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## The Dehumanization of Contemporary Society Through Social Media in "Nosedive" and "Smithereens"

"Nosedive" ve "Smithereens" de Çağdaş Toplumun Sosyal Medya Aracılığıyla  
İnsandışlaştırılması

Kevser ATEŞ\*\* 

### Öz

İngiliz bilim kurgu dizisi *Black Mirror*'ın iki farklı bölümü olan "Nosedive" ve "Smithereens", insanların başkalarının dikkatini çekmek için doyumсуз açgözlülüklerinden yararlanan çağdaş dünyanın sosyal medya takıntısına odaklanmaktadır. Bu bölümlerde gerçek ile sanal arasındaki sınır o kadar bulanık görünür ki insanlar ikisini birbirinden ayırt edemez. "Nosedive" ve "Smithereens", çağdaş dünyada sosyal medyanın eninde sonunda ortaya çıkarabileceği en kötü kabusları canlı bir şekilde araştırmakta ve analiz etmektedir. Yeni medya teknolojilerine aşırı bağımlılığın sonuçlarını, bu yeni teknolojilerin sağladığı yapay dünyanın derinliklerine gömülmüş karakterlerle resmederek incelemektedir. Dijitalleşen dünyada bilim kurgu ile gerçeklik arasındaki bulanıklaşan sınırları vurgulayan bu çalışma, çağdaş toplumun şekillenmesinde ve inşasında temel bir rol oynayan, en son medya teknolojilerinin artmasına sebep olduğu sosyal medya kültürünün oluşturduğu hayati tehdidi ortaya çıkarmayı ve yapısöküme uğratmayı amaçlamaktadır; bu, *Black Mirror* bölümleriyle dikkat çekici bir şekilde kanıtlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Medya, İnsandışlaştırma, Distopya, Simülakrlar ve Teknoloji.

### Abstract

"Nosedive" and "Smithereens", two different episodes from the British science fiction television series called *Black Mirror*, focus on the contemporary world's obsession with social media which takes advantage of humans' insatiable greed for getting attention from others. In these episodes, the borderline

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between the real and the virtual seems so blurred that people do not seem to differentiate one from the other. “Nosedive” and “Smithereens” vividly explore and analyze the worst nightmares of the contemporary world that social media can ultimately bring into being. They examine the consequences of extreme dependence on new media technologies by illustrating characters immersed in the depths of the artificial world these new technologies ensure. Highlighting the blurred boundaries between science fiction and reality in this digitalized world, this study aims to explore and deconstruct the crucial threat posed by social media culture aggravated by the latest media technologies that play a fundamental role in shaping and constructing contemporary society, which has been remarkably proved by Black Mirror episodes.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Dehumanization, Dystopia, Simulacra and Technology.

### INTRODUCTION

Charlie Brooker’s *Black Mirror* is a highly acclaimed British Tv series about the near dystopian futures created by advanced technology. This series illustrates that reality and science fiction do not seem to differ anymore. In *Simulacra and Science Fiction*, the postmodern critic Jean Baudrillard claims: “In fact, science fiction in this sense is no longer anywhere, and it is everywhere, in the circulation of models, here and now, in the very principle of the surrounding simulation.”<sup>1</sup> Considering the flawed way they act and interact with each other in an advanced technological world, it can be claimed that the world where these stories take place bears huge resemblance to ours. Technological developments strongly change the human condition by reshaping it, which is vividly illustrated in this show that mirrors not only what may happen shortly but also largely what is currently happening in our world. Baudrillard, paying attention to the signs and simulacra surrounding the age of media, highlights the negative aspects of advanced technology and mass media which seemingly guarantee to pave the way for a better and brighter lifestyle, but conversely create a bitter and darker future as exemplified by these episodes.

The series critically examines the effects and social consequences of modern technology on humans. Asking profound questions about the perception of reality and human psychology, the series presents dystopian scenarios that reveal the dark aspects of human nature through technology and media. It aptly presents the worst fears and nightmares our affiliation with media technologies may lead us to. With the advanced scientific and technological developments, the post-industrial society has led to the commodification of humans degrading to the status of mere objects. Postmodern culture has produced depthlessness, superficiality, and meaninglessness surrounding everyday reality, which has been accelerated by the introduction of social media. In *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, the sociologist Christian Fuchs emphasizes how social media leads to the commodification of human interaction and the limitation of the depth of relations in contrast to meaningful and personal ties. He explains how economic value is established on social media platforms: “The time that users spend on commercial social media platforms generating social, cultural and symbolic capital is in the process of prosumer commodification transformed into economic capital. Labour time on commercial social media is the conversion of Bourdieuan social, cultural and symbolic capital into Marxian value and economic capital.”<sup>2</sup> For material purposes, humans have become objectified and gained commercial value. The cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han criticizes how social media negatively affects the depth of human relations: “Social media and personalized search engines set up, in the internet, a space of absolute closeness [Nahraum]; here the outside has been eliminated. One encounters only oneself and one’s own life.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, digital interactions do not possess the depth and meaning conventional human relationships have.

<sup>1</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, 126.

<sup>2</sup> Fuchs, 2014, 114.

<sup>3</sup> Han, 2015, 35.

With the increase of communication technologies, the real human interactions have ironically decreased and lost their significance. Proper conversations have been replaced by incomplete expressions and images containing emotions such as emoticons by means of Instagram, Facebook, snapchat etc., which have now become the new ways of communication. Everyday reality has lost its significance, vividness and meaning to the shallow images containing no depth represented on social media. This paper inquiries into the series' portrayal of the manipulation of reality defined by technological authority, the creation of fake priorities and the questionable power of social media companies. What social media platforms care for is the commercial value they can gain through the display of individual lives. Owing to the addictive quality these platforms have, individuals are tempted to share more in their digital lives than they do in their real ones. This paper aims to examine this issue in order to reveal how individuals' perception of reality is shaped in the digital world and how deep the social and political influence of social media companies is. This study draws a parallel to what Baudrillard asserts in his criticism of the postmodern era, "boundaries between science fiction and science fact are fast collapsing"<sup>4</sup>, *Black Mirror* episodes are usually set in near future like "Nosedive", but "Smithereens" seems to represent our current life without displaying any techno futuristic elements that fail to reflect contemporary world.

### 1. Dehumanization in "Nosedive"

In "Nosedive", which takes place in the near future, a person's social status depends on the points he or she earns in daily interactions with other people such as friends, co-workers, relatives including family members. "Nosedive", aired in October 2016 on Netflix, is the first episode of third season, written by Rashida Jones and Mike Schur. The episode centers on a young woman called Lacie Pound, who lives in an environment where people rating each other has a profound impact on their lives, affecting their jobs, housing, and friendships. With the elimination of the boundaries between virtual relationships and the real ones, it appears that people are missing genuine bonds in this digitalized world. Despite being superficial and shallow, social ratings based on how people present themselves online seem to play a crucial role in their societal status. Lacie's world, almost exclusively painted in soft colors, is portrayed as a hyperreal one where everyone attempts to present the best versions of themselves through online posts to get high ratings like her old friend, Naomi with a high score of 4.8, posting pictures of herself always with a big smile in the most beautiful environments such as beaches and the ocean or in a helicopter. This episode reflects a society in which appearance and social image supersede personality.

The society depicted in "Nosedive" draws on our understanding of technology and consumerism, particularly the practice of liking and ranking ourselves, which has been generated by information and media technologies. The quality of their lives seems to heavily rely on this application which resembles Instagram. It emphasizes the necessity of the main character, Lacie, who aims to achieve benefits, to create a perfect image of her own life by posting fake smiles and showing false happiness towards others while pretending to live an unreal perfect life instead of the real one. It also emphasizes the concept of simulation, as seen in a scene where a real estate agent simulates Lacie's "perfect" life to persuade her to get this new expensive place in Pelican Cove, advertising the picture of a beautiful laughing woman on its page, to which Lacie's brother, Ryan reacts in disbelief stating that even a two-year-old child with a balloon cannot be this happy. His sincere reaction reveals the inauthenticity and superficiality of the images on which their system is based. In "Nosedive" "interveillance has become systematic and hierarchical: individuals only exist by their grades and their place in the world is entirely linked to this grade. Rating, qualifying social interactions via app, and being rewarded with commodities are direct consequences of a society where actors are compliant with the surveillance culture"<sup>5</sup>. Personal worth and social position of people are determined by the assessment of individuals in their society, which can be alarming as it

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<sup>4</sup> Best and Keller, 2001, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Allard-Huver and Escurignan, 2018, 47.

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is simply operated by their emotional presence. In his book *The Transparency Society*, Byung-Chul Han explains how the desire for transparency in this digitalized world destroys the privacy of individuals. Emphasizing the change in the ways social control and surveillance are achieved in this internet age, Byung-Chul Han makes a resemblance between social media and “digital panoptica that discipline and exploit the social”<sup>6</sup>. With the increase of social media platforms, individuals voluntarily share personal information online without realizing that this self-exposure is a new way of surveillance.

In this society, individuals’ social positions are determined by their overall ratings. Individuals who score four and above benefit from various benefits, while those who score 1-3 receive little or no benefits. Therefore, people constantly need to exhibit positive behavior in this society; otherwise, they risk getting low scores and consequently losing their status and getting fired. In order to be liked more by others and have more likes and higher ratings, Lacie practices her smile in front of the mirror at home. In her world, almost everyone smiles all the time as people do on social media posts, which proves what Baudrillard claimed that the point of smiling is about showing the transparency and candidness of someone when they do not have anything to say, and they are indifferent to others: “Let this emptiness, this profound indifference shine out spontaneously in your smile. Give your emptiness and indifference to others, light up your face with the zero degree of joy and pleasure, smile, smile, smile ...”<sup>7</sup> The encounter at the elevator between Lacie and a woman highlights the emptiness and indifference both women have towards each other as their social interaction is not determined by their genuine affection but by their purpose of exchanging high ratings. It is clearly shown that Lacie has to check the woman’s account to learn something about her life. They are subjugated by the social domination of media technologies, which aptly defines how they are supposed to behave in everyday life. Any humane reactions pertaining to anger, resentment or awkwardness are socially unacceptable and ultimately lead to low ratings. Lacie’s ignoring a low-rated colleague who desperately needs some high ratings to keep his job after his break-up with his partner is an instantiation of social domination. The profound impact of social media on the way people behave and act becomes evident in the way she changes her attitude toward him after learning that her colleagues do not desire to have any connections with him. Despite her initial support for him due to her fear of getting low ratings from other colleagues, she immediately prefers to ignore him at the expense of him getting fired. In this world, everyone is ruled by the “power based on the rating system which serves as a sophisticated and self-executing framework of control. At the same time, under one’s own personal power which is exercised socially, the individual “freely” accepts the rules, or the contract, of absolute surveillance which is offered.”<sup>8</sup> It emphasizes a problematic aspect of technology and social media: In order to avoid the loss of economic power and social isolation, people feel obliged to use this application continuously, which hints an ideological control it performs. Manipulated by the enforcement of this system, they are compelled to act in certain ways to attract more likes. This ideological control takes the power of the users to stay away from the application.

In order not to be ostracized from social life, they are forced to play this game all the time with a cute smile on their face. After buying a cup of coffee and a cookie with a smiley face on it, Lacie gives the clerk and everyone else around her a 5-star rating, and in turn everyone else gives her a 5-star rating as well. Through her retinal implants, she can see each person’s overall rating and information and other people can see it as well. The unreal world in which she lives manifests itself in her posting a picture of the cookie and the coffee which her reaction after tasting it reveals that she despises and gets 5-star ratings on the social media platform, which leads her overall score to

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<sup>6</sup> Han, 2015, VIII.

<sup>7</sup> Baudrillard, 1989, 34.

<sup>8</sup> Giraldo-Luque, Bugs and Tejedor, 2021, 173.

elevate slightly. Her spreading forced smiles around those in the café and her social interactions with them merely to elevate her score are instances of the hyperreal world she is in.

In order to be accepted to “Prime Influencers Program” to get a discount she needs to have a fantastic apartment, Lacie is required to own a 4.5 rating score, which she can only achieve in a short time if she attends the fancy wedding of her old friend Naomi with the grade of 4.8. In this wedding, she can get high ratings from Naomi’s guests with high scores. Her fight with her brother who accuses her of pretending all the time, obsessed with her ratings, shows her denial of the truth as Baudrillard asserts “We live, sheltered by sign, in the denial of the real.”<sup>9</sup> In this consumer society, we are highly surrounded by shiny and alluring images concealing the truth. Baudrillard claims that “we disappear behind our images”<sup>10</sup>. Lacie feeds on and lives for the attention and appreciation she can get from others on social media. Byung-Chul Han claims that today’s panoptic structure is different from the Benthamian panopticon in that “the inhabitants of today’s panopticon network and communicate with each other intensively ... the particularity of the digital panopticon is that its inhabitants actively collaborate in its construction and maintenance by putting themselves on display and baring themselves.”<sup>11</sup> Directed by the need to be seen and validated, people voluntarily display themselves on social media and take a part in their own surveillance.

It can be claimed that consuming “an object is not so much about consuming the product but about consuming a meaning. The product is sold by grafting onto it meanings with no necessary connection to the product.”<sup>12</sup> The idea that the motivation behind why people buy commodities is to fulfill practical necessities has been replaced by acquiring the symbolic importance and representations these commodities have. According to Baudrillard, in a society that is organized around consumption, the way people can have prestige, identity and social position is by means of showing commodities.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the more prestigious commodities someone owns, the higher rank or more prestigious social status they have in society. In terms of displaying the value and standing individuals achieve, the display of commodities plays a crucial role. Baudrillard’s Marxist criticism is explained by Kellner: “Sign-values are generated through hierarchical ordering among commodities, in which, for instance, certain types of cars or perfumes attain varying prestige through signifying the rank, social position and status of their owners or consumers.”<sup>14</sup> Lacie’s desire to buy that beautiful apartment where the simulation manifests that she is happy in the kitchen with her imaginary handsome partner is about to own that happiness, not the property. To get that dreamy home in an affluent neighborhood, or more accurately the fantasy it promises to provide as in the simulation, she has to have a higher score, which would make her suitable for a discount.

Society expects even those suffering to be nice at all costs: Even in a situation like terminal illness, in which the late husband of the female truck driver was denied special treatment owing to not having ratings high enough, she was punished by society through low ratings as a consequence of her angry reaction to her husband’s death for such a reason. However, after this tremendously painful experience, Susan, the truck driver, tells Lacie that she feels free as she no longer thinks or cares about how others will rate her as Lacie does. But Lacie is not ready to learn from Susan’s wise lesson yet till she painfully goes through her own cathartic experience on the wedding day of Naomi. In the end, when she, in dirty clothes, crashes the high-class wedding despite the resistance of Naomi, who does not accept her owing to her grade below 3, she gives the speech, and all the guests give her low points. Ironically, on the day she expects to get the highest ratings, she gets the lowest ones to the point that she gets imprisoned for crashing her friend’s wedding and causing a scene after her meltdown. In the prison, her retinal implants are taken off and she seems surprised to see

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<sup>9</sup> Baudrillard, 1989, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Baudrillard, 2005, 85.

<sup>11</sup> Han, 2005, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Trapp, 2002, 316.

<sup>13</sup> Kellner, 1989, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Kellner, 1989, 22.

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around differently without them. Thus, instead of being above 4.5 owing to a high score she can achieve through her wedding speech that can lead her to have that dreamy home in Pelican Cove, because of that speech, she finds herself in prison, where unexpectedly, she feels free, genuinely smiling while staring at the dust in the daylight coming through the cell window. When compared to her fake smiles for the ratings and her fake cries for her maid of honor speech, she freely smiles and genuinely cries when she observes the environment without her implants and without the concern for being liked by others. In this episode, for the first time, she speaks her mind when she swears at the man in another cell, who also does the same. Another irony that catches attention is that the man seems attractive just like the one that appears in the simulation illustrated in Pelican Cove, which is hinted to persuade lonely Lacie.

The problems that may ultimately arise in the near future from this digitalized world where we rate what we purchase and the service we get from people are questioned in this episode. It demonstrates how individual identity is degraded to simple and basic ratings, implying a hierarchy that vulgarly defines and determines human worth based on these personal evaluations without encompassing all characteristics of people.

### 2. Dehumanization in “Smithereens”

“Smithereens”, the second episode of the series’ fifth season, follows a disastrous incident connected with “Smithereen”, a fictional social media company similar to Facebook or Instagram. The main character is an Uber driver, Chris, who for a long time waits outside the company and inquires car passengers if they work at “Smithereen” and finally takes hostage a young employee who is dressed like a manager but unfortunately turns out to be only an intern. The entire episode revolves around Chris’s attempt to reach the founder of this app while highlighting the social control the company holds on people. The event focuses on technology and social media addiction, invasion of privacy, and the effects of technological companies. “Smithereens”, introducing social media as a new addiction of contemporary society, deals with the effects of technology on people and communication problems. The episode meticulously reveals that as human beings, we seem to have little or possibly no power over our temptation to check the screen in the presence of any messages or notifications, which strengthens the domination and power of social media companies in our lives while minimizing our free will. It powerfully depicts a hyperreal world combined with the power of social networking sites and the catastrophic results of technological addiction.

The addiction to such apps emanates from the desire to escape the silence that individuals are not skilled enough to cope with except by numbing themselves with the exhilaration coming from the screen. Baudrillard argues that “[t]he futility of everything that comes to us from the media is the inescapable consequence of the absolute inability of that particular stage to remain silent”<sup>15</sup>. Humans’ need to fill the void they have inside has been masterly utilized and exploited by traditional media for years which has now been substituted by social media that has become accessible almost anywhere anytime. The vividness, brightness, and exuberance promised by social media manipulate us into turning into it at every opportunity we have. The lack of substitution of what is provided by the screen chains us into it to fill the deep void inside us. Fulfilled with admiration for rising modern technologies, the main character, Chris is obsessed with the app called Smithereen, similar to Facebook or Instagram, until he causes a car accident when he checks the notification about a dog video on his phone. This accident leads to the death of his fiancé and the other car’s driver, who gets blamed for this catastrophe as he is drunk. Guilt-driven Chris cannot continue his regular life afterwards and he makes a plan to reach the founder of Smithereens, Billy Bauer, to explain to him the catastrophic results this app can cause. In order to talk to Bauer, he decides to kidnap an executive from Smithereens building in England as an Uber driver and threatens to kill him if they do not let him talk to Bauer, but the young man he kidnaps turns out to be an intern. The moment Chris reaches

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<sup>15</sup> Baudrillard, 1990, 139.

Bauer's team in the USA, they start to listen to his phone and let the FBI and local English police listen to him as well, which is alarming in terms of personal privacy social media companies can violate. As the discussion continues, it appears that this media company knows more about Chris than local police and even the FBI since they can learn everything from Chris's history as an old app user in a few minutes.

Chris criticizes those addicted to looking at their phone constantly, resembling it to chain-smoking: "People don't even look up anymore. The sky could turn f...purple and you ... wouldn't notice for a month. You didn't look up and look where that got you." As the boy was engaged with his phone in the car without looking outside, he did not realize that Chris was taking him outside his route. Our trust in modern technologies and their profound impact on human lives are interrogated in this episode. It reveals the delusional idea that we have full power over them, deciding when and where we are online by pointing to the opposite. As is pointed out by the conversation between Chris and Bauer, what the app struggles to achieve is that no one can take their eyes off the screen. Bauer discloses that the goal is to make people addicted to it, employing the metaphor for a Vegas casino where all the doors are sealed so that everybody has no choice but to keep playing. Thanks to technological tools that ease our lives, we are given a lot of free time which is unfortunately and ironically manipulated by other technological devices. American literary critic Frederic Jameson argues that "[t]he 'culture industry' (1947) of Adorno and Horkheimer then theorizes the structure of the commodification of culture and provides a powerful dystopian vision of the alienation of leisure under capitalism which is not particularly relieved by any alternative accounts of a socialist (and mostly Stalinist) culture."<sup>16</sup> What Adorno and Horkheimer harshly criticize is the alienation of leisure time and the social domination led by culture industry. In capitalist societies, leisure time is no longer when people can relax and socialize but become reckless consumers who do not have time to focus on their inner selves. With the acceleration of digital technologies, alienated leisure has become more prominent, especially with social media which has turned individuals into passive consumers. Individuals manipulated and controlled through social media companies encounter obstacles hindering the development of personal freedom and critical thinking.

The interference of social media companies with people's lives is shown in "Smithereens", which is a critique of technological addiction. It illustrates how dependence on technology and the sheer size of tech companies have the potential to have a crucial impact in the real world. Intensely intertwined with hyperreality, individuals' passion for technology makes the boundaries between the real and the virtual world increasingly blurred. This situation shapes people's life experiences and transforms the structure that forms the basis of their perceptions and interactions. Baudrillard firmly believes technology and mass media have adverse effects on humanity, causing profound damage to communication by deeply and negatively affecting its structure and function:

They fabricate non-communication -- this is what characterizes them, if one agrees to define communication as an exchange, as a reciprocal space of a speech and a response, and thus of a responsibility (not a psychological or moral responsibility, but a personal, mutual correlation in exchange) .... they are what always prevents response, making all processes of exchange impossible (except in the various forms of response simulation, themselves integrated in the transmission process, thus leaving the unilateral nature of the communication intact). This is the real abstraction of the media. And the system of social control and power is rooted in it.<sup>17</sup>

While idealizing face-to-face communication, Baudrillard intensely criticizes media communication. Here, he explicates how media forms its social control and power. When communication is defined as a process of mutual interaction and reaction, and personal responsibilities are present in this process, it can be claimed that mass media are not sufficient to provide such communication. As a form of mass media, social media platforms generate social miscommunication and alienation by preventing a real dialogue between individuals and a sense of

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<sup>16</sup> Jameson, 2005, 154.

<sup>17</sup> Baudrillard, 1978, 169-170.

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personal responsibility. Considering communication necessitates the sharing of meaning and personal interaction, what social media platforms offer is not the same as this in-depth interaction, and thus inevitably results in non-communication.

According to Fredric Jameson, the simulacrum’s “peculiar function lies in what Sartre would have called the derealization of the whole surrounding world of everyday reality ... The world thereby momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density.”<sup>18</sup> What Jameson criticizes is the emptiness and superficiality of contemporary image-driven society lacking genuine depth. Everyday reality with social and meaningful interactions has lost its value, reduced to mere representations of reality, deprived of tangibility, and meaning. Chris defines himself as an addict, a cliché he says, whose phone is glued to his hand all the time since the first thing he does in the morning and the last thing he does at night is to use Smithereen, looking at images until his addiction leads to the death of his fiancé.

Driven by technological addiction, people increasingly lose the boundaries between reality and simulation. The tendency of individuals to present themselves differently and create simulations in their virtual worlds blurs the boundaries between reality and simulation. It seems alarming how much social power and control social media companies globally have on individuals who willingly volunteer.

### CONCLUSION

Incisively critiquing modern technology under the control of social media platforms, *Black Mirror* explores the potential threats to human life and questions the near future while artfully depicting the world we live in. Both episodes question how technology can intervene in human life and the ethical and social consequences of these interventions. The Internet age has brought the anticipation of information and communication technologies’ promising a more collaborative future for providing the public with many possibilities in the world. Conversely, it has multiplied the shallowness, insignificance, and emptiness pervading our daily lives. Caught up in this glamorous fantasy world, people are tempted to forget their priorities while interacting with fake ones generated and marketed by new media in these dystopian episodes. This study shows that the alarmingly manipulative power of technological companies over individuals is becoming exponentially controversial in today’s world. Rather than forming meaningful and deep conversations in real life, people increasingly prefer to have shallow and unfulfilling relationships on social media platforms. Using their great influence, social media companies manipulate and commodify individuals who display their lives, exploiting them for their commercial value.

Operating as a mirror that reveals the reflections and potential dangers of technology and social media in contemporary society, “Nosedive” and “Smithereens” skillfully employ different topics to explore and discuss. They vividly illustrate emerging life conditions yielded by technology by potently criticizing the way people respond to these developing social realities. “Nosedive” puts the focus on how the use of social media ratings in real life will eventually result in superficiality, insincerity and a lack of depth in social life, even affecting personal relationships at home and leaving nowhere to be genuine. On the other hand, “Smithereens” addresses the alarming power of technological companies as well as emphasizes that social media addiction, surpassing the effects of drug addiction in terms of its constant availability, could disastrously lead to more fatal outcomes.

### Geniřletilmiř zet

Charlie Brooker’ın *Black Mirror* adlı dizisi, ileri teknoloji tarafından yaratılan distopik bir geleceęi konu alan, olduka beęenilen bir İngiliz TV dizisidir. Bu dizinin iki farklı blm olan

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<sup>18</sup> Jameson, 1991, 34.



“Nosedive” ve “Smithereens” teknolojinin insan hayatına nasıl müdahale edebildiğini göstermekte ve bu müdahalelerin etik ve toplumsal sonuçlarını sorgulamamızı sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, her iki bölümü analiz ederek, bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinin, dünyadaki birçok olasılığı sunan ve insanları birleştiren parlak bir gelecek vaat ederken, aynı zamanda günlük yaşamlarımıza nüfuz eden sığlık, önemsizlik ve yalnızlığı nasıl artırdığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu dizi, gerçeklik ve bilim kurgu arasındaki farkın neredeyse yok olduğunu göstermektedir. Dizi, modern teknolojinin insanlar üzerindeki etkilerini ve sosyal sonuçlarını eleştirel bir şekilde incelemektedir. Gerçeklik algısı ve insan psikolojisiyle ilgili derin sorular soran dizi, teknoloji ve medya aracılığıyla insan doğasının karanlık yönlerini ortaya çıkaran distopik senaryolar sunmaktadır. Medya teknolojileriyle olan bağımızın bizi götürebileceği en kötü korkuları ve kâbusları bize ustalıkla sunmaktadır. Fransız eleştirmen Jean Baudrillard, medya çağını çevreleyen işaret ve simülakrlara dikkat çekerek, daha iyi ve daha parlak bir yaşam biçiminin önünü açmayı garantileyen ileri teknoloji ve kitle iletişim araçlarının, bu olaylarda örneklendiği gibi, tam tersine daha acı ve daha karanlık bir gelecek yaratan olumsuz yönlerine vurgu yapmaktadır. Teknolojik gelişmeler, insan koşullarını yeniden şekillendirerek büyük ölçüde değiştirmektedir ve bu durum, yalnızca yakın gelecekte olabilecekleri değil, aynı zamanda büyük ölçüde şu anda dünyamızda olup bitenleri de yansıtan bu dizide canlı bir şekilde gösterilmektedir. Postmodern kültür, sosyal medyanın da devreye girmesiyle hız kazanan gündelik gerçekliği çevreleyen derinliksizlik, yüzeysellik ve anlamsızlık üretmiştir. Sosyolog Christian Fuchs, sosyal medyanın insan etkileşiminin metalaşmasına ve anlamlı ve kişisel bağlara kıyasla ilişkilerin derinliğinin sınırlandırılmasına yol açtığını vurgulamaktadır. Ne yazık ki, dijital etkileşimler geleneksel insan ilişkilerinin sahip olduğu derinliğe ve anlama sahip değildir. İletişim teknolojilerinin artmasıyla, gerçek insan etkileşimleri ironik bir şekilde azalmış ve önemini yitirmiştir.

Yakın bir gelecekte geçen “Nosedive” adlı bölümde, bir kişinin sosyal statüsü, arkadaşları, iş arkadaşları, akrabaları ve aile üyeleri gibi diğer insanlarla günlük etkileşimlerinde kazandığı puanlara bağlıdır. Bölüm, insanların birbirlerine verdikleri puanların işlerini, konutlarını ve arkadaşlıklarını etkileyerek hayatlarını derinden şekillendirdiği bir ortamda yaşayan Lacie Pound adlı genç bir kadını konu almaktadır. Sanal ilişkiler ile gerçek ilişkiler arasındaki sınırların ortadan kalkmasıyla, insanların bu dijitalleşmiş dünyada gerçek bağları özlediği anlaşılmaktadır. Yüzeysel ve sığ olmasına rağmen, insanların kendilerini çevrimiçi olarak nasıl sunduklarına dayanan sosyal derecelendirmeler, toplumsal statülerinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Neredeyse tamamen yumuşak renklerle boyanmış olan Lacie'nin dünyası, herkesin çevrimiçi gönderiler aracılığıyla kendilerinin en iyi versiyonlarını sunmaya çalıştığı bir yaşamı betimlemektedir. Bu hiper gerçek dünyada Lacie'nin eski bir arkadaşı olan 4.8 gibi çok yüksek bir puana sahip ve şahane bir hayat sürüyor gibi görünen Naomi gibi insanlar en güzel ortamlarda, örneğin plajlarda ve okyanusta veya bir helikopterde her zaman büyük bir gülümsemeye sahip fotoğraflarını yayınlamaktadır. Bu bölüm, görünüşün ve sosyal imajın kişiliğin önüne geçtiği bir toplumu yansıtmaktadır.

“Smithereens” adlı bölüm, ana karakter Chris'in Instagram benzeri bir sosyal medya platformu olan “Smithereen” adlı uygulamanın kurucusuna ulaşma çabası etrafında şekillenirken, şirketin insanlar üzerindeki sosyal kontrolünü çarpıcı bir şekilde vurgulamaktadır. Olay, teknoloji ve sosyal medya bağımlılığı, mahremiyet ihlali ve teknoloji şirketlerinin insanlar üstünde ne kadar büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğuna odaklanmaktadır. Sosyal medyayı çağdaş toplumun yeni bir bağımlılığı olarak tanıtan “Smithereens”, teknolojinin insanlar üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koyarken iletişim sorunlarına dikkat çekmektedir. Bölüm, insanlar olarak, herhangi bir mesaj veya bildirim varlığında ekranı kontrol etme isteğimiz üzerinde çok az veya muhtemelen hiç gücümüz olmadığını, bunun da sosyal medya şirketlerinin hayatımızdaki hakimiyetini ve gücünü güçlendirirken özgür irademizi en aza indirdiğini titizlikle ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bölüm sosyal ağ sitelerinin gücü ve teknolojik bağımlılığın felaket sonuçlarıyla birleşen hiper gerçek bir dünyayı güçlü bir şekilde tasvir etmektedir. Bu tür uygulamalara olan bağımlılık, bireylerin ekrandan gelen coşkuyla kendilerini uyuşturarak, baş edemedikleri sessizlikten kaçma isteğinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Sosyal medyanın


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vadettiği canlılık, parlaklık ve coşku, her sıkıldığımızda ona dönmemize neden olmaktadır. Ancak bu alışkanlık, içimizdeki derin boşluğu doldurmaktan ziyade, bu boşluğu daha da derinleştiren bir kısır döngü yaratmakta ve sosyal bağlarımıza zarar vermektedir.

Çağdaş toplumda teknoloji ve sosyal medyanın yansımalarını ve potansiyel tehlikelerini ortaya koyan “Nosedive” ve “Smithereens”, günümüz ilişkilerine ayna tutmakta ve teknolojinin ortaya çıkardığı yaşam koşullarını sorgulamaktadır. “Nosedive”, sosyal medya derecelendirmelerinin sebep olduğu yüzeyselliğe, samimiyetsizliğe ve yalnızlığa odaklanırken “Smithereens” sosyal medya şirketlerinin sahip olduğu büyük güce dikkat çekmekte ve sosyal medya bağımlılığının ölümcül sonuçlara yol açabileceğini vurgulamaktadır.

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