how human interaction and individual consciousness is presented, in terms of the technological influence of the common individual. The issue of physical interaction is oppressed and independence of consciousness is limited by artificial intelligence, which neutralizes the ideals of individualism in relation to human liberties, since the visualization of uploading one's consciousness to a technological device is presented with a notion of voluntary submission of consciousness, which additionally emphasizes the negative turn in cultural discourse. Additionally, this portrayal of how artificial intelligence eventually affects human consciousness could be a critical reference towards the emotion of loneliness and a textual imitation of involuntary isolation, which conflicts with how postmodernism provokes a notion of rearranging socially established norms and structures, as it has been theoretically suggested by Hutcheon (Hutcheon 2004, 7).

Taking the terminology of consciousness into account, there is furthermore a philosophical facet within the development of character identity, in which the philosophical thoughts of René Descartes becomes relevant, and especially his quote "*Cogito, ergo sum*" (1637), since the main

characters critically reflect upon their sociocultural position in opposition to advanced technology and artificial intelligence, which articulates a disruptive attitude regarding the representation of technological superiority and creating an understanding of the individuality of human consciousness. In accordance with the theoretical thoughts, as posed by Christian Wolff, there is a significant correlation between the understanding of one's consciousness and recognizing the distinction between self and the consciousness of objects, in which the consciousness of objects is expressed as a necessity in the process of understanding one's self, which is a highly relevant disposition to emphasize in this analysis (Thiel 2011, 308). The conflictual interaction between human beings and artificial intelligence must be interpreted as the textualization of understanding consciousness and self within the narrative of this text since the development of individual consciousness is presented as depending on the ability of making a distinction between the subject and object.

Considering the representation of consciousness in relation to narrative function, it is relevant to highlight the vocalization from the characters presented in the text, in which it is rhetorically discussed how artificial intelligence adapts itself and interferes with the independence of human beings, in relation to human features of intuition and instinct. The represented characters, as the central subjects of this text, do expose a notion of disbelief in the comprehension of *self* and a notion of uncertainty regarding their individual position in society. This analytical perspective presents a radicalized restriction of societal liberations, in which there is a self-reflexive notion of categorically defining the negative turn in cultural discourse in regard to the implication of technological dominance, which is additionally emphasized by postmodern literary as a fractured representation of subjectivity (Rose et al. 2015, 83).

The aforementioned is additionally articulated by Hutcheon as a theoretical attribution of postmodern arts, in which postmodernism interferes with the perception of political dynamics and express criticism towards societal assumptions of domination (Hutcheon 2004, 4). In terms of technological domination and the representation of artificially fabricated restrictions of human consciousness, it is rather appealing to focus on how the barriers of privacy is textually deconstructed, since the autonomy of humanistic individualism is manipulated, which Hutcheon additionally comments as a postmodern assessment of questioning the terminology of subjectivity (Hutcheon 2004, 13). Subsequently, the textual representation of denaturalizing individualism and privacy in relation to human consciousness influenced by advanced technology, there is a notion of an authorial concern and criticism towards societal behaviour in regard to humanistic development, since the

reader may interpret a significant attitude of contradicting the critical disposition of human engagement with artificial intelligence, which is expressed with a specific emphasis on the inevitability of technological advancement. Furthermore, this analytical disposition expresses a certain notion of criticism towards the submission and control of human consciousness, since the cultural embracement of technological development is meta-reflectively categorized by the writers as already present in contemporary society, which therefore concretizes the technological influence on society as inevitable. By observing the theoretical statements, as posed by Rose and Christiansen (Rose et al. 2015, 77), it is suggested that postmodern writing concentrates on representing the incongruities between technological and societal progression, which not exclusively has a positive effect on matters of sociocultural development. This theoretical perspective does emphasize the postmodern representation of self-reflexivity in this text, in which an authorial scepticism in relation to humanistic progression is communicated to the receiver.

Focusing on how this text represents a certain conception of postmodern character portrayal within the narrative function, it is essential to concentrate on how the characters are presented as textually developing a rebellious behaviour and reveals a desire to break with "*the system*", which is a clear vocalization of how this text is postmodern in its artistic form. Furthermore, there is a notion of expressing self-reflexivity in relation to the parodical function regarding socially constructed ideals, by emphasizing the necessity for dissolving the interference between technological and societal development. In addition to the aforementioned, the main characters discover and gain insight on how the technological implication has a manipulative effect on society, which is reasoned in a thematic clarification of reality as an unstable social construction that disorients the individual and thereby has a negative influence on the consciousness of the individual.

This analytical perspective is theoretically supported, by Rose and Christiansen (Rose et al. 2015, 82), in which it is argued that the aforementioned is a common tendency of postmodern expressionism, even though postmodern narratology is not a completely constituted system and is instead comprehended as a terminology that is developmentally explorational, in terms of how postmodern literature represents ambiguity and complexity within the narrative structure.

Horror, technology, and artificial intelligence

The following section concerns the theoretical inclusion of horror, in which an analysis of how the aforementioned terminology functions concerning how the writers of *Black Mirror* textually represent the subject of artificial intelligence and digitalization of consciousness, as an essential element of the narrative function. The episode of interest throughout this part of the analysis will be “*Be Right Back*” (2013) from season two, in which the analytical work will be theoretically substantiated by primarily including the work of Julia Kristeva, Gwyneth Peaty and Brian N. Duchaney. The substantial reason for focusing on “*Be Right Back*” is that it is among several episodes, which concerns the theme of artificial intelligence in contextual correspondence with horror and technology.

Comprehending downloadable consciousness

A central issue of this episode concerns the human addiction of advanced technology and social media, which vocalizes a notion of authorial concern, regarding a presupposed decline of physical interaction and presence, when thinking of the development of human behaviour in general. The narrative of the episode presents two different characters, who represent two entirely different attitudes towards the engagement with technology and social media, which emphasizes the conflictual disposition on how advanced technology affects the interaction between human beings. In order to apply this analytical perspective to the theoretical thoughts on abjection, as posed by Kristeva (1982), it is essential to go into depth with how the narrative of this particular episode articulates the physical presence of advanced technology and discuss how it interferes with the progression of human behaviour, in terms of physical and communicative interaction. It is suggested by Kristeva that the terminology of abjection, must be interpreted as a rhetorical tool of expressing poetic sorrow, which is important to apply to the analysis of this episode since there is a contextual incorporation of emotionally expressing sorrow and the trauma of losing someone you love (Kristeva 1982, 141).

The portrayal of mentally comprehending emotional distress and issues in regard to human interaction with advanced technology expresses a certain notion of repulsion towards the advancement of artificial intelligence, which emphasizes the textual punctuation of technology as an abject and consequently constitutes the genre of this episode as hi-tech horror. In terms of how the narrative of this episode articulates the issue of technological interference with the consciousness of a human being, it is essential to focus on how the issue of death is vocalized since there is a significant authorial attitude of ignorance regarding the naturalness of mortality. Through the textual implication

of artificial intelligence, which relies on the social media behaviour of the deceased, an exploration of breaking with the naturalness of death is textually initiated by the writers, by presenting a desire of denaturalizing the limitations of human interaction and possibilities of communication enabled through the engagement with advanced technology. The struggle of comprehending traumatic experiences is presented with a critical disposition towards the issue of human existentialism, in which there is a significant focus on how the consciousness of a human being is developmentally affected by the communicative interaction with advanced technology and social media.

In the episode, the character of Martha is introduced to the opportunity of initiating contact with her dead partner, Ash, which emphasizes the fictional implication of representing downloadable consciousness within the narrative. The implication of articulating human emotions concerning the literary function of horror, is narratively visualized through the fear of the unknown, which in the case of this episode is the concept of artificial intelligence interference with the consciousness of a human being, although there is additionally a desire of interacting with artificial intelligence that manifests the incongruity of comprehending the emotion of fear within the text. In accordance with the theoretical thoughts of Peaty, the margin between fear and desire has grown to be nearly transparent, highly affected by the increasing exploration and admiration of technological advancement, which she suggests is both provoking an increasing incongruity of societal comprehension of privacy and intimacy, but additionally conflicts with the discourse of narrative in contemporary literature (Corstophine et al. 2018, 302).

In terms of how this particular episode expresses a notion of critical distance towards the issue of artificial intelligence, it is applicable to determine the technological influence on society as the textual abjection of the episode. Although by going further into depth with how the central issue is articulated as the artificial sustainability of an individual's consciousness, the most significant concern points towards how human beings desire to engage with advanced technology concerning social media behaviour, which instead constitutes the authorial emphasis of human beings as the abjection of the text. The contextual assertion of portraying societal incongruity regarding the thematic employment of horror is reasoned in the questioning of not being able to comprehend the fundamental distinction between fear and desire, which consequently emphasizes the authorial articulation of critical distance towards human engagement with artificial intelligence.

As an implication of theoretically expressing the function of horror within the narrative of the text, the reader is presented to a manipulating shift in the textual interpretation of natural and artificial, in

which the characters of the text is challenged in terms of emotionally comprehending the break with naturalness and engagement with the unnatural, which in this instance must be considered the employment of artificial spiritualism. Extensively, the text reveals a certain implication of techno-anxiety, which functions as a literary tool of expression in terms of determining the human comprehension of technological advancement and its supposed effects on the life of the individual. To determine how this representation of techno-anxiety correlates with the genre of horror, it is essential to observe how the character of Martha, is simultaneously compelled to communicatively engage with the artificial version of Ash, whilst she is clearly expressing emotions of fear and repulsion towards the technological capabilities (Brooker et al. 2013). Reflecting upon this particular instance, it exceedingly exemplifies the conflictual progression of technological capabilities regarding the human comprehension of how advanced technology deconstructs the perception of naturalness, which urges the emotional attitude of anxiety and fear towards technology and artificial intelligence. This is additionally supported by the theoretical thoughts of Peaty, in which it is implied that the literary function of techno-anxiety, must be interpreted as a literary tool of expressing the human emotion of fear in regard to the developmental progression of technological communication, in which there is a disruption in the human perception of naturalness in relation to means of communicative interaction (Corstophine et al. 2018, 307-308).

When going further into depth with the anxiety of technological influence on society, it is beneficiary to analyse how the anthology discuss the conception of artificial embodiment, in which one of the central issues is the disassociation of consciousness and its connectedness with human behaviour in the physical reality and in matters of social media behaviour. In terms of how this episode articulates and discuss the conceptualization of downloadable consciousness, there is an authorial attitude of cultural critique towards the incorporation of social media and how it affects human behaviour, when thinking of society increasingly engages with modified means of technological communication that eventually dissolves the necessity of physical presence. The textual implication of making a critical distinction between the originality of individual consciousness and social media behaviour is expressed as an employment of horror regarding how artificial intelligence adapts to human behaviour by imitating an individual's social media interaction, which simulates a consciousness with limitations. According to Duchaney, this textual representation of artificial intelligence and conceptualization of downloadable consciousness, could be interpreted as a progressive convention in contemporary horror writing, influenced by textual conventions of science-fiction, in which there is a desire of fictionally exploring how advanced technology affects the human

capability of making a comprehensive distinction between natural and unnatural occurrences (Duchaney 2015, 213).

The textual convention of implementing fictional dispositions of technological science to the genre of horror could additionally be interpreted as an authorial proposition of questioning a negative turn in cultural discourse, in which the primary concern is reasoned in the societal embracement of technological development. It could be interpreted that the writers of *Black Mirror* wish to indirectly incorporate a notion of realizing the actuality and immediacy of artificial intelligence's presence in society and the inevitability of technological advancement, expressed through the textual conventions of science-fiction horror.

By textually establishing a reality, in which the possibility of interactive engagement with artificial intelligence is central to the narrative structure, a notion of uncertainty towards the perception of human and nonhuman is simultaneously presented. Reflecting upon the theoretical thoughts of Peaty, the general perception of what is considered natural is disrupted and the fear of the unexplored capabilities of technological development challenges the societal clarification of the boundaries between the real and unreal (Corstophine et al. 2018, 303). The embodiment of artificial intelligence as a physical imitation of Ash, simulating a technologically constructed consciousness based on individual social media behaviour could be interpreted as an authorial effort of exemplifying the horrors of technological exploration by visualizing a denaturalizing break with the cultural ideals of interaction through communicative interfaces. The presence of artificial intelligence interrupts the comprehension of natural responses, in regard to human emotions, such as sorrow, fear and disgust, in which a conflictual disposition is presented in relation to the natural immediacy of physical interaction, since the portrayal of technologically programmed consciousness only provides a limited presence, which textually emphasizes the fundamental gap between the unnaturalness of artificial intelligence and naturalness of individual consciousness.

The established consistency of articulating artificial intelligence as nonhuman and identifying its presence as a disruptive element in the comprehension of naturalness must be understood as a critical concern towards the concretization of existential meaning in contemporary horror literature. Providing an analytic view on the contextual approach in terms of identifying the literary differentiation between individual consciousness and artificial intelligence, is concretized by observing the text as visually channelling the contradictory distinctions between the human and nonhuman, in terms of presenting humanistic qualities and technological limitations by opposing the

two factors through the exploration of mental and emotional capabilities. In an oppositional view, it appears that the narrative of the text expresses a disruptive concern in terms of unlimiting the consciousness of a human being, by manifesting physical presence and conscious immortality as separate. Simultaneously the episode constitutes a certain notion of mechanization of personality when speaking of how Ash's artificial consciousness lack the ability to comprehend and evaluate human emotions, which additionally concretizes his physical presence as a synthetic projection of social media behaviour (Brooker et al. 2013).

By having suggested earlier in this section, that the authorial intent of contextually centralizing advanced technology as the abjection within this narrative, it is more relevant to reflect upon how advanced technology is reduced to maintain a neutral position and alternatively the text categorically references social media behaviour as the primary object of horror within the narrative. In terms of identifying the abjection of the text, it is relevant to draw on the theoretical thoughts of Duchaney, in which it is argued that the abjection is not the primary source of horror, but instead he suggests that the problematics of textually defining the position of the abjection lies with the behavioural motivations of the individual developing or interacting with the object (Duchaney 2015, 131). Furthermore, it could be argued that the portrayal of digital consciousness and its structural function of symbolizing the abjection of the narrative, must be observed as a textual misdirection, which urges a readerly reflection upon societal development and perhaps raises the question of what direction cultural discourse is headed. There is a notion of denial in relation to the issue of digital consciousness, in which Martha vocalizes her difficulty in mentally comprehending the separation of human and nonhuman, by verbally expressing her repulsion towards the artificial version of Ash, but she is simultaneously revealing a notion of attraction, which emphasizes the textual implication of deception and dissolution of subjectivity in regards to the portrayal of human addiction of advanced technology.

However, it appears that the characterization of artificial Ash has been textually provided with an attributional notion of black humour regarding the self-aware lack of human naturalness, in which there is a humorous remark towards the disregard of nutrition, although artificial Ash states that he is capable of chewing and swallowing even though it serves no significant function (Brooker et al. 2013). In accordance with the theoretical commenting on black humour, as posed by Colletta, it appears that the narrative of the episode employs an element of black humour, in order to establish a specific incoherence in the readerly identification of individualism, in which there is a notion of absurdity applied to the literary conception of denaturalizing essential facets of human existence

(Colletta 2003, 10). When considering the necessity of textually constituting the absurd incongruity of digitalizing the consciousness of an individual, it could be interpreted as a contextual employment of black humour that serve the purpose of addressing the consequential inevitability of technological advancement.

In terms of how the genre of this episode must be considered horror, is reasoned in how the anthology express a connectedness between the articulation of fear and anxiety, by visualizing an increasing atmosphere of dystopia, which is established through the textual means of exemplifying the denaturalization of human consciousness and reinterpret it as a digital self-aware commodity that has the purpose of decreasing the human emotion of loneliness. Considering the functional purpose of the digital version of Ash, there is a certain ambiguity that has to be taken into account, in which this objectification of consciousness cannot exclusively be categorized as the abjection of the narrative. The fundamental meaning of digital Ash's existence and purpose is to provide Martha with relief and comfort as emotional counterparts of her traumatic experiences of sorrow and loss, although in an oppositional aspect, the artificial presence of Ash's downloaded consciousness gradually manipulates Martha's mental stability and eventually disrupts her distinction between natural and unnatural. It could be argued that Martha experiences abjection, although her encounter with artificial intelligence and digitalization of consciousness constitutes her struggle of identifying whether it is technology or herself, that eventually is the real abject of horror. Although, from a contradictive perspective the authorial attitude towards the characters within this episode, could be considered cynical in relation to the portrayal of self-inflicted damage, which subsequently puts a certain emphasis on human engagement with advanced technology.

When gazing upon how this text critically approaches the sociocultural issue human interaction with advanced technology and artificial intelligence, it is relevant to discuss how the genre of this text could be considered *digital horror*, since it appears that there is an unavoidable contextual desire to explore the horrifying aspects of societal digitalization. In the theoretical thoughts of Peaty, the terminology of *digital horror* derives from the artistic curiosity of textually exploring the anxieties connected to the increasing digitalization of contemporary life, by primarily focusing on how society engages with technological advancement in relation to distribution of information, digital simulations, virtual reality and online social platforms (Corstophine et al. 2018, 309). The aforementioned statement is additionally supported by the theoretical thoughts of Duchaney, in which the attentiveness of expanding contemporary horror writing with themes of technological

development and digitalization, is determined as an artistic desire to envision an unfamiliar conception of reality (Duchaney 2015, 5).

From a critical disposition, it is inarguably relevant to reflect upon how the aforementioned theoretical comments, must be interpreted as philosophical expressions of literary concern regarding cultural discourse and sociocultural development. The immediacy of digitalization in contemporary society additionally contains a horrifying actuality, especially when reflecting upon the portrayal of individuality, consciousness, and ability to comprehend the distinction between natural and unnatural. In accordance with the theoretical commenting above, it appears that there is a notion of contextual congruency in presenting Martha as the character that is articulating the artistic desire of exploring the unfamiliar facets of horror literature, concerning how *digital horror* anticipates the futuristic dystopia of a technologically affected society.

Satirical criticism of society

In this section of the analysis, the main intent is to work with the theoretical conception of satire and analyse how satirical criticism of society is textually expressed through the narratology of *Black Mirror* by observing how the episodes included in this thesis, articulates satirical perspective of criticism regarding societal structures and cultural ideals. The episodes of interest throughout this part of the analysis are “*White Christmas*” and “*Hang the DJ*”, in which the analytical work will be foregrounded by theoretical work and commenting concerning both satire and black humour.

Restraining the consciousness of others

In the introduction of the episode, the viewer is visually presented to a textual environment that has the resemblance of an apocalyptic dystopia, in which a notion of involuntary solitude is applied to the characters. The episode of “*White Christmas*” additionally portrays capabilities of monitoring the vision of an individual through a technological implant, which dissolves the boundaries of privacy. Furthermore, it must simultaneously be considered that this episode engages in a contextual discussion of moral and ethical values regarding the issue of human digitalization, and downloadable and uploadable consciousness (Brooker et al. 2014).

When reflecting upon the portrayal of technological advancement concerning interpersonal connectivity, it seems that there is a conflictual anticipation regarding the technological disturbance of an individual's consciousness. The portrayal of how communicative interaction is digitalized through the vision of an individual reveals a textual notion of satirical absurdity since it appears that the efforts of engagement in physical interaction are mechanized through the conflictual submission of an individual's consciousness. Additionally, it could be argued that the text represents a concern towards digitally objectifying the consciousness of a human being, which reveals the authorial implication of satirical criticism regarding the issue of subjectivity and individualism. According to Frye (Frye 1957, 224), it appears that the writers of *Black Mirror* represent a satirical attitude of hostility and fictionally expose the damaging modifications of digitalizing an individual's consciousness, channelled through the implication of satirical humour. In a contributing perspective, the fictional initiation of objectifying the consciousness of an individual and dissolving the boundaries of privacy does appear to have been construed as a satirical remark towards the issue of establishing self-esteem and personal development in competencies of communication.

In the episode, the character of Matthew vocalizes his partaking in the submission of an individual's consciousness as "*romantic services*", in which Matthew is granted access to a direct transmission of an individual's vision, although by focusing on how the text presents the issue of downloadable and uploadable consciousness, it is considered relevant to determine this example as digitalization of interpersonal guidance (Brooker et al. 2014). This particular illustration of interpersonal engagement enabled by technological advancement must be identified as a vocalization of critique towards the abandonment of human instincts and intuition, in which the producers of the text employs a satirical element of engaging the reader in a discussion regarding an undesirable turn in cultural discourse. The technologically enhanced interaction between individuals simply manipulates the human ability of individually establishing an idealized perception of self, which ultimately dissolves the concept of self-reliance.

Taking the aforementioned analytical statement into consideration, it could be argued that the writers of *Black Mirror* intentionally exaggerates the thematic issues of the text, although by applying this to the theoretical commenting on satirical undesirability, as posed by Frye, it appears that there is a correlation with how the writer wishes to settle upon a specific agreement with the reader regarding what is satirically comprehended as undesirable (Frye et al. 2006, 43). To a further extent, this satirical articulation of exposing the digitalization of human consciousness as undesirable

constitutes an authorial reflection upon how contemporary society is increasingly influenced by technological advancement. Consequently, it could be interpreted that the textual implication of satire functions as a rhetorical tool of evoking a readerly sense of scepticism towards own moral judgement and ethical values regarding contemporary society and the dependency on technological development.

By observing how this particular episode of the anthology articulates a rhetorical concern regarding the dysfunctionality of monitoring an individual's consciousness, it is applicable to gaze upon the employment of grotesquery in its representation of black humour. The humorous implications are not considered as explicitly exaggerated, which emphasizes the literary application of black humour within the narrative, which accordingly to the theoretical thoughts of Bloom is an essential commodity of black humour and its contextual functionality in literary production. Not only does the text visually exemplify the satirical absurdity of digitalizing an individual's consciousness, but there is furthermore a grotesque articulation of violating the natural boundaries of individual privacy, in which Matthew is monitoring Harry's visit to the bathroom (Brooker et al. 2014). The aforementioned sequence from the episode is not intentionally humoristic in its expressive form, although the readerly interpretation could determine this particular sequence as humour, which underpins Bloom's theoretical conception of black humour and its indirect functionality in comic literature (Bloom 2018, 81).

In addition to the analytical point regarding the employment of satirical absurdity in relation to social interaction, there is a visualization of how the writers adapt the digital function of 'blocking' the presence of another human being from an individual's consciousness, which juxtaposes certain features of contemporary social media platforms. The characters within the episode are enabled to technologically exclude an individual's physical visibility and transform the appearance of that individual into a 'static blur', which considerably manifests how digitalization manipulates the conception of natural human features (Brooker et al. 2014). It could be argued that the writers implement satirical cynicism in order to articulate a specific doubt in cultural development and behaviour, which in accordance with Frye (Frye 1957, 230) is a significant characteristic in the production of satirical humour, since *Black Mirror* satirises the socially established ideals of social media behaviour in a notion of humoristic cynicism. To go even further into depth with how "*White Christmas*" satirically depicts contemporary society, it is relevant to reflect upon how this episode imitates reality as a social media platform, in which human beings are characterized as users and

governmental authorities resembles the department of restriction. By fictionally objectifying an individual as a user of a social network platform it simultaneously appears that the authorities are capable of constraining the consciousness of an individual in terms of excluding people from interacting with reality, which constitutes the notion of satirical humour regarding the cynical aspect of digitalizing society. Human beings are not exclusively in charge of each their individual consciousness but instead required to restrain themselves within certain boundaries of what is considered appropriate social behaviour, which ultimately dissolves culturally established ideals of liberty regarding communicative interaction.

Within the episode of "*White Christmas*", the issue of downloadable and uploadable consciousness is textually presented alongside the matter of artificial intelligence, in which it is made possible to extract the consciousness of a human being and thereby create an independent digital replica. The replicated version of an individual's consciousness is presented with no physical appearance of solid material but instead vocalized as a technologically programmed identity consisting of codes and data (Brooker et al. 2014). The textualization of surgically downloading an individual's consciousness and uploading it to a technological device, which has the intention of maintaining the household of that individual, could be considered to articulate a concern towards the moral and ethical values regarding enslavement and torture. By textually presenting a denaturalizing of the moral aspects regarding the implication of artificially replicating an individual's consciousness only to enhance the life quality of human beings, constitutes the authorial employment of satirically exaggerated grotesquery, in which the writers engage in a dialogue with the reader upon the inhumane act of slavery and provoke a readerly reaction of disgust and repulsion towards technological advancement (Frye 1957, 224).

The implicated articulation of satirical mockery must be comprehended as an authorial attitude of ridiculing sociocultural development regarding an increased societal dependency of advanced technology, in which the text exaggerates the societal interaction with artificial intelligence and juxtaposes this particular example with technological enslavement. The text satirically objectifies the theme of downloadable and uploadable consciousness as an issue similar to the grotesquery of enslaving an individual, which in accordance with the theoretical thoughts of Colletta, must be interpreted as an authorial warning of not abandoning moral or ethical values of society (Colletta 2003, 31).

It could be argued that the textual environment of the episode wish to illustrate an elitist and idealized society, in which undesired social behaviour is articulated as disposable, made possible

through the advancement of technology, although in an oppositional perspective, the readerly comprehension of this fictionally presupposed dystopia could instead provoke a reaction of repulsion and anxiety. Furthermore, it appears that the narrative structure of the text intends to make the receiver evaluate their individual conception of moral and ethical values, in which the fundamental issue revolves around the question of digitally enslaving an artificially programmed replica of an individual's downloaded consciousness. It appears that the writers of *Black Mirror* wish to communicate a concern of societal hypocrisy regarding behavioural improvement.

In accordance with the theoretical thoughts of Buccaria, it does appear that the episode of "*White Christmas*" intentionally employs a notion of black humour in regard to the discomfiting articulation of enslavement and torture, in which the text wish to express a concern towards past societal traumas that eventually provokes an emotional reaction from the reader (Buccaria et al. 2016, 55). The implication of visually portraying a notion of cynical disregard for the mental stability of consciousness additionally applies the narrative structure with a self-reflexive concern towards social behaviour and cultural discourse, in which the writers suggests a negative turn in developmental aspects of society, expressed through the literary function of black humour. The textual adaptation of digitalizing slavery regarding the implementation of human ignorance to carry out mundane and insignificant tasks must be interpreted as a satirical approach that emphasizes the technological affection of society and immaterial reliance on technology.

Abandoning self-reliance through digital dominance

Within the narrative of "*Hang the DJ*" (2017) the viewer is presented to a conflictual establishment of human submission to artificial intelligence and a dysfunctional reliance on digitalization, which textually portrays a substantial disturbance of sociocultural progression. The narrative of the episode satirically deconstructs socially established ideals of human interaction, by textually representing a conflictual interruption with conceptions of love, romance, and physical attraction.

In terms of how this particular episode of the anthology satirically highlights the issues of human engagement with advanced technology, it is relevant to reflect upon how the writers of *Black Mirror* articulate societal criticism and ridicules cultural structures by objectifying the conception of individual consciousness, in a self-reflexive fashion that eventually evokes a readerly comprehension similar to moral discomfort.

A quite distinctive issue of this particular episode is the societal abandonment of natural selection and ignorance of individual independency, where human beings are blindly submitting to having their life organized by artificial intelligence, which is vocalized as “*the system*” and thereby constituted as a mechanism of superiority in opposition to human individualism (Brooker et al. 2017). Considering the narrative structure of the episode, it seems that it is vastly influenced by the terminology of satire regarding the depiction of culture, in which socially constructed norms are mocked and articulated as dysfunctional, which additionally supports the theoretical thoughts of Simpson, since he suggests that satirical texts intend to address the reader by objectifying the primary target of the text and thereby urge a specific readerly comprehension (Simpson 2003, 155). In addition to the aforementioned, the satirical employment within the text could be considered a reflection of contemporary society, in which the increased reliance on advanced technology affects the ignorance of how artificial intelligence substitutes the human conception of confidence with insecurity that ultimately decomposes the necessity of physical interaction.

Consequently, the satirical portrayal of individualism could be interpreted as social enslavement of consciousness, in which individuals are downloaded into a dystopia of insecurity and technological dominance that dissolves the ideal of societal progression. The conception of human intuition and trust of individual instincts are substituted with an unconscious reliance on algorithms and calculations processed by artificial intelligence, which constitutes the satirical distinction between human consciousness and artificial intelligence. The emotional aspects of a human being are textually represented as inferior in opposition to the functionality of artificial intelligence.

The central characters within the episode represent the exploration of finding love and creating a comprehensive understanding of self, although the struggle of searching for romantic relations is articulated as mentally exhausting, which emphasizes the employment of black humour within the narrative regarding the efforts of physical interaction (Brooker et al. 2017).

From a critical perspective, it could be interpreted that the sustainability of individual consciousness is entirely depending on technological supervision in relation to humanistic concerns surrounding love and romance, which additionally constitutes the textualization of uploadable consciousness. Furthermore, the text reveals that there is an explicit mechanization of human beings, in which the efforts of social engagement are technologically compromised and transformed into a

mechanized feature of social behaviour, since artificial intelligence controls and manages how human beings physically interact. However, the absurdity of conceptualizing mechanized consciousness could be considered a satirical reflection upon how individuals communicate through contemporary digital dating-applications, which constitutes an authorial concern regarding the decreasing necessity of physical interaction and importance of comprehending individual presence in reality. In accordance with the theoretical thoughts on mechanization, as posed by Colletta, it is suggested that the incoherent development of human mechanization must be interpreted as a sociocultural disruption, in which the communicative instincts of comprehension, responding and interaction is denaturalized by the incongruency of social mechanization (Colletta 2003, 19).

Furthermore, it could be argued that the episode “*Hang the DJ*” is authentically reflexive upon its textual presentation of communicative inadequacy, by envisioning the negative affection of individual consciousness in relation to establishing a comprehensive understanding of self. The episode visualizes a satirical impression of the necessity of technological reliance and challenges the societal discourse by the inclusion of black humour, which is done by exaggerating the insignificance of technology in opposition to the comprehension of individual consciousness. An individual is not exclusively depicted as a consumer of technological instrumentation in a digitalized reality, but the conception of downloadable consciousness suggests the absurdity in societal addiction of advanced technology in connection to the constituted belief of heightening life quality through the embracement of advanced technology. When theoretically reflecting upon the aforementioned analytical perspective, it shows that the theoretical thoughts on satirical production posed by Frye especially applies to the satirical articulations of *Black Mirror*, in which the authorial intent must be interpreted as a confrontation with culturally established ideals expressed through the incorporation of humour (Frye 1957, 224).

Taking the dysfunctional comprehension of individual consciousness into consideration, it appears that the narrative of the episode exemplifies the technological repression of humanity regarding fundamental cultural conceptions of love and romance, in which the traditional celebration of love is textually transformed into a grotesque appreciation of technological superiority. The manifestation of belief and trust in “*the system*” articulates a notion of societal abandonment of natural instincts, which could be interpreted as a contextual instalment of satirical criticism towards the cultural disassociation of naturalness. Additionally, the narrative reflects upon the uncertainty of fate in relation to personal fulfilment, in which the technological position of dominance is constituted with

“everything happens for a reason” that constitutes the conflictual relation between human beings and artificial intelligence (Brooker et al. 2017).

By visualizing artificial intelligence as the dominant determiner of an individual’s pursuit of personal fulfilment, it could be argued that the satirical conception of uploadable consciousness must be interpreted as an authorial articulation of the similarities between addiction and enslavement. The communicative intention of the satirical employment within the narrative must be perceived as an authorial desire to make the reader obtain a comprehensive distinction between technological addiction and voluntary enslavement of consciousness (Simpson 2003, 155).

Although, in accordance with the theoretical thoughts of Pollard, it is suggested that a central feature of satirical expressionism is the concretization of the distinction between appearance and impression, in which it appears that there is correlation in regard to the authorial desire of satirically visualizing a comprehensive distinction between the terminologies of addiction and slavery in relation to the conception of downloadable and uploadable consciousness (Pollard 1970, 3). The textual manifestation of human addiction of advanced technology is inarguably accompanied by a notion of black humour, in which the humoristic instalment could be interpreted as an articulation of artificial intelligence interfering with an individual’s ability of comprehending personal identity (Colletta 2003, 8). The text expresses a notion of critical disregard towards the affectioning reliance on artificial intelligence in relation to the conception of individual destiny, in which the understanding of self and individual independency concretizes the naturalness of human existence.

Discussion of authorial position

In this section of the paper, the main intention is to provide the reader with a comprehensive discussion on how the writers of *Black Mirror* articulate an authorial desire of manifesting a specific meaning within the narratives of the anthology. The discussion serves to provide the reader of this thesis with enlightenment on certain authorial aspects regarding the communicational intent and mediation of concern towards cultural constructs and societal development regarding the increased dependence on advanced technology.

Expressing writerly intention

When watching the anthology of *Black Mirror*, it is rather inarguable that the implied message of the writers must be interpreted as an authorial desire to emphasize the urgent matter of realizing the negative influence of advanced technology regarding sociocultural improvement. It has been suggested by the creator of the anthology, Charlie Brooker, that technological development is inevitable (Shepherd 2019), although on the contrary it must be considered that the societal perception of this inevitability is considerably interchangeable since the communicated meaning of this anthology unveils an authorial *word of warning*.

The various narratives of *Black Mirror* are assumed to have an incontestable effect of shock and anxiety on its viewers, which presumably affects the increasing cultural interaction and embracement of modern technologies. Furthermore, it must be taken into consideration that the writers of the anthology articulate a notion of contemporary authenticity regarding the critical reflection upon the issue of digitalized affection of sociocultural structures. In observance of the contextual ambiguity of the anthology, it is additionally relevant to discuss the writerly disconcerting anticipation of technological manipulation of the societal ability of distinguishing between natural and unnatural, especially when considering the sustainability of the cultural conception of consciousness. By satirically articulating a ridiculing concern towards the negative turn in cultural discourse, it becomes rather apparent that the writers of the anthology are accustomed to this presupposed inevitability of technological dominance.

The authorial intention of presenting a literary concern regarding the consequentiality of unconsciously engaging with advanced technologies distorts and misdirect the culturally structured ideals, in which an authorial awareness of the severity of this negative turn in cultural discourse is

communicated through the exaggerated concern, which conclusively constitutes the meaning of the anthology. Although, when reflecting upon the implication of satirical criticism, it is exceedingly debatable if the writers articulate an ambiguous correlation between fiction and reality, in order to undermine the contextual severity of sociocultural critique. In matters of identifying the primary concern within the various narratives could be comprehended as a deliberate convention of applying a certain degree of ambiguity to the philosophical structure of the anthology, in which the authorial intention must be considered to cause a readerly reaction of reassessing personal belief and values.

When thinking of the contextual functionality of incorporating a consequential conclusion within the narratives of the anthology, the writers textually challenges the fundamental conception of contemporary society, by emphasizing the severity of humanistic inadequacy in opposition to technological inevitability. The textual representation of a dysfunctional reality must be considered a determination of sociocultural unsettlement, which additionally is vocalized by the creator, Charlie Brooker, as an intentionally established atmosphere of the anthology (Duca 2015).

Communicating an authorial concern

In accordance with the authorial articulation of societal concern, it must be considered that Brooker and Jones intentionally communicate a fictional conception of which direction the contemporary cultural development is headed. It could be argued that the authorial anticipation of the developmental ambiguity is remarkably obscure, which provides the narratology of *Black Mirror* with a horrifying self-reflexive profundity on the sociocultural progression of contemporary reality. The diversity of narrative structures within the anthology additionally communicates a concern regarding the cultural attitude of unconsciously adjusting to the conflictual digitalization of society, in which the Brooker and Jones noticeably wish to maintain the humane ideals of sociocultural constructivism. The subsidiary employment of a satirical attitude of criticism towards developmental aspects of society is meant to be interpreted as a preliminary assumption of the consequences of technological dominance in relation to sociocultural structures. Not only does the anthology express a concern towards the affection of sociocultural development in general, but the ambiguity of the authorial articulation of distress concerning fundamental aspects of consumerism, medical science, political ideologies, or individualism, emphasizes the critical reflection upon the situation of contemporary society.

Furthermore, it must be considered that the writers of *Black Mirror* articulate an unmistakable concern regarding how societal interaction with artificial intelligence disrupts the cultural

comprehension of naturalness and perception of human existence. A central issue of the authorial concern must be characterized as a desire to depict the anxiety of cultural trauma, in which sociocultural structures are gradually neutralized and society is transformed into a futuristic dystopia of distress. When watching the episodes of the anthology, the viewer is not provided with a comprehensive solution, but instead presented to an unsatisfying elaboration of meaningless indifference regarding the urgency of social improvement, which conclusively constitutes the authorial notion of satirical criticism. It is suggested by Donovan Conley that the anthology of *Black Mirror* intentionally desires to portray a coherence between the function of affection and the function of critique, in which sociocultural incongruity is established (Conley et al. 2019).

The textual presentation of cultural affection of technological influence and societal digitalization could additionally be interpreted as an authorial desire to make the viewer reject the fictionally estimated condition of contemporary society, which emphasizes the necessity of satirically articulating the urgency for constructive sociocultural transformation. By consequently textualizing an authorial attitudinal intent of representing disruptive absurdity in the form of chaos and trauma, the anthology of *Black Mirror* demonstrates a disconcerting affection of sociocultural ideals, which is satirically emphasized with a rhetorical notion of self-reflexivity. The contextual confrontation between the fictional perception of natural and unnatural could additionally be interpreted as an authorial desire to make the reader acknowledge the severe circumstances of contemporary reality, whether it concerns the ignorance of the necessity for physical interaction, moral judgement of digital presence, or ethical questions of sexual orientation.

It must be taken into consideration that in addition to the authorial articulation of concern towards the sustainability of societal and cultural ideals, it could be argued that there is a rhetorical concern towards the dissolvment of an individual's ability to make a distinction between realism and surrealism. The writers of *Black Mirror* satirically suggest that the consequence of abandoning the culturally established belief in social ideals by interacting with artificial intelligence and digitalization, indicates an anticipated dissolution of individually comprehending the perception of cultural consciousness. It could be argued that the writers wish to express a concern regarding the human ability to make a distinction between real and unreal, by demonstrating the horrifying discomfort of not being able to recognize the difference between authenticity and artificiality.

Conclusion

This assignment has been concerning the issue of advanced technology and its increasing influence on sociocultural aspects regarding societal structure and conception of culture, but most substantially, the primary concern has been the fictional representation of individual and cultural perception of consciousness, as presented in the anthology of *Black Mirror*. The satirical illustration of the human ability to make a comprehensive distinction between natural and unnatural has additionally been an essential measurement regarding the analytical study of *Black Mirror*, in terms of fictionally incorporating the societal interaction with artificial intelligence in a postmodern literary context. Lastly, a certain focus has been put on clarifying how the narratology of *Black Mirror* textually illustrates an ambiguous incorporation of the horror genre, by analysing how there is an explicit emotional expression of sorrow, anxiety, and fear applied to the thematic function of technological advancement within the anthology.

Besides introducing the reader to a thorough analysis of the represented episodes of the anthology, a discussion on how authorial intentions and concerns are textually manifested has been carried out, in which the reader is provided with debatable conception on how the writers of *Black Mirror* address its audiences and intends to communicate through the contextual assumptions regarding sociocultural progression. The discussion could be interpreted as serving the purpose of representing an ambiguous estimation on which developmental direction the writers suggest contemporary society is headed, although an essential subject of reflection within the discussion, is the attitudinal intent of disregard.

The anthology of *Black Mirror* fictionally presents a supposition of the societal ability to maintain culturally established ideals, in which the anthology seeks to challenge the sociocultural conception of individuality. In accordance with how the anthology must be interpreted as a postmodern production of fiction, it is relevant to constitute the textual rejection of history, in which *Black Mirror* does not rely on representing the past, but representing the forthcoming consequences of society not being attentive to the affections of engaging with advanced technology and artificial intelligence. The anthology textually constitutes an increasing dissolvment of the capacity of an individual's consciousness in opposition to artificial intelligence, in which the fundamental aspects of human existence are obliterated and substituted with the incorporated exploration of *downloadable* and *uploadable consciousness*. Conclusively, there is a comprehensible articulation of satirical criticism regarding the portrayal of societal dysfunctionality, in which the primary focus is put on the

deconstruction of the cultural conception of consciousness, by fictionally representing a repulsive conceptualization of degressive social behaviour with undesirable ideals.

The concluding assumptions mentioned above are inarguably applicable to the anthology of *Black Mirror*, although it is debatable whether the aforementioned generalizations regarding the textuality of *Black Mirror* can be excluded from being represented or adapted by similar productions of postmodern fiction, since the conception of representing satirical assumptions on sociocultural development is not a commodity exclusively preserved to the fictional domain of *Black Mirror*.

Simultaneously, it cannot be denied that the findings within this study of *Black Mirror* can be applied to the entire genre of *hi-tech horror*, which means that it will be relevant to examine similar productions of contemporary fiction with a similar theoretical framework of research and explore how this is not exclusively a literary initiative that only applies to *Black Mirror*, although its immediate presence in contemporary society exceedingly manifests its position of importance.

To clarify why the anthology of *Black Mirror* is significant to take into consideration as an important segment in contemporary postmodern literature, it is inarguably relevant to reflect upon its success as a fictional work of entertainment to the masses. It appeals to a wide range of different viewers, in which it could be assumed that the anthological structure additionally serves the purpose of pleasing the individual and personal references. With an over-all rating of 8.9 out of 10 on IMDb (IMDb), it appears that the anthology of *Black Mirror* is an inarguable popular source of entertainment in society, which conclusively manifests the general fascination of this particular work of postmodern fiction and obscure prediction of potential societal devastation. Its presence in contemporary society additionally constitutes its conditional actuality regarding the societal obsession with articulating the urgency of positive change, whilst neglecting the perception of the expansive incorporation of advanced technology, which only serves the purpose of provoking a radical change in behaviour without considering the necessary effort of adapting to the proposed adjustments.

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