

The Spectrality of Technology and the Gendered Subjugation in Stephen King's *Mr. Mercedes*

Spektralitas Teknologi dan Penaklukan Gender dalam "Mr. Mercedes" Karya Stephen King

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spectrality; technology;
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Abstract

This study examines Stephen King's *Mr. Mercedes* as a techno-horror narrative in which technology operates as a spectral force that reinforces patriarchal domination. Combining the issue of gendered subjugation with the objective of analyzing its technological mechanisms, this research investigates how digital tools function as invisible yet pervasive instruments of control. Using a qualitative textual analysis grounded in Goldman's concept of spectral reading and Faulkner's gendered technology framework, the study explores how Brady Hartsfield weaponizes surveillance, digital manipulation, and remote intimidation to harm and dominate women, particularly Holly and Janey. The findings reveal that technology in the novel exceeds its function as a mere tool; it becomes a ghostly presence that destabilizes privacy, autonomy, and psychological security. Through this portrayal, King critiques the insidious forms of violence enabled by technological mediation and exposes the heightened vulnerability of marginalized individuals in digitized environments. The study concludes that *Mr. Mercedes* operates as a contemporary parable of invisible power structures regulating modern gender relations through technological means.

Kata kunci

spektralitas; teknologi; gender;
kekerasan; kerentanan.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji novel *Mr. Mercedes* karya Stephen King sebagai narasi *techno-horror* di mana teknologi beroperasi sebagai kekuatan spektral (bayangan) yang memperkuat dominasi patriarki. Dengan menggabungkan isu penundukan berbasis gender dan tujuan untuk menganalisis mekanisme teknologinya, penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana perangkat digital berfungsi sebagai instrumen kontrol yang tidak terlihat namun meresap. Menggunakan analisis teksual kualitatif yang didasarkan pada konsep *spectral reading* dari Goldman dan kerangka kerja teknologi berbasis gender dari Faulkner, studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana Brady Hartsfield mempersenjatai pengawasan, manipulasi digital, dan intimidasi jarak jauh untuk menyakiti dan mendominasi perempuan, khususnya Holly dan Janey. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa teknologi dalam novel tersebut melampaui fungsinya sebagai sekadar alat; teknologi menjadi kehadiran hantu yang mengacaukan privasi, otonomi, dan keamanan psikologis. Melalui penggambaran ini, King mengkritik bentuk-bentuk kekerasan tersembunyi yang dimungkinkan oleh mediasi teknologi dan menyingkap kerentanan yang meningkat pada individu yang terpinggirkan dalam lingkungan digital. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *Mr. Mercedes* beroperasi sebagai perumpamaan kontemporer tentang struktur kekuasaan tak terlihat yang mengatur hubungan gender modern melalui sarana teknologi.

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A. Introduction

Stephen King's *Mr. Mercedes* explores the disturbing intersection of technology, power, and gendered subjugation by illustrating how digital tools function as invisible extensions of patriarchal authority. The novel situates technology within a sphere of psychological terror, showing how ordinary devices such as phones, computers, and online platforms become conduits for intrusion and coercion. Through the antagonist Brady Hartsfield, King dramatizes how technological connectivity enables a hidden form of malevolent presence. This presence is capable of infiltrating personal spaces and destabilizing the autonomy of women, specifically characters such as Holly Gibney and Janey Patterson. This depiction reflects growing cultural anxieties regarding digital surveillance, data vulnerability, and the precarious conditions faced by women in technologically saturated environments. In these spaces, the boundary between empowerment and exposure becomes increasingly fragile. To conceptualize this dynamic, the present study employs two primary theoretical frameworks that bridge the gap between material function and metaphorical meaning.

First, Goldman's (2012) concept of spectral reading provides a lens for understanding how narratives are shaped by unseen yet profoundly influential forces, allowing technology in *Mr. Mercedes* to be read as a haunting presence rather than a mere tool. Through this lens, Brady's technological reach becomes a form of spectrality, an intangible extension of his will that haunts his victims without physical proximity. Second, Faulkner's (2001) theory of gendered technology highlights how technological systems are embedded within social power hierarchies and frequently reproduce patriarchal biases. Together, these frameworks clarify why technology in the novel becomes a channel for gendered domination, transforming digital devices into instruments that amplify entrenched societal inequalities.

Alongside these primary frameworks, a wider body of scholarly work deepens the context of this study. Harris (2016) discusses how technology-facilitated violence creates "invisible chains" that confine victims within psychological and virtual boundaries. McLaughlin et al. (2012) identify the paradox in which the same technologies that promise empowerment also expose individuals, particularly women, to coercion and surveillance. Furthermore, Laist (2010) highlights how increased digital connectedness heightens vulnerability to external control, while Winkelmann (2015) observes how digital environments dissolve traditional boundaries between public and private life. Although these perspectives illuminate key concerns about the psychological and social impacts of technology, they have not been extensively examined within the framework of horror fiction, where these anxieties are often intensified through narrative techniques of fear, haunting, and psychological entrapment.

This absence of integrated scholarship reveals a significant research gap. While studies have examined gendered technology (Faulkner, 2001), technology-facilitated violence (Harris, 2016), digital surveillance and vulnerability (Laist, 2010; McLaughlin et al., 2012), and spectral narrative forces (Goldman, 2012), few have combined these concepts to analyze technological spectrality within horror literature. Research on Stephen King often addresses themes of trauma, monstrosity, and technological anxiety; however, there is limited focus on how technology becomes a ghost-like force that enacts gendered subjugation. The intersection of spectrality, digital surveillance, and patriarchal domination remains insufficiently explored, particularly in contemporary techno-horror narratives like *Mr. Mercedes*. Currently, no substantial study has applied Goldman's spectral reading together with Faulkner's gendered technology to demonstrate how King constructs technology as a haunting mechanism that perpetuates psychological confinement and gender-based violence.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to examine how *Mr. Mercedes* portrays technology as a spectral mechanism that reinforces patriarchal power and intensifies gendered vulnerability. Using qualitative textual analysis informed by Goldman's spectral reading and Faulkner's gendered technology framework, the research investigates how Brady Hartsfield weaponizes technology to monitor, manipulate, and dominate female characters. The objective is to demonstrate how King's narrative critiques contemporary digital power structures by revealing the insidious ways in which technology, when embedded within patriarchal systems, erodes privacy, autonomy, and psychological security. Through this examination, the study positions *Mr. Mercedes* as a critical commentary on the

hidden dangers of digital environments and the gendered consequences of technological domination in the modern world.

B. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method using close textual analysis to examine how technology functions as a spectral mechanism of patriarchal power in Stephen King's *Mr. Mercedes*. The object of the research is the novel itself, and the primary data consist of narrative descriptions, dialogues, and scene-level interactions involving technology, surveillance, and gendered vulnerability. The study focuses particularly on passages depicting Brady Hartsfield's use of digital tools to monitor, manipulate, and psychologically dominate women such as Holly Gibney and Janey Patterson. Data were collected through a systematic process of close reading, during which the novel was read multiple times to ensure familiarity with its narrative structure and thematic patterns. During each reading, all passages involving technological actions, such as hacking, remote surveillance, message transmission, digital intimidation, and online manipulation, were identified and marked. These excerpts were then gathered into a structured data corpus, with special attention paid to scenes that suggest an invisible presence or heightened psychological tension linked to technological mediation, as these represent the core of the study's focus on spectrality and gendered subjugation.

Once the data corpus was compiled, the material was organized into thematic clusters that included technological surveillance as psychological intrusion, digital manipulation as an extension of patriarchal control, the erosion of privacy and personal boundaries, and the representation of technology as an unseen or ghost-like presence. After categorization, the data were analyzed using the theoretical lenses explained in the Introduction. Goldman's (2012) concept of spectral reading guided the interpretation of technology as an intangible yet powerful force that extends Brady's influence beyond physical space, while Faulkner's (2001) gendered technology perspective was applied to understand how technological systems amplify patriarchal structures that disproportionately endanger women in the narrative.

Supporting perspectives from Harris (2016), McLaughlin et al. (2012), Laist (2010), and Winkelmann (2015) were used to contextualize the textual findings within broader discussions of digital power dynamics, technology-facilitated violence, and gendered vulnerability. The final stage of analysis involved synthesizing these interpretations to articulate how *Mr. Mercedes* critiques contemporary technological cultures. By triangulating close textual reading with the theoretical frameworks, the study traces the progression of Brady's technological domination, identifies how technology becomes a spectral extension of his agency, and demonstrates how King's narrative exposes the psychological consequences of digital intrusion on female characters. Through this methodological process, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of how technology operates as both a literal tool and a metaphorical specter that reinforces gendered subjugation in the novel.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that *Mr. Mercedes* positions technology as a spectral extension of patriarchal power, enabling Brady Hartsfield to exert psychological domination over female characters through digital intrusion, surveillance, and manipulation. Using the combined framework of Goldman's spectral reading and Faulkner's gendered technology, the analysis demonstrates how digital devices, phones, computers, online communications, operate as ghost-like intermediaries that allow Brady to remain absent physically while present in effect. The novel illustrates how technological mediation erodes privacy, blurs the boundaries between public and private space, and heightens women's vulnerability to gendered harm. This discussion organizes the findings into major thematic categories that illuminate how technology functions as an invisible but powerful agent of patriarchal control within the narrative.

1. Technological Surveillance as a Mechanism of Control

Brady's technological surveillance functions as a primary channel through which he exercises patriarchal dominance. The novel depicts his use of digital tools not merely as mechanical operations but as extensions of his presence, allowing him to "haunt" his female victims from a distance. This aligns with Faulkner's (2001) claim that technological systems often reflect and intensify gendered power structures, reinforcing the already uneven distribution of social control. In one significant moment, Brady watches Holly through interconnected digital feeds, experiencing satisfaction in "haunting her from behind the screen" (King, 2014, p. 198).

Through this portrayal, King transforms mundane technologies, such as laptops, webcams, and networks, into instruments of psychological terror. Winkelmann's (2015) perspective on the dissolution of personal and private boundaries further illuminates this dynamic. Brady's ability to penetrate Holly and Janey's domestic spaces through technological mediation demonstrates the erosion of autonomy experienced by women when surveillance becomes omnipresent. This dissolution precisely represents the condition Goldman (2012) identifies as "the intangible hand" of control in spectral narratives, in which unseen forces determine character actions and emotional states.

In *Mr. Mercedes*, technology becomes that unseen force, transforming Brady's absence into a persistent haunt that dictates the psychological environment of his victims. Brady's remote and invisible domination mirrors real-world patterns of cyberstalking, where perpetrators use digital channels to observe, threaten, and manipulate victims without physical confrontation. Such practices are consistent with Harris's (2016) argument that technology-facilitated violence creates "invisible chains" that bind women psychologically and emotionally. King's portrayal situates *Mr. Mercedes* within these broader cultural anxieties, revealing how digital tools allow patriarchal power to operate stealthily, silently, and continuously.

2. Psychological Manipulation and Erosion of Autonomy

Brady's use of technology extends far beyond surveillance, functioning as a psychological weapon that steadily erodes the autonomy of his victims. Bridget Harris (2016) argues that digital violence creates "invisible chains" that confine victims within intangible boundaries, preventing them from feeling safe even in their own homes. This concept is vividly illustrated in *Mr. Mercedes*, where Brady's remote harassment of Holly and Janey results in a constant sense of vulnerability. Holly's psychological state deteriorates as she realizes that her digital life is no longer private; she feels as though she has "*lost any semblance of privacy*" (King, 2014, p. 263). The fear of being constantly watched strips her of her ability to move freely, aligning with Harris's argument that technology-facilitated violence constructs a form of digital imprisonment. King intensifies Holly's inner turmoil by depicting her growing hyper-awareness of being monitored. He writes that she "*couldn't shake the feeling that eyes were always on her, watching and waiting. Even the smallest movement felt like exposure*" (King, 2014, p. 271). This progressive erosion of Holly's autonomy exemplifies McLaughlin et al.'s (2012) argument that digital tools create a paradox in which the same technologies designed to empower individuals simultaneously expose them to surveillance, manipulation, and coercion. In Holly's case, digital communication becomes a conduit for psychological domination rather than connection.

Brady's manipulation is not confined to passive observation; he employs technology to actively distort Holly's emotional and cognitive stability. In one scene, he sends her a series of anonymous messages intended to heighten her fear and insecurity. King (2014) describes Holly's reaction as "*a spiraling loss of self-control, as though each message chipped away at her confidence, replacing it with dread*" (p. 287). Through these digital intrusions, Brady extends his influence into Holly's internal world, creating a form of psychological enslavement that compels her to doubt her own agency. The subtlety of this manipulation reflects the insidiousness of technological power: it operates silently yet pervasively, leaving victims unsure of where the threat originates.

Janey Patterson experiences a similar dissolution of autonomy as Brady infiltrates her digital space without warning. King illustrates Janey's anxiety by showing how she begins questioning her own thoughts and reactions, feeling as though "*her reality was being twisted by someone else, her life no longer her own but shaped by a hand she couldn't see*" (King, 2014, p. 274). This perception echoes McLaughlin et al.'s (2012) claim that technology has a dual capacity to empower and disempower. Although Janey's devices are intended for convenience and connection, they instead become tools that tether her to Brady's oppressive influence.

These portrayals of Holly and Janey reflect broader societal concerns regarding technology's capacity to facilitate psychological control. As digital tools permeate private life, King exposes the false security associated with technological convenience. Instead of fostering autonomy, technology, when weaponized, creates invisible restrictions that entrap individuals in a persistent state of fear and powerlessness. Holly's heightened hyper-vigilance illustrates this crisis, as ordinary digital interactions become potential threats. Through these narrative choices, King critiques the paradoxical nature of technology: its ability to connect and empower is matched by its potential to isolate, terrorize, and dominate. Brady's calculated psychological manipulation demonstrates that the impact of technology on personal autonomy is determined by the intent of its user. In King's narrative, technology becomes a vehicle not only for communication but also for coercion, revealing how patriarchal power can be technologically amplified. *Mr. Mercedes* ultimately illustrates that digital tools are not inherently liberating; instead, they possess the capacity to undermine autonomy and intensify societal power imbalances, particularly for women who are already vulnerable within patriarchal structures.

3. Spectral Technology as a Tool of Gendered Violence

Brady's technological domination over Holly and Janey demonstrates how digital systems become spectral instruments capable of enacting gendered violence from a distance. Goldman's (2012) theory of spectral reading, which describes narrative forces that influence characters without being physically visible, directly informs this dynamic. Brady's technological actions operate as a haunting presence that infiltrates the private spaces of his victims. In *Mr. Mercedes*, technology embodies this spectral force, enabling Brady to assert control through digital channels that render him omnipresent despite his physical absence. This spectral omnipresence aligns with Laist's (2010) concept of digital subjectivity, which argues that the more individuals rely on connectivity, the more vulnerable they become to external control. Holly's experience exemplifies this vulnerability, as her dependence on digital devices transforms into a conduit for psychological exposure and entrapment.

King makes this spectral quality explicit in a moment when Holly suddenly senses the depth of Brady's intrusion into her life. He writes that she felt "the hairs on her neck prickle, as if someone were watching her, someone she couldn't see but knew was there all the same" (King, 2014, p. 256). This sensation frames Brady's digital surveillance as a ghostly presence, one that exists everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. Because Holly cannot confront or locate the threat, her fear intensifies, creating a psychological prison defined not by physical confinement but by technological intrusion. The same spectral pressure extends to Janey Patterson, whose communications Brady manipulates to distort her emotional stability. When Janey receives a series of unsettling messages that feel too targeted to be random, King describes her terror as feeling as though "her thoughts were being read, her private life suddenly made public by a presence she couldn't confront" (King, 2014, p. 198). This moment illustrates Goldman's argument that spectral forces "strip away the illusion of personal boundaries," leaving victims exposed to invisible manipulations beyond their control.

Brady's technological power becomes most chilling when he hijacks ordinary household devices to assert dominance. In one disturbing scene, he remotely manipulates Janey's television, causing it to flicker with disturbing images. King depicts Janey's reaction as a "cold realization" that she is no longer safe, as though "invisible chains were binding her, pulling her into a realm where she was no longer safe, even in her own home" (King, 2014, p. 276). These manipulations demonstrate how Brady weaponizes technology to turn domestic environments, spaces traditionally associated with safety, into sites of terror. The transformation of household objects into instruments of violation

reinforces Harris's (2016) concept of "digital prisons," in which victims of technology-facilitated violence become psychologically confined within boundaries enforced by digital tools.

Through these narrative choices, King critiques the normalization of modern surveillance culture. He reveals how technologies intended for convenience, such as televisions, phones, and computers, can be refigured into ghostly apparatuses that perpetuate patriarchal control. Holly and Janey's experiences show that technological violence does not require physical proximity; instead, it operates through networks, screens, and signals that allow abusers to maintain continuous contact. This insidious form of power reflects the broader societal oversight of how digital systems disproportionately endanger women, especially those already marginalized within patriarchal structures. Brady's spectral use of technology thus serves as an allegory for contemporary anxieties surrounding digital domination. His actions expose the darker side of devices presumed neutral, revealing how technology can both connect and conquer, empower and entrap. Through *Mr. Mercedes*, King underscores the double-edged nature of technological advancement: the same tools that promise accessibility and efficiency can be mobilized to intimidate, isolate, and suppress. In Brady's hands, technology becomes the perfect weapon for enacting gendered psychological violence, transforming the invisible wires of the digital world into conduits of fear and domination.

4. The Dual Role of Technology: Empowerment and Control

King's portrayal of technology in *Mr. Mercedes* underscores its inherent duality, functioning simultaneously as a tool of empowerment and a mechanism of control. This paradox becomes central to the experiences of Holly and Janey, who, despite relying on technology for connection and safety, find themselves increasingly vulnerable to Brady's digital manipulation. McLaughlin et al. (2012) describe this tension as technology's "dual capacity for empowerment and control," noting that women often experience both benefits and restrictions when digital tools become sites of monitoring and coercion (p. 630). King brings this tension to life by demonstrating how Brady weaponizes technological access, transforming it from a medium of communication into a conduit of psychological domination. For Holly, the paradox is particularly acute. Her dependence on digital devices, intended to enhance communication and provide reassurance, becomes a source of profound anxiety as Brady's remote presence begins to haunt her daily interactions. The more she engages with technology, the more exposed she feels, illustrating Laist's (2010) argument that increased connectivity heightens susceptibility to external control. King's narrative emphasizes this vulnerability by depicting Holly's internal conflict: she recognizes the necessity of technology in modern life, yet she cannot escape the fear that "*each message or notification could carry his shadow*" (King, 2014). Technology, therefore, becomes both a lifeline and a threat, offering convenience while simultaneously enabling her subjugation.

Janey's experience further illustrates this duality. Although she uses technology to navigate her personal and professional life, Brady's intrusion into her digital spaces strips away the autonomy these tools are meant to provide. Harris's (2016) findings on technology-facilitated violence illuminate this dynamic, noting that victims often experience an "invisible yet tangible imprisonment" when their digital environments are infiltrated by abusers (p. 322). Janey's growing paranoia reflects this form of imprisonment, as her once-private communications feel increasingly unsafe. King's depiction reveals how digital devices can become extensions of patriarchal power, enabling abusers to impose psychological confinement without ever appearing in person. Through Holly and Janey, King critiques the contemporary reliance on technology, emphasizing that the very systems designed to enhance communication and efficiency can be exploited to produce fear, surveillance, and gendered subjugation. The paradox of empowerment and control suggests that technology's liberating potential is inseparable from its capacity for harm. In *Mr. Mercedes*, digital tools not only connect but also entrap; they facilitate not only progress but also violence. By illustrating how technology simultaneously enables and undermines personal agency, King exposes the precarious nature of digital life, where empowerment becomes fragile and control becomes pervasive.

5. Spectral Technology and Psychological Entrapment

King's portrayal of Brady Hartsfield's digital intrusion illustrates how technology becomes a spectral force that entraps victims psychologically, even in the absence of physical proximity. This dynamic embodies Goldman's (2012) concept of spectral reading, wherein unseen influences shape the characters' emotional and behavioral responses. In *Mr. Mercedes*, Brady's remote abilities to observe, manipulate, and infiltrate digital spaces operate as invisible forces that confine Holly and Janey within a persistent state of fear. The threat is not simply that Brady is watching but that he can watch without being seen, creating a haunting presence that destabilizes the women's mental equilibrium.

King emphasizes this spectral intrusion through moments that heighten the psychological tension of being monitored while remaining unseen. When Holly senses Brady's digital presence, she feels "the hairs on her neck prickle, as if someone were watching her, someone she couldn't see but knew was there all the same" (King, 2014, p. 256). This experience transforms ordinary digital interactions into potential sites of surveillance, contributing to a psychological prison in which the boundaries between safety and exposure collapse. Brady's invisible reach mirrors modern anxieties surrounding surveillance culture, where an individual's sense of autonomy erodes under the weight of constant monitoring.

Laist's (2010) notion of digital subjectivity further clarifies the psychological vulnerability produced by technological saturation, arguing that increased connectivity "transforms personal devices into potential conduits of control" (p. 143). Holly's hyper-vigilance exemplifies this argument as her awareness of Brady's reach renders every device suspect and every online action a possible point of entry for his intrusion. Even when Brady is physically absent, his digital presence lingers like a haunting echo. King frames this digital haunt as a form of psychological confinement, where technology's purported benefits of connection, efficiency, and convenience are overshadowed by their capacity to facilitate control and terror.

Through Brady's manipulation of digital landscapes, King critiques the insidiousness of modern technological power, revealing how its unseen influence can produce deep psychological entrapment. The spectral quality of Brady's presence demonstrates that technology does not need to attack physically to violate autonomy; instead, it infiltrates the mind, reshapes perception, and invites fear into spaces once believed to be private.

6. Gendered Technology as a Reflection of Patriarchal Power

Brady's technological manipulation throughout *Mr. Mercedes* demonstrates how digital tools can reproduce and reinforce patriarchal power structures, aligning directly with Faulkner's (2001) theory of gendered technology. Faulkner argues that technological systems are rarely neutral; instead, they often replicate societal biases and hierarchical power relations, disproportionately disadvantaging women. Brady's ability to remotely surveil, manipulate, and influence Holly and Janey exemplifies this phenomenon. Technology enables him to assert dominance across physical distances, transforming digital spaces into arenas of gendered violence.

Through Brady's actions, King illustrates how patriarchal power adapts to digital environments. Holly and Janey do not simply face physical danger; they confront an unseen authority capable of intruding upon their personal lives at any moment. Their experiences reflect broader cultural anxieties surrounding how technology can facilitate both overt and covert control, particularly when directed at women. This aligns with Winkelmann's (2015) observation that digital surveillance "erodes the sanctuary of personal spaces, transforming homes into sites of potential intrusion" (p. 23).

In King's narrative, the home, traditionally framed as a space of refuge, becomes destabilized as Brady's digital presence permeates its walls. King highlights this erosion of privacy through Holly's constant alertness and Janey's escalating fear. Devices that should have offered safety and connection instead become instruments of vulnerability. Brady's presence, carried through screens and signals, reflects a form of patriarchal authority that is both contemporary and spectral: contemporary because it uses technology, and spectral because it operates invisibly. His power thus mirrors real-world

patterns of technology-facilitated gendered oppression, in which women's autonomy is undermined not through physical force but through digital intrusion and manipulation.

By framing technology as a modern extension of patriarchal dominance, King critiques the cultural complacency surrounding digital surveillance. He reveals how ostensibly neutral tools can become mechanisms of deep psychological and social harm when wielded by those intent on control. In *Mr. Mercedes*, technology becomes the perfect vehicle for gendered violence, reinforcing inequalities that restrict women's freedom, safety, and psychological security. King's narrative thereby positions digital technology as both a mirror and a magnifier of patriarchal power, an invisible force capable of shaping lives, emotions, and identities from the shadows.

7. Implications for Gender and Technology in Contemporary Society

By portraying technology as a spectral force that extends patriarchal authority, King's *Mr. Mercedes* offers a critical reflection on the impact of digital advancements on women's autonomy, privacy, and safety. Holly and Janey's entrapment through technological means mirrors real-world patterns of cyberstalking, digital harassment, and the erosion of private boundaries. Their experiences embody Goldman's (2012) notion of the "invisible hand" that shapes lives in unseen yet powerful ways, underscoring how digital tools can become mechanisms of psychological coercion when embedded within gendered power structures. In this sense, King's work transcends its genre of horror, serving also as a commentary on how technological systems amplify the vulnerabilities of those already marginalized by patriarchal norms.

The findings of this study highlight that technology's integration into everyday life necessitates a deeper reconsideration of gendered experiences within digital spaces. Holly and Janey's encounters with Brady's technologically mediated control reveal the extent to which digital tools can be weaponized to perpetuate systems of gender-based oppression. Harris's (2016) analysis of technology-facilitated violence emphasizes that digital environments often function as "invisible yet tangible" mechanisms of control (p. 321), a phenomenon vividly depicted in King's narrative. The resonance between Harris's research and King's portrayal of Brady's actions underscores a pressing societal need: increased awareness of how technological infrastructures can be exploited to reinforce existing inequalities.

King's narrative further suggests that the pervasive presence of digital devices demands ethical, regulatory, and cultural vigilance. As technological integration deepens across all dimensions of daily life, *Mr. Mercedes* warns that without critical oversight, digital systems may continue to magnify patriarchal power, enabling forms of domination that are subtle, persistent, and difficult to detect. Through Holly and Janey's struggles, King articulates a broader critique of the digital age, one that calls for heightened scrutiny of how technology intersects with gender, agency, and structural inequality. His narrative ultimately argues that technological advancements, if left unregulated or unexamined, risk perpetuating the same oppressive dynamics they purport to solve, revealing the dark underside of digital culture's promise of connection, efficiency, and progress.

D. Conclusion

Stephen King's *Mr. Mercedes* offers a sharp critique of the entanglement between technology and patriarchal power, illustrating how digital tools can evolve into spectral mechanisms that erode privacy, autonomy, and psychological security. Brady Hartsfield's ability to terrorize Holly Gibney and Janey Patterson from a distance demonstrates how technology, far from being a neutral instrument, can become an extension of malevolent intent. The novel exposes the invisible operations of digital control, revealing how contemporary surveillance practices, both overt and covert, create environments in which vulnerable individuals, particularly women, experience heightened fear and loss of agency. This study's analysis shows that technology in *Mr. Mercedes* functions as a haunting presence that destabilizes boundaries between public and private realms. Drawing on Goldman's insights into spectral influence and Faulkner's observations on gendered technology, the research illustrates how King transforms everyday devices into conduits of psychological domination. While

digital tools promise efficiency and connection, King reveals their capacity to enable manipulation and violence when appropriated by those intent on exerting power. Holly and Janey's experiences reflect broader societal patterns in which cyberstalking, digital harassment, and the erosion of privacy disproportionately affect women. The findings highlight the novel's relevance to contemporary discussions on digital culture. King's narrative mirrors concern raised by scholars of technology-facilitated violence, who warn that technological infrastructures often reproduce existing power imbalances and expose marginalized individuals to unseen threats. By portraying technology as a spectral force that persists even in the absence of physical danger, *Mr. Mercedes* underscores the psychological consequences of living in a hyper-connected world where surveillance can be continuous, invisible, and deeply personal.

The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how *Mr. Mercedes* merges horror conventions with critiques of digital power, framing technology as a modern agent of patriarchal domination. This interpretation extends existing scholarship by showing that technological spectrality, an underexplored concept in horror literature, functions as a narrative strategy through which King interrogates the social and ethical implications of digital life. The study's use of spectral reading and gendered technology offers a fresh lens for understanding how contemporary fiction reflects anxieties surrounding digital intrusion and gendered vulnerability.

Ultimately, *Mr. Mercedes* serves as a cautionary narrative about the hidden dangers of technological dependence. King's depiction of digital devices as instruments of control urges readers to recognize how easily technology can be weaponized in ways that compromise mental well-being and personal freedom. As digital systems become increasingly embedded in daily life, the novel underscores the need for thoughtful regulation, ethical awareness, and critical vigilance. The story of Brady's unseen influence reminds us that the power of technology does not lie solely in its capabilities, but in how, and by whom, it is used. In doing so, King prompts a broader reflection on the intersection of gender, technology, and autonomy in the modern world.

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