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The Manifestation of Technology-Human Relations in Theatre: A Critical Analysis of Plays in the Context of 'Unintended Consequences'

Tiyatroda Teknoloji ve İnsan İlişkisinin Tezahürü: 'İstenmeyen/Beklenmeyen Sonuçlar' Bağlamında Oyunların Eleştirel Bir Analizi

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Abstract

Technology, which has existed from the primitive tools at the beginning of human life to today's most advanced devices, has established itself at the centre of life in the modern world. Technological elements have increasingly taken up more and more space in human life, providing people with convenience in various areas from industrialisation to communication, from healthcare to education, and from workplace technologies to artificial intelligence systems. The fact that many technological products have made great contributions to their lives by enabling people to save time and effort also leads to 'unintended consequences' that may arise when people use technology. American sociologist Robert K. Merton uses this term to describe the unanticipated outcomes of actions, decisions, and regulations. With the developments and advances of the modern era, technology has become an indispensable part and basic requirement of people's lives; however, depending on the use of technological devices, several undesirable or unforeseen physical, psychological or social problems arise in addition to the positive effects for people. The 'unintended consequences' that may arise due to people's mispositioning of technology in their lives, over-dependence on technology or inability to use technology for its intended purpose will be revealed in this study by presenting a glimpse into the lives of fictional characters. The selected plays from American theatre, *Softly*, and *Consider the Nearness* (1973) by Rosalyn Drexler and *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (2007) by Sarah Ruhl, portray the undeniable presence of technology in people's lives, yet it is accompanied by loneliness, social alienation and isolation, non-communication, loss of trust and disruption of privacy. Through these plays, the essential presence of technology in human life

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will be revealed, and the question of how and where humans may position themselves within the framework of their relationship to technology will be critically examined.

Keywords: Technology, "Unintended Consequences", Social Alienation and Isolation, Disruption of Privacy, Softly, And Consider the Nearness, Dead Man's Cell Phone.

Öz

İnsan yaşamının başlangıcındaki ilkel aletlerden günümüzün en gelişmiş teknolojik aygıtlarına değin her zaman hayatın içerisinde var olan teknoloji günümüzün modern dünyasında da yaşamın merkezinde kendine yer bulmuştur. Teknoloji unsurları endüstriden iletişime, sağlıktan eğitime, iş alanlarındaki teknolojilerden yapay zekâ sistemlerine kadar birçok alanda insanlara kolaylık sağlayarak insan yaşamında daha geniş bir yere sahip olmuştur. Birçok teknoloji ürününün zamandan ve emekten tasarruf sağlayarak insan yaşamlarına büyük katkı sağladığı gerçeği insanların teknoloji kullanımında ortaya çıkabilecek 'beklenmeyen/istenmeyen sonuçlar'ı da beraberinde getirir. Amerikan sosyolog Robert K. Merton bu ifadeyi davranışların, kararların ya da düzenlemelerin beklenmedik sonuçlarını tanımlamak için kullanır. Modern dönemdeki gelişmeler ve ilerlemeler ile teknoloji insan yaşamının vazgeçilmez bir parçası ve temel gerekliliği haline gelmiş, bununla beraber teknolojik aygıtların kullanımına bağlı olarak insanlar için olumlu etkilerinin yanında istenmeyen ya da öngörülemeyen fiziksel, psikolojik ya da sosyal problemler ortaya çıkmıştır. İnsanların hayatlarında teknolojiyi yanlış konumlandırmaları, teknolojiye aşırı bağlılık ya da teknolojinin olması gereken amaçlar doğrultusunda kullanılmaması nedeniyle ortaya çıkabilecek 'beklenmeyen/istenmeyen sonuçlar' bu çalışmada kurgusal karakterlerin hayatlarına bir bakış sunarak ortaya konulacaktır. Amerikan tiyatrosundan seçilmiş Rosalyn Drexler'in *Softly, and Consider the Nearness* (1973) ve Sarah Ruhl'un *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (2007) oyunları teknolojinin insan yaşamındaki inkâr edilemez varlığının bir tasvirini sunar; fakat buna yalnızlık, sosyal yabancılaşma ve tecrit, iletişimsizlik, güven kaybı ve mahremiyetin yıkımı eşlik eder. Oyunlar aracılığıyla insan yaşamında teknolojinin zorunlu/gerekli varlığı ortaya konacak ve teknoloji ile ilişkisinde insanın kendisini nasıl ve nerede konumlandıracağı eleştirel olarak incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Teknoloji, "Beklenmeyen/İstenmeyen Sonuçlar", Sosyal Yabancılaşma ve Tecrit, Mahremiyetin Yıkımı, *Softly, And Consider The Nearness, Dead Man's Cell Phone*.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, the selected plays from the American Theatre *Softly, and Consider the Nearness*, written by Rosalyn Drexler in 1973, and *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, written by Sarah Ruhl in 2007, will be discussed to present an analysis of the relationship between technology and human beings. These plays, written in different periods, are also significant in displaying that both developments and preoccupations with technology continue. The fact that the plays discussed in the study span different time periods provides a comparative approach for various historical periods in order to trace the evolution of the intricate relationship between people and technology and to demonstrate the continuity of certain technology-related concerns. In addition to highlighting the irresistible place and importance of technology in human life, this study will also draw attention to the potential negative aspects that it may reveal in human life and social relations. Technology has become more controversial due to the rapid growth of technology and the development of digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Hence, it has become known for its potential negative effects as well as its positive aspects on individuals and societies. The use of technology outside the specified purposes, attribution of wrong value and meaning to technology, and dependence on technological elements will be elucidated in the context of American sociologist Robert K. Merton's term "unintended consequences". The term, used to define unpredictable results other than the desired results of an action, plan, decision, or practice, is reinterpreted within the framework of the adverse and

unfavourable effects of technology in people's lives. In addition to the potentially positive aspects of technology, many scientists and sociologists also draw attention to potential drawbacks. Technology, which is effective in all spheres of life such as health, economy, industry, communication, education and tourism, provides better living standards for people, while at the same time, it can cause unexpected physical, psychological and social problems. Employing the methodologies of close reading and interpretive analysis with consideration of the theoretical framework, this study conducts a textual and thematic analysis, exploring how the presence and impact of technology are dramatically represented and how these representations reflect broader societal concerns. For this reason, this study offers a critical approach to technology through selected plays and analyses how people position technology in their lives through selected plays and aims to show how people position it incorrectly in their lives, how the human aspect is suspended in their technology-focused lives, and how it can create some negativity in human life. In conclusion, not only will this study reveal different ideas about technology through the experiences of the characters of the plays, but it will also provide examples of potential problems that people may experience in technology-related issues concerning the concept of unintended consequences.

1. "Unintended Consequences" and Technology

When the effects of technology on human life and social activities are considered, different approaches to this issue have emerged. Although it is a much-debated topic in modern societies, technology has always had a place in people's lives. The presence of technology in human life goes back to primitive times, from the spears or arrows made for hunting to the hand tools they developed to process materials, to the wheels, to the wooden houses they built. Today, it has become a more prominent and indispensable part of life, as can be observed through information and digital technologies, space technologies, construction and industrial technologies, and nuclear technologies, which have developed in ways that can hardly be imagined. Technology has never been isolated from human life in terms of saving labour and time by facilitating human life, providing easier production, and even influencing the distribution of power between states. Although the opportunities offered by technology for people in all areas of life, from transportation to the energy sector, from production and trade to all kinds of industrial sectors, from information technologies to digital platforms, when human relations, social and individual development processes are considered, it reveals some adverse aspects. Not all technological advances can guarantee one hundred per cent peace, happiness, and security. Along with many positive opportunities provided by technology, it has also caused unexpected negative effects on human life. This condition can be interpreted in reference to the term "unintended consequences" coined by American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) in his essay "The Unanticipated Consequences of Social Action" (1936). In an even broader sense, "unintended consequences" are associated with actions, decisions, regulations and legislations that have unintended and unexpected and sometimes undesirable consequences. It can also be characterised as the process by which any proceeding, arrangement or development in any field evolves into a different result instead of serving the expected purpose.

When historical phases are followed, the term "unintended consequences" is used to describe ties in various areas of life, from economics to legal rules, agricultural activities to social sciences. As Merton asserts, there are substantial contributors to this term in history and in the modern time like Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), Adam Smith (1723-1790), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), Max Weber (1864-1920), Graham Wallas (1858-1932), Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin (1889-1968), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) (see Merton, 1936, p. 894). While the rationality in people's purposeful actions and decisions and the connection between this result and the achievement of the intended consequence are established, the deviation from the intended consequence and rationality in this process is referred to as unintended consequences. However, this deviation in the result, according to Merton, is not attributed to success or failure (1936, p. 896). Furthermore, the consequence will be subject to change concerning the following contexts: "consequences to the actor (s), consequences to other persons mediated through, the social structure,

the culture and the civilisation" (Merton, 1936, p. 895). Underlying the non-existence of homogeneous categories in human actions, he accepts the deviation considering the complex and numerous forces and circumstances (p. 896). The agents of the actions/decisions, the mediators, and the social, cultural and even historical expectations play their roles in the existence of the deviations. Merton explicates how difficult it is to understand and evaluate human behaviour with the following statements:

This is to say, in the study of human behaviour, there is found a set of different values of one variable associated with each value of the other variables, or in less formal language, the set of consequences of any repeated act is not constant but there is a range of consequences, any one of which may follow the act in any given case. In some instances, we may have sufficient knowledge of the limits of the range of possible consequences, and even adequate knowledge for ascertaining the statistical (empirical) probabilities of the various possible sets of consequences, but it is impossible to predict with certainty the results in any particular case. (1936, pp. 898-899).

The variable, fluid and unpredictable human behaviours may cause variations and deviations from the intended outcomes. Merton's ideas are later elaborated by theoreticians in the following years, and unintended consequences are roughly categorised under three groups as unexpected benefit, unexpected drawback and perverse result (Depperschmidt, 1994, p. 65). In this categorisation, unexpected benefit refers to positive unexpected outcomes, unexpected drawback means unexpected negative outcomes alongside the desired ones, and finally, the perverse result expresses a counter outcome of the expected one. This different categorisation demonstrates the possibility of unpredictable results in a positive or negative sense in the plans or activities put forward regarding human beings. Signifying unforeseen consequences, unintended and unanticipated consequences are used synonymously (Merton, 1936, p. 896). In modern terminology, the use of the term "unintended consequences" is more common since it carries a wider range of meanings. As it is suggested, "unanticipated consequences can only be unintended, but unintended consequences can be either anticipated or unanticipated, a distinction lost in the single opposition of "intended" versus "unintended" (Zwart, 2015, p. 286). Evidently, that these terms, used interchangeably by Merton, have changed their usage and connotation over time. Moreover, "unintended consequences" has become a very utilised term to explain certain social circumstances. Anthony Giddens' following remarks show how essential the unintended consequences as well as the desired consequences for society: "We may say that unintended consequences are deeply involved in the reproduction of social institutions, however much such reproduction is also governed by intention and contrivance" (1987, p. 10). Taking into account the unpredictable, sophisticated and fluid nature of human beings, for individual and societal development, these undesired and unforeseen outcomes function to take a broader perspective. Based on this idea, in the analysis of the role of technology in human life, this study emphasises unintended consequences that technology can potentially bring rather than the positive conditions it provides. This is regrettable because, along with the many significant advancements that technology has brought to our lives, unexpected or anticipated drawbacks of technology have emerged as "unintended consequences" in the form of social isolation, alienation, physical or mental illness, and reliance on technological devices.

The inseparable presence of technology in people's lives is emphasised and its various contributions are highlighted by many researchers, theoreticians, sociologists and scientists. For instance, Max Weber discusses technology in terms of its role in shaping modern society and economic systems, and he finds technology as one of the primary forces for economic progress (2013, p. 174). Anthony Giddens, pointing out that technology has both positive and negative aspects, approaches the issue from the perspective of social integration by stressing that technological developments can lead to new ways of communication for societies in the global sense (1990, pp. 169-170). Focusing on digital technologies, the internet and access to information, Manuel Castells draws attention to digital communication technologies (2010, p. xviii). Maybe the term "global village" by Marshall McLuhan is one of the important statements that summarise the last point that technology has reached (1964, p. 93). It is an important concept used to describe today's world where physical distances are overcome, and people can reach many things they want with a single click of a keyboard. The praise for the

positive situations and developments associated with technology, as well as the loud warnings for people, coincide well with the phrase “unintended consequences” chosen for this study.

One of the critical points at which famous sociologists such as Karl Marx (1818-1883), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), Jacques Ellul (1912-1994) and Neil Postman (1931-2003) have adopted a discerning and questioning attitude towards technology and warned people about its negative impact on social relations. Considering technology in the concept of capitalism, Marx underlines the potential social inequalities and reduction of self-autonomy if technology is used as a tool for exploitation. Marcuse, in his work *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), points out the possible role of technology as a manipulator and social controller in the hands of dominant forces (2012, p. 161). From his perspective, technological advancement has the potential to result in the dehumanisation of individuals, leading to their standardisation and robotisation within a mechanised system. (Marcuse, 2012, p. 9). Declaring his ideas on the role of technology in modern times, Postman, in his book *Technopoly* (1992), does not deny the benefits of technology, but he underlines the effect it has on the erosion of cultural values and the loss of critical thinking (1993, p. 71). It would not be wrong to say that if it is not used consciously and effectively, technology can enclose people in a process that can cause individual and social problems. The positioning of technology at the centre of life brings about negative situations such as social isolation and alienation, reduction of physical interaction, erosion of privacy, the feeling of surveillance, dependency on technological tools, superficial connections, loss of cultural values, overloaded, untrustworthy information, and dehumanisation. Just one of the representative real examples of the repercussions of technology-TV on social life, based on the findings of research among remote indigenous people of Australia, clearly shows how it can change human life. Inge Kral conducts a project to show the shifting perceptions and identities with communication technologies (2014, p. 176). Although the introduction of television to people living in these remote local areas in the 1970s does not have much impact on older people who have tried to remain firmly attached to their culture and roots, especially for the younger generation, there is an attraction to the content given in the media, the Western lifestyle, the language used, and the elements of technology:

Despite the persistence of strong cultural continuities, some elders perceive that ‘everything changed’ after the 1970s when, as discussed above, new communication and media technologies were introduced. Furthermore, it is evident that young people are spending more time in contexts pivoting around technology and in peer-to-peer (rather than cross-generational) interactions (Kral, 2014, p. 180).

The innovations brought to the communication and media sector with new technological elements have caused traditional ways of communication to be less preferred by young people. Face-to-face interactions are challenged by the ways of interaction and communication in physical or virtual environments dominated by technology. One of the most prominent thinkers in the field of digital or media studies in recent years, Shoshana Zuboff, articulates concerns regarding how digital technologies endanger people's communication, privacy and autonomy in her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (2019). Another name that has raised concerns about technology, in her 2021 *Atlas of Artificial Intelligence*, Kate Crawford draws attention to the potential economic and social drawbacks of artificial intelligence systems, one of the most significant technological advancements of our time. Life manifests itself in art, literature and theatre, thus similar narratives can be the main subject of such artistic pieces. Leo Tolstoy, in his work *What is Art?* (1904), explains what people do for the sake of art and why people give importance to art. “Art is not a pleasure, a solace, or an amusement; art is a great matter. Art is an organ of human life, transmitting man’s reasonable perception into feeling” (Tolstoy, 190, p. 210). Similarly, theatre makes people think, feel, and entertain and gives an insight into the future. In the (post)modern world, theatre has been one of the main arts that will reflect the relationship of human beings with technology and the emotional state that develops accordingly. Proceeding from this situation, this study addresses the issue through the selected theatrical pieces Rosalyn Drexler’s *Softly, and Consider the Nearness* (1973) and Sarah Ruhl’s *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* (2007).

2. The Boundaries of Human-Technology Relations in *Softly, and Consider the Nearness*

Softly, and Consider the Nearness, written by Rosalyn Drexler in 1973, delineates the presence of technology in people's lives by pushing the boundaries of human-technology relationships in a way that can be called humorous and absurd. This one-act play revolves around the ordinary life of a mid-thirty's woman, Nona. The strange dialogues of this loner character with the television turn this play into a funny and entertaining show and provide a platform to question people's ties with technology. In the story created with an absurdist attitude, the character's relationship with television makes the meaninglessness and mechanics of life more visible. While this character, who is lost in the search for meaning, strives for self-existence, the fact that she relies on a technological device to achieve this has trapped her in a vicious circle. The technological elements of the 1970s, which will be quite overshadowed when compared to the use of technology, the internet and artificial intelligence in today's digital society, are important examples to show how effective they were in human life at that time and to show that this effect has increasingly carried over to the present day. TV as a character appears like an individual being even though it/he is depicted with these features: "The TV's character and voice change with each change of the channel. He is at NONA's mercy: an object and a slave to her every whim yet constrained because of what he is inanimate" (Drexler, 1998, p. 168). Although this technological device is presented as an inanimate object, a tool to be used only to serve man, it functions like a roommate, a partner, and a lifesaving hero in the play. In the ordinary life of the female protagonist of the play, who works as a receptionist, after having worked from nine to five, all she wants to do is go home and watch TV. However, as implied at the beginning of the play, TV is not seen just as a technological device but is treated like a human being by Nora. This bizarre relationship is described as "an intimate relationship, not without its problems" (p. 168) as if depicting ordinary human relationships or a romantic relationship.

Nona's loneliness and solitude are a state of modern and post-modern humanity. "We are the inheritors of a legacy of loneliness" (2008, p. x) says Thomas Dumm in his book *Loneliness as a Way of Life* in a way that delineates the character Nona who is described as a very lonely and desperate figure with "no friends, no family, no pets, no plants, no kitchen, no bath, no closet space, no view, no cross-ventilation" (Drexler, 1998, p. 172). From TV's voice, the life story of Nona is depicted. She had a difficult life with a father who killed himself when Nona was 6 years old, an alcoholic mother who was run over by a truck, a grandmother who was strangled by a stranger under the influence of drugs, a grandfather who succumbed to heart disease, and a sister who was imprisoned. This life story is very parallel to Dumm's depictions of loneliness:

The division between public and private, our inability to live with each other honestly and in comity, the estranged and isolating forms that our relationship with most intimate acquaintances sometimes assume, the weakness of our attachments to each other and hence to our lives in common- are all manifestation of the loneliness that has permeated the modern world (2008, p. x).

The elements of Dumm's definition of loneliness here are inherent in Nona's life. She appears as a lonely woman from the beginning of the play to its end. Other than the burglar, no one appears in her apartment, and she does not contact anyone. Her only social activity outside of work life is watching TV and chatting with him. When she comes home from work, she first greets her TV, saying hello by asking him if he misses her. This situation of loneliness and communication with television gradually evolves into unexpected dialogues. While Nona is trying to adjust the contrast, screen and signal, Nona addresses TV saying, "You are always in my heart, and as long as I live, you will remain there" (Drexler, 1998, p. 170). As Nona changes the channel, the sound of channels about the industry, traffic, weather and daily issues comes in, but at the same time, an ambience is created in which they can talk back and forth as if in dialogue with TV. Even in this dialogue, referring to the clichéd statements in male-female relationships where men say they cannot understand women, TV says to Nora: "If I only knew what you really want" (p. 170). These expressions, which refer to the helplessness of the man in the face of a variable, inconsistent, endlessly demanding woman as a stereotypical

woman depicted by the male eye, also point to Nona's loneliness and expectations. Unfortunately, the only person/device to ask for Nona's wishes and expectations is TV. That's why in the following dialogue, the words of TV are heard like a manifestation of Nona's subconscious. TV says, "[...] The immediacy of imagined life, which is the only life you have at the moment. I am your family, your lover, your gateway to the world. You owe your life to me. As for me, I ask no more than to be seen and heard by you" (p. 170). Nona puts TV at the centre of her life; she spends her time with him and features him as her family, friend, partner and a way of escape from the realities of her life. The intimacy created by the words is carried a little further by physical intimacy:

Nona: See how sensitive you really are? You don't flinch from the truth. You're such an excellent set. May I kiss you?

TV: If you are not well grounded you might get an electric shock Miss Nona wet lips. Oh baby, you've got me where you want me.

Nona: (Fiddles with channel changing knob.) Right between channels

TV: Oh-oh-I have an itch.

Nona: Where?

TV: I'm not sure. Scratch me vertical, and then scratch me horizontal. That oughta do it.

Nona: Just like man and wife (Drexler, 1998, p 171).

Nona hears many compliments on TV saying that she is important and precious. TV says several things to Nona to support her psychologically, make her feel less alone and feel valuable. He treats her like a TV star, telling her she is not living up to her potential and that she has much more than she is now. During the rehearsal of Nona for the best start to the programme, TV breaks down. Nona panics, looking for a TV guarantee, then she decides to fix it/him herself by saying, "Don't worry darling, I'll bring you back from the dead if I have to" (Drexler, 1998, p. 173). Nona is delighted since TV works and is alive again, because she enunciates, "If I had lost you, a part of myself would have died to" (p. 173). Even the dialogue between Nona and TV goes in the weirdest way. TV asks Nona whether she will change him to another TV set as he broke down before, and she replies:

Nona: What I have with you no one else has. Frankly, do you realise what our relationship has become?

TV: Illicit? Are you guilty?

Nona: A little, certainly. Those times I went to bed with you.

TV: You had my voice first thing in the morning.

Nona: I need that kind of thing. A woman needs comforting (Drexler, 1998, p. 174).

This intimacy, depicted in the mode of a forbidden love story, shows the role of the lover attributed to TV, and, at the same time, reveals an ironic criticism of the excessive value attached to technological devices and the bitter reality of people's estrangement from each other. Saying "You are mine alone" (Drexler, 1998, p. 174) to TV, Nona tries to actualise her feelings of ownership and belonging through an inanimate object. This not-so-ordinary and normal relationship between Nona and the television becomes even stranger when a thief enters the house through the window. While they are not yet aware of the burglar's presence in the house, their conversation, which turns into an erotic talk among themselves, starts with Nona saying, "I want you to touch me" (p. 175). TV gives direct and technical replies to questions and wishes of Nora, within this span of time, Nona also dresses sexy, and they talk about Nona Show where Nona shines in her show and is paid high. The moment they recognise the burglar's shadow and hear him coughing, Nona feels

frightened and asks TV to do something. "I'm rooted to the spot" (p. 175) says TV, declaring that he cannot protect Nona as it is beyond his capacity. TV's directives help Nona because TV instructs Nona to freeze like a statue when the burglar comes in. Surprisingly the burglar looks at Nona and thinks that it is a modernist art, then TV as a saviour save the day with that terrifying sound: "Drop that gun hombre, or I'll blow you sky high! Your life ain't worth a plug nickle 'round these parts. (Gunshot) Next bullet's for you" (p. 176). Startled by the sound of the television, the thief throws down his gun and says he is leaving. Nona picks up the gun, points it at the man and scares the thief out of the window. At the end of the play, the bond between TV and Nona, who overcome the burglar together, becomes deeper and even more erotic. Even though in the play this bizarre connection of Nona with TV is comically presented to the audience, this connection is an emblematic reflection of the pathetic condition of great numbers of modern people who give a perverse meaning and value attributed to technology. Her association of the roles of family, friend, lover and the safe home environment with television indicates her loneliness and social isolation. Television has been attributed to a characteristic that goes far beyond serving its basic purposes, such as providing entertainment or obtaining information, and this inanimate object is treated as if it were a human being. As Merton's concept of unintended consequences suggests, if a phenomenon, idea or object does not serve the intended and desired purposes, it brings unintended consequences. Nora's story clearly shows, not being able to position technology correctly in people's lives and not being able to use it appropriately can lead them into a life that is beyond the normal, sometimes absurd. As Nora struggles to live on her own, she reinforces her loneliness through her strange relationship with television and isolates herself from society both physically and emotionally. It is unfortunate that this character, who expects to receive from a technological device the words of praise and love that she cannot hear in real life, and who tries not to feel the loneliness she experiences in real life by talking to or courting television, is not a rare figure in the modern world.

3. The Intervention of Technology in People's Lives in *Dead Man's Cell Phone*

Premiering at Woolly Mammoth Theatre and directed by Rebecca Bayla Taichman, two-act play *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (2007) by American playwright Sarah Ruhl narrates a captivating story of mourning, existence and the intervention of technological devices in every aspect of our lives in the modern world. The story of Gordon in this play presents a more complicated relationship between modern man and technology. Playwright, essayist, and academic Ruhl addresses the intersection of mortality and remembrance with a humorous, romantic, and ironic tone while offering a critique of the contemporary digital landscape. Ruhl brings to the stage the funny, dark, complex, and sometimes surreal experiences of two main characters whose paths cross through death. The story begins with the death of one character in a cafe and continues with the discovery of a new life for the other character. Ruhl describes these two characters' encounter with these poetic words: "That we drive alone in our separate carriages never to truly know each other and then the book shuts and then we die?" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 71). The word 'carriage' is here metaphorically used to create nostalgia in the modern era where technology and digitalism surround people's lives, and it also refers to the lives of characters evolving in two opposite directions. It is evident that Ruhl, in writing this work, has taken into consideration many serious issues in the technology-human-theatre triad. She explains the coexistence of death and cell phone, which is particularly striking in the title *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. Ruhl highlights the importance of recent studies conducted in many different countries, drawing attention to the serious effects of cell phones on cancer and brain tumours, behavioural problems or pregnancy (*Dead Man's Cell Phone Study Guide*, 2023, p. 9). This situation is also emphasised in a hidden way by setting up the story through the telephone of a deceased character, perhaps the best way to draw attention to the damages of technology to human physiology is through a dead character.

Problematizing the pervasiveness of technology and its encirclement of even the daily routines of people, the play reveals the dominance of technological devices that have become inescapable in human life. The relentlessly ringing telephone in the play reveals the discrepancy between the

deceased character's state of being dead and the destruction of being dead because of the phone. The telephone that continues to ring after the death of its owner, as if offering a different sphere of existence, is answered by a woman who will then be involved in the life and family of the deceased phone owner. Thus, centred around a dead man's ringing phone, this play explores the impact of the technological/digital world on human behaviour and relationships by presenting coincidences and some well-intentioned lies, addressing the element of grief, and creating surreal settings. Ruhl explains why she wrote this work in this fashion:

Imagine that I said that I was interested in the culture of cellphones, in how they have completely altered our emotional, psychic and body states to the point where culture (and perhaps not even evolution) has caught up. Imagine that I said I was interested in how there is no longer any privacy, nor is there any reason anymore to talk to strangers on elevators. I might say that I don't feel comfortable with modernity (2008, p. 9).

The playwright's discomfort with modernity and his questioning of cell phones is manifested both through the constantly ringing phone and the characters' preachy discourses about phones and technology. The insistent involvement of technology in life regarding human relations and the phenomena related to human beings, such as death, grief, and memory, is intensely felt by the audience from the beginning of the play to its end. The first scene begins in an almost empty café with the character Gordon, who looks calm and silent but is actually dead, sitting on a chair. Another character, Jean, who is drinking coffee at another table and writing a thank you note, is disturbed by the persistent ringing of the telephone. The caller calls again and again. Jean sighs and looks at the man to pick up the phone, and finally, unable to bear it, feels the need to intervene. She addresses Gordon: "Would you mind answering your phone? I'm sorry to bother you. If you could just- turn your phone- off? (...) Are you ill? No answer. Are you deaf? (Ruhl, 2008, p. 8). The phone continues to ring, and Jean is very irritated by this noise. The sound of the phone violates other people's peaceful space; furthermore, why the phone is not answered is another intriguing matter. Given the dependence on or addiction to technological devices in today's societies, it is rare not to answer a ringing phone unless there is a serious excuse for not answering the caller. That's exactly why not answering the phone has been associated with being ill or having a disability in the play. People voluntarily or compulsorily include some kinds of technology in their lives. Therefore, in the play, the disturbing sound of a constant ringing can be interpreted as a symbolic reference that shows technological devices' penetration into people's lives. As David Cote states, "Ruhl makes acute observations about how being surrounded by wireless devices has eroded public-private boundaries and made our lives ghostly, atomised and impermanent" (qtd. in Ruhl, 2008, p. 1). The sound of a personal device removes the boundaries of privacy, and it also blurs the boundaries of human privacy. Seeing that the man does not attempt to answer his mobile phone, Jean reaches for the phone and answers it. When Jean touches Gordon's shoulder and checks, she calls 911 and tells them that there is a dead man next to her in the café.

Later on, Jean finds herself answering each call to Gordon. It soon crystallises that Jean feels a strange attachment to Gordon and a sense of responsibility to his loved ones. By preparing appropriate responses according to the caller, she acts as an intermediary between the dead man and the people on the phone. Gordon's mother, brother, wife, girlfriend, colleagues and others, who were strangers to Jean before, suddenly become familiar people she can put at the centre of her life after the phone calls. As Isherwood also observes, "Clinging doggedly to the symbol of her life-changing communion with a corpse, Jean will not stop at playing the dead man's social secretary either" (2008, line 31). The telephone not only provides Jean with the role of a secretary but also serves as a medium for Jean to develop different relationships. Jean, who has no social life, gets to know Gordon's family through the telephone, befriends them and even starts a romantic relationship with Gordon's brother. As per Martha Lavey, "Gordon's cell phone is an artifact of his life and through it, Jean enters its living web. It is as if she has finally found, in the cell phone, the artifact that permits her to enter not just a memory, but a present—a circle of survivors. And there

in that living circle is Gordon's brother, Dwight: the dead man's double, alive" (3023, line 29). When this is evaluated in terms of Anthony Giddens' idea of technology and social integration, it can be seen that technology functions as an element of integration for Jean and opens up new social spheres for her. This phone acts as a catalyst for Jean's social life, the phone calls she has answered with good intentions have enabled her to communicate and share more easily.

This phone, which has a positive meaning for Jean, will turn into a noise that people do not want to put up with. At Gordon's funeral, she prays for Gordon's peacefulness, and she wants to help comfort his loved ones. Unfortunately, this desire is interrupted by phone calls that continue even during the funeral. While prayers and eulogies are being delivered, Gordon's phone keeps on ringing throughout the funeral. Even when Mrs. Gottlieb, the mother, begins her eulogy, it starts ringing, so she cannot hide her anger:

Could someone please turn their fucking cell phone off. There are only one or two sacred places left in the world today. Where there is no ringing. The theatre, the church, and the toilet. But some people actually answer their phones in the shitter these days. Some people really do so. How many of you do? Raise your hand if you've answered your cell phone while you were quietly urinating. Yes, I thought so. My God (Ruhl, 2008, p. 15).

Phone ringing is not only distracting, but it also disrupts the flow and atmosphere of the funeral. Because of the phone, the eulogy to be given to Gordon turns into a speech which criticises the unlimited presence of phones in people's lives. Having decided to continue the funeral ceremony with hymns, Jean tries to answer the phone, just as the hymn 'You'll Never Walk Alone' starts. Amidst the sadness and the remembrance at the funeral she organized for her son, Mrs Gottlieb's criticism of the telephone ringing like a constant harasser is quite clear: "You'll never walk alone. That's right. Because you'll always have a machine in your pants that might ring. Oh, Gordon" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 16). These expressions can perhaps be seen as a bitter reproach from the mother to a child who has not saved any time for his mother by being busy with the telephone. Lavey, with these expressions, explains exactly what is mentioned in the play: "Each of our cell phones tells the story of our life—it is the alternate 'me', the repository of personal and professional contacts and commitments, and the device that connects us to those people and places. To lose one's cell phone is to become untethered, to lose the thread of one's connection in the web of one's life" (Lavey, 2023, line 8). In the play, the phone provides a passage for Jean to enter the circle of Gordon's family and acquaintances. Even after Gordon's death, his phone, which had a very active place in his life, is still active as if he were alive. Gordon's privacy is invaded through Jean's answering the phone, since it gives her access to Gordon's personal space. Through this telephone connection, she discovers she has a lover and learns he has an unethical job. Jean meets the people she talks to on the phone and establishes a deep connection with them throughout the rest of the play. This condition creates the image that Gordon still has the entity through the phone, as it appears that he is still present in their lives in the context of an intangible presence, even if not physically. This is very much in coincidence with the term "digital ghost" used by Timothy Recuber in his book *The Digital Departed: How We Face Death, Commemorate Life, and Chase Virtual Immortality* (2023). He says, "The idea that online death has the potential to create a kind of digital ghost, or virtual immortality, simply the idea that a dead person's profile contained some essence of some remaining form of selfhood—I have labelled this the digital soul" (Recuber, 2023, p. 36). Especially after the 2000s, with the impact of social media elements that became more widespread with the digital age, "the ethics of digital death" became noticeable (2023, p. 25). With technological devices and digital applications, a new sphere of entity beyond physical existence has been created and the loved ones of the deceased or the deceased themselves have created living spaces in these digital environments. As depicted in the play, it seems that the physical presence of the person in real life and his/her presence in the digital world cannot necessarily be synchronised. The presence of such a personal and communicative device of the deceased makes him seem to exist as if he was alive in a digital afterlife. This is also how Jean feels about Gordon and his phone, she says, "But when

Gordon's phone rang and rang, after he died, I thought his phone was beautiful, like it was the only thing keeping him alive, like as long as people called him, he would be alive" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 53). Gordon's death does not erase him from people's phone books, or his posts or photos do not disappear from social media or the digital environment, so Jean has the feeling of offering an alternative living space for Gordon through the phone. Hoping that there might be people who will call him in the future, she says "I'll leave his phone on as long as I live. I'll keep recharging it" (p. 53), as if Gordon will still be alive if people remember him and keep calling him.

As the play exemplifies, with the use of technology and digital devices, the traditional link between tangible physicality and existence is disrupted. Digital space offers a variety of modes of existence, and people can be active in the physical space and the digital space at the same time. French philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard asserts that the concept of reality is no longer valid and introduces the concept of hyperreality to define what is beyond reality. Especially with the development of technology and the virtual environment, physical reality has disappeared, and a reality has been created between the virtual and the real (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 125). Baudrillard also stresses the neutralising effect of media regarding the impact of digitisation and the virtual realm on people's lives. He adds, "Virtuality retranscribes everything in its space; in a way, human ends vanish into thin air in virtuality. It is not a doom-laden danger in the sense of an explosion, but rather a passage through an indefinable space, a kind of radical uncertainty. (Baudrillard, 2015, pp. 110-111). Baudrillard offers a critique of the digitalisation process to which we have adapted our lives without question. He says, "We live our smartphoned, i-padded, internetted and digitalised lives" (2017, p. 4). Mehmet Güzel underlines that "today's world is not a real society, and that reality or truth is replaced by symbols, images and a virtual reality instead of the concrete" (2015, pp. 69-70). This circumstance also leads to the loneliness of today's phone and digital device users in a crowd, or the existence of countless unknown acquaintances through the social interactions that these devices enable. Alongside the dependency on technology, the issue being anxiously pondered has been that if the developments in technology and digitalism in the age of consumption proceed in the service of capitalism, it affects the human relations, values and personal desires adversely. It is here that Marx's warnings about the potential negative effects of technology concerning capitalism and the use of technology for personal gain come into the foreground. He criticises the materialistic use of technology out of concern for the social inequalities it can create and emphasises the idea that people can eventually lose their autonomy and human values. In the play, Gordon's organ trading job, which can be seriously associated with capitalism, is described as a very ordinary job by Gordon, disregarding ethical and moral values. Although medical developments and technological advances have found very innovative and miraculous remedies for human health, the fact that some people abuse them for monetary reasons reminds us of the unintended consequences of technology. As an organ trader, Gordon says in his soliloquy, "I make people feel good about their new organs. (...) Morality can be measured by results: how good do you make people feel? You make them feel good? Then you're a good man. You make people live longer? Great" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 59). Hermia, Gordon's girlfriend, explains how he has made hundreds of thousands of dollars by selling organs to people in various countries and brought her diamonds. This tragic reality about Gordon breaks the ideal human image Jean created in her mind for Gordon. The dramatic irony is created when Gordon's secret identity in real life is unknown to Jean is unveiled through his phone; personas and authentic identity of Gordon are now visible to Jean as well. In reality, Gordon is one of the representatives of the mentality that ignores human values, disregards moral values, and he is in the service of materialism by bringing technology and capitalist interests together.

In the first scene of the second act, where the last day of Gordon's life is disclosed to the audience in a very surrealistic setting, Gordon narrates what he was doing the day he died. As he talks about the hectic pace of his ordinary everyday life, he brings attention to the attitudes of the new digital society, with its serious disregard for personal privacy and social rules of life, by

focusing for a moment on the use of cell phones by the mass of people on the move: "And everyone's yelling into their cell phones, and I'm thinking, where have all the phone booths gone? The phone booths are all dead. People are yammering into their phones, and I hear fragments of lost love and hepatitis, and I'm thinking, is there no privacy? Is there no dignity?" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 58). In a sense, Gordon draws attention to the rapidity and pervasiveness of technological developments while showing that people can be self-centred and indifferent to social rules and, at the same time, be beneficiaries of these developments. He ponders the subway and the airports and concludes that they are like hell. Looking at the advertisements on the subway, he dreams of lobster bisque, which is the reason why he is in the café that day. Another criticism of technology features in the scene in which Gordon's brother Dwight and Jean discuss the value of physical materials, like thank you notes, greeting cards, or stationeries, through which people remember each other and feel special, and the mundaneness of the artificial materials offered by technology. The digital age, which offers many technological products where people can store their knowledge and memories, provides conveniences for people, and yet these conveniences also bring along people's effortlessness and forgetfulness. Dwight expresses his thoughts on the subject with the following statements: "These digital cameras—you know—and all the digital—stuff— the informational bits— flying through the air—no one wants to remember. People say I love you—on cell phones—and where does it go? No paper. Remembering requires paper" (p. 47). As he says, people now do not want to make an effort to remember or to keep things in mind precisely because so many digital products designed to do this are available and at their service. As a result, people have become distant from real things; tangible things that can be touched and felt have been replaced by products that have a virtual existence in digital settings. Jean also touches on another point where she feels uncomfortable with digital devices: she laments the impossibility of being accessible and visible at all times because of the phone, and the desire to retreat into one's shell. Jean explains the impossibility of having a space or time of one's own in the following statement: "You know what's funny? I never had a cell phone. I didn't want to always be there, you know. Like if your phone is on, you're supposed to be there. Sometimes I like to disappear. But it's like— when everyone has their cell phone on, no one is there. It's like we're all disappearing the more we're there" (pp. 52-53). Although it is sometimes desired to escape, people have created a living space woven with technology and a prison equipped with different technological devices.

Towards the end of the play, Jean finds herself in a moral dilemma after learning about the existence of a capitalist exchange that disregards human life and moral values and wants to make things right for the people involved in the sale of organs. Thinking that she has formed a deep bond with Gordon, she says, "I'll make up for Gordon's mistakes" and sets off (Ruhl, 2008, p. 85). When the phone rings again, Jean talks to the people calling about the organ transfer and is told that she has to go to South Africa for the kidney in Brazil and goes to the airport. At the Johannesburg airport, a fight breaks out between Jean and the stranger (the disguised Gordon's mistress) when Jean refuses to hand over the money and Gordon's phone, and Jean eventually passes out from a hit to the head. Thus begins a surreal scene -an afterlife in hell, a pipeline, in a laundromat- reminiscent of Jean and Gordon's encounter, as if the play were starting all over again. Jean gets the chance to talk to Gordon, whom she is curious about, to get angry with him about the organ transplant and to convey her mother's love to Gordon to make him feel better. The play ends with Jean waking up in Gottlieb's house. When Jean recovers, she thinks she has been gone for a day, yet she learns that months have passed. Meanwhile, Gordon's mistress has taken over his business, and Gordon's wife has returned to the stage as a dramatic skater. When Jean tells Gordon's mother that her son is waiting for her in the afterlife, she throws herself into the burning fire. By saying "They'll be happy together" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 97), Dwight emphasises that this is a good ending. Jean's words to Dwight, "I want to make sure we get on the same planet when we die.... let's love each other absolutely" (p. 98), conclude the play with words of love in this world and hope for the next. It is right that *Dead Man's Cell Phone* takes us on a journey where characters discover themselves through unexpected and often absurd situations, reminding us of that personal growth often emerges from life's most unforeseen twists"

(*Dead Man's Cell Phone* Study Guide, 2023, p. 4). During this journey, the audience witnesses a diverse range of experiences about human relations through both real and surreal representations, as well as the effects of the digital age. Several topics, such as the aspect of the telephone that both brings people closer and separates them, loneliness, the desire to belong, death, sadness and many different feelings, show that the relationship between humans and technology is not easy to define, but this relationship needs to be established delicately and attentively.

CONCLUSION

In the modern world, where the indispensable place of technology in people's lives is undeniable, the value that people attribute to technology and the relationship they develop with technology have sometimes not progressed in a positive direction, and many technological elements developed to facilitate people's lives and provide better living conditions have been effective in the development of some undesirable attitudes and behaviours. American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910-2003), in his essay *The Unanticipated Consequences of Social Action* (1936), emphasises the term unanticipated/unintended consequences to explain unpredictable and unforeseen outcomes of any action's regulation or decision. The presence of deviations in the targeted objectives and the results achieved, or the results that are different from the desired ones or that result in negative targets, is associated with the unintended consequences. Considering the place of technology in human life and the value attributed to it, it is possible to see not only the essential and indispensable positive aspects for people but also the negative aspects that can be described as "unintended consequences". On the one hand, technology can provide personal empowerment, social and cultural development, global awareness, better quality of life, environmental benefits, economic growth, access to unlimited information, advancements in healthcare, easy communication and transport, on the other hand, it can create unanticipated and undesirable domains for people where they can face mental health issues as addiction or anxiety, physical health problem like posture problems or vision issues, social isolation and alienation, the violation of privacy or reduction in critical thinking. In this context, it is remarkable that many scientists and sociologists, such as Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, Jacques Ellul, and Neil Postman, have been highly critical of the place of technology in our lives and have drawn attention to its potential drawbacks, such as the fact that it can increase inequality and reduce personal development, that it can be used as a mechanism of social control, and that it can be effective in destroying cultural values. The human-technology relationship, which is echoed in the fields of art, literature and theatre, whose material focuses on human life, has been examined in many different aspects. In this study, the place of technology in human life in the context of unintended consequences is revealed with two important works selected from American theatre.

Through fictional characters, the misconceptions people attribute to technology and the improper attitudes they develop concerning technology are brought to light in plays. Written by American playwright Rosalyn Drexler in 1973, *Softly, and Consider the Nearness* carries the extreme relationship that mankind can develop with technology on stage by presenting an absurdist atmosphere. Even though it is presented with a funny and surreal narrative, the addiction of the loner character Nona to TV and her behavioural and communicative disorders contains a message that will make people question their relationship with technology. As an individual isolated and alienated from society, Nona substitutes TV for family, friends and society. She comes home from work longing for TV and shares her troubles and dreams with it. Television operates as a device that enables the lonely person not to feel this loneliness in her own loneliness. In this play, where noncommunication, loneliness, social isolation and lack of family are problematised, television is at the centre of the character's life as both a cause and a solution provider. Another play that shows that similar problems and more continue to exist in people's lives despite the passing of time is *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, written by Sarah Ruhl in 2007. This play is depicted as "the odyssey of a woman forced to confront her own assumptions about morality, redemption, and the need to connect in a technologically bewitched world" (State Theatre Company, 2023, line 5). Based on two characters, Gordon, a man who dies in a café, and Jean, who answers his phone and begins to develop close relationships with the people

around her, this play is a combination of grief, romance, action, disappointment, sociological evaluations, criticism of technology and the mystery of human life. The bonds established through a dead man's phone, the destruction of private lives and the intervention of technology in human life are delicately portrayed. In this play, the secrets of a dead man are revealed through his phone. Jean, who has never had the chance to get to know Gordon in the real world, can enter his personal space through his phone and learn a lot about him. The phone, which rings constantly from the beginning to the end of the play and interrupts many conversations or work, reveals the inevitable intrusion of technology in people's lives. The fact that the telephone brings people together but can also make human relationships more superficial and isolate individuals shows that the world is full of contradictions and contrasts in the modern world. Through these theatrical analyses, which are exemplary in terms of critically revealing the role of technology in shaping human relationships, the concept of privacy, the intervention of technological devices in human life, and the dissolution of human relationships, this paper emphasises that the negative aspects of technology cannot be ignored. The study illustrates theatre's ongoing role in reflecting, dramatising, and critiquing modern technological life, and the selected plays demonstrate the influence of technology on identity, emotion, and community. Consequently, technology has an indispensable place in human life and is effectively present in every field. However, it must be taken into account that in the relationship between humans and technology, people can experience unintended consequences that may cause physical, mental, and social disorders. People in societies that are otherwise equipped with technology but face individual and social problems, such as isolation, lack of communication, superficial relationships, and intrusion of privacy, may find themselves in a serious crisis. For that reason, a critical-humanities approach to technology and digital culture is crucial to determine the place of technology in human life, how it is used, and what it serves.

Geniřletilmiş Öz

Amerikan Tiyatrosundan seçilen Rosalyn Drexler tarafından 1973 yılında kaleme alınan *Softly, and Consider the Nearness* ve 2007 yılında Sarah Ruhl tarafından yazılan *Dead Man's Cell Phone* oyunları ile teknoloji-insan ilişkisi üzerine bir analizin sunulduğu bu çalışma, teknolojinin insan hayatındaki karşı konulamayan yeri ve önemine değinmenin ötesinde teknolojinin olumlu yönlerinin yanı sıra insan yaşamı ve toplumsal ilişkiler konusunda ortaya çıkarabileceği potansiyel olumsuz yönlerine dikkat çeker. Amerikan sosyolog Robert K. Merton'ın bir eylem, plan, karar, ya da uygulamaya dair hedeflenen sonuçların dışında öngörülemeyen sonuçlar için kullandığı 'beklenmeyen/istenmeyen sonuçlar' terimi bu çalışmada teknolojinin belirlenen amaçların dışında kullanılması, teknolojiye yanlış değer ve mana atfedilmesi ve teknoloji unsurlarına bağımlılık çerçevesinde yorumlanarak insanlar için ortaya çıkabilen olası beklenmeyen ya da istenmeye sonuçlar üzerinde durulmuştur. Teknoloji insanlık tarihinin en başında icat edilen en ilkel araçlardan günümüzün sağlık, endüstri, sanayi, eğitim ve daha birçok alanda geliştirilmiş en son teknolojik ağıtlara kadar insan yaşamında her zaman yer almıştır. Günümüzde özellikle teknolojinin daha hızlı büyümesi, dijital teknolojilerin ve yapay zekâ unsurlarının da gelişmesi ile daha görünür ve tartışılır hale gelen teknoloji olumlu yönleri ile olduğu kadar bireyleri ve toplumlar etkileyen olumsuz etkilerle de anılır hale gelmiştir. Bu yüzden teknolojinin hayatımızdaki vazgeçilmez yerinin yadsınmadığı günümüz dünyasında, insanın teknolojiye yüklediği değer ve geliştirdiği ilişki her zaman olumlu biz düzlemde ilerlememiş, insanların hayatını kolaylaştırmak ve daha iyi yaşam şartları sağlamak adına geliştirilen birçok teknoloji unsuru insanların bazı istenmeyen tutum ve davranışlar geliştirmesinde etkili olmuştur. Fransız filozof ve sosyolog Jean Baudrillard gerçeklik kavramının artık geçerliliğini yitirdiğini belirtirken, gerçekliğin ötesine geçen bir gerçek üstülük olgusundan bahseder. Teknolojik gelişmelerle dijital ortamlar ve sanal gerçeklikler ile fiziksel gerçekliğin ötesinde alanlar oluşmuş ve gerçeklik ötesi kavramı daha da pekiştirilmiştir. Ayrıca Baudrillard kapitalizm ve teknolojinin birlikteliğinin insan ilişkileri ve değerler üzerindeki olası olumsuz etkileri konusunda da insanları uyarır. Karl Marx, teknoloji ve kapitalizm ilişkisinde olası sömürü sistemine ve sosyal eşitsizliğe karşı bir söylem ortaya koyar. Herbert Marcuse ise teknolojinin hâkim gücün elinde sosyal kontrol mekanizmasına

dönüşebileceği ve insanların standartlaşarak mekanikleşeceği ihtimaline yönelik kaygılarını dile getirir. Neil Postman, teknolojik gelişmeler ile kültürel değerlerin yitirilmesi ve eleştirel düşüncenin yok olması olasılığına karşı temkinli olunmasını salık verir. Birçok bilim insanının ve sosyologların olumlu olduğu kadar olumsuz olabilecek yönleri ile dikkat çektikleri teknoloji bu çalışma içerisinde de potansiyel olumsuzluklara dikkat çekilerek analiz edilmiştir. Çünkü sağlık, ekonomi, endüstri, haberleşme, eğitim, turizm gibi hayatın her alanında etkili olan teknoloji insanlar için daha iyi yaşam standartları sağlarken bir yandan da beklenmeyen fiziksel, psikolojik ve sosyal sorunların var olmasına neden olabilmektedir. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada teknolojinin olumlu yönlerini vurgulamak değil, potansiyel olumsuzluklara dikkat çekmek amaç edinilmiştir. Teorik çerçeveyi dikkate alarak yakın okuma ve yorumlayıcı analiz metodolojilerini kullanan bu çalışma, teknolojinin varlığı ve etkisinin dramatik bir şekilde nasıl temsil edildiğini ve bu temsillerin daha geniş toplumsal kaygıları nasıl yansıttığını araştıran metinsel ve tematik bir analiz yürütmektedir.

Sanatın ve tiyatronun insan yaşamının yansımalarını sunacağı fikri ile kurgusal karakterler vasıtasıyla insan-teknoloji ilişkisinde insana yönelik ne tür olumsuz durumların söz konusu olabileceği açığa çıkartılmaya çalışılmıştır. *Softly, and Consider the Nearness* oyunu absurdist oyunları hatırlatan bir tarzda komik bir anlatım ile insanın teknolojik aygıtlarla kurabileceği aşırı bağıın tasvirini sunar. Otuzlu yaşlardaki yalnız bir kadın karakter olan Nona'nın televizyonu ile olan garip ilişkisine yoğunlaşan bu oyun, cansız bir nesne olan televizyonun Nona için bir arkadaş, aileye, sevgiliye ve hayatını kurtaran bir kahramana dönüşümünü seyircisine sunar. Teknoloji unsurlarına geliştirilen bağı ve yüklenen anlamın sınırlarının sorgulandığı bu oyunda, iletişimsizlik, yalnızlık, sosyal tecrit, aidiyet hissedememe gibi konuların teknoloji ile ilişkili olarak analiz edilmiştir. Kafede ölmüş olan Gordon adlı karakter ve onu sürekli çalan telefonuna bakan Jean karakteri ile başlayan *Dead Man's Cell Phone* adlı oyun ise ölüm, yas, hatırlanma, hayal kırıklığı, yalnızlık ve cep telefonu kullanımı gibi farklı konuları bir araya getirir. Oyun boyunca sürekli çalan cep telefonu metaforik olarak telefonların ve teknolojinin insan yaşamındaki müdahaleci ve vazgeçilemeyen yönünü gösterir. Yalnız bir karakter olan Jean ölen Gordon'un telefonu aracılığıyla ailesi ve arkadaşları ile iletişim kurar ve kendisi için yeni sosyal bir alan oluşturur. Cevaplamış olduğu çağrılar ile Gordon'un hayatına dair bilgilere ulaşarak özel yaşamının gizliliğini ihlal eder. Oyun, teknolojinin insan ilişkilerini şekillendirmedeki rolünü, mahremiyet kavramını, teknolojik aygıtların insan yaşamına müdahalesini ve çözülmüş/dağılmış insan ilişkilerini eleştirel bir tavırla yansıtır. Her iki oyunda da teknoloji ile ilişkili olarak modern insanın deneyimlediği yalnızlık, sosyal yabancılaşma, aidiyetsizlik, yüzeysel ilişkiler, iletişim ve güven eksikliği, televizyon ve telefon gibi teknolojik cihazlara aşırı bağlanma ve yanlış anlamlar yükleme eğilimleri görülmektedir. Bu nedenle teknolojinin insan yaşamındaki yeri ve insanların teknolojiyi niçin ve nasıl kullanacakları konusu teknolojinin olumsuz yönleri de dikkate alınarak incelenmiştir. Çalışma, tiyatronun modern teknolojik yaşamı yansıtmada, gerekli eleştirileri sunmada ve bunu seyircisine taşımadaki rolünü ortaya koyarken, seçili oyunlar aracılığıyla da teknolojinin birey toplum üzerindeki beklenmeyen ve istenmeyen etkilerini kurgusal karakterler vasıtasıyla örneklendirmiştir.

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