NOSEDIVING OF A SOCIETY: DYSTOPIAN QUALITIES IN BLACK MIRROR'S EPISODE, NOSEDIVE

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It is not unfamiliar for one to imagine oneself living in a society in which everything he/she does is under certain gazes, thus being checked and judged from every step he/she takes. In today's world, social media displays a role as such. All we do is to give likes to people and to follow their perfect lives so that we can draw our own path to seem like the 'ideal' one. What if not only our photographs or videos are judged and liked but also every moment that we live and interact with the other people are rated? One of Black Mirror's episode, Nosedive offers this kind of a dystopian world that, at first, looks like it has utopic qualities.

As being one of the significant works of dystopia, Nosedive stands as a ground-breaking episode in the sense that it combines two different worlds: the one that we live in and the one that is envisaged. Dystopic works are generally referred with futuristic and innovative technology. What makes Nosedive unique is that the audience gets a sense of realism, in spite of advanced technology, since we are already obsessed with the number of likes of our posts.

The story is told in the eye of the protagonist, Lacie Pound who lives in a society where people are given points, by their highly improved mobile phones, according to their actions. This episode starts with Lacie smiling to a mirror to pick which Lacie is going to show today. In consideration of the society that forces everyone to get higher points so as to be a respected one, Lacie tries to be or seems to be a nice person with her look and her behaviors. Although imagining the community that everybody is attempting to be flawless may sound excellent, at the same time, it raises a question: since people are under constant surveillance, are they completely free or are they showing some kind behavioral pattern not to be locked in jail?

People are given points on a scale of 5 in accordance with their actions. This ranking system is set as a rule to control every individual of the society and no matter who one is, everybody is ranked and expected to have a high point. Lacie, who has 4.2 stars, is already considered in a high position. Her downfall starts when her points are not enough to buy a home which is only available for the ones who have at least 4.5 points. This limit gives the viewers an idea about the restricted freedom of the characters. If one wishes to have a regular life that, I mean, has no difference at all than any other ordinary lives in which people have to obey the rules that are set by an authoritarian system, he/she has to have a very high ranking. Since in
this community, the people are controlled by both the rules that are set up and each other’s opinion, it would not be wrong to say that the authority figure, that dystopic works have, is not only the system but also the people themselves. This control mechanism is maintained by a corporation which consists of the system and its productions, which are the people. Although this system is ruled by a superior figure, it is the people who retain it by giving points to each other so that they can have their own dream lives.

Whenever Lacie has a phone call with Naomi, her old friend, the viewers see Naomi working out all the time. As being one of the members of “quality people,” she is in a constant struggle of keeping her body in perfect shape that is a demand to be expected from such a figure in this world that there is no room for imperfection. The body is also a tool to be controlled and shaped in a way that the ones who are overweight are not qualified to stand as a “quality” person in the *Nosedive* community. The dystopic world that they live in does not only affect their personality, also their bodies are under control discipline. If one wants to analyze this society through the help of Foucaultian reading, it can be clear that the soul is punished as well as the body. With the restriction of the freedom and creating a self-control mechanism on people to adhere strictly to the rules, both the bodies and the soul are shaped in a way until one has no difference than the other.

When Lacie comes to realize how evil and fierce this world is, she talks about her past with Naomi and how she is tricked by her. This point can be considered as the nosedive point. Everything starts to fall apart for Lacie, her dreams are destroyed, and her life is ruined. The title *Nosedive* can be interpreted in a way that is the society's nosedive where genuine thoughts disappear and every individual show specific behavioural pattern to be the accepted one.

In dystopian works, the protagonist stands as a character who sees the flaws of the society, she/he lives unlikely to others. Lacie, on the other hand, does not seem to realize these flaws, such as a society that attributes people to act phony and limits their behaviour, until the very end. Turned out as a hero, she finds and raises her own voice by observing and announcing the ill-fated rules of the community. At the end of the episode, she is locked up in jail and gets into a quarrel with a stranger. This quarrel gives her a sense of freedom. The writer makes the audience to experience a kind of dichotomy that in spite of the fact that a prison is where freedom is restricted, she gains independence in the prison finally getting a chance to say whatever she wants and expresses herself in a freeway. The development of Lacie's character throughout the story makes her a perfect example of a hero from a dystopian world who is the
only one that is aware of a restrictive power mechanism that checks up on people in every possible way.

With the mechanism created to control individuals, restricting them to obey the rules of the community and to punish the ones who do not conform to the expectations, *Nosedive* is a perfect example of a dystopian work. All through the episode, Lacie Pound's struggle to be a qualified one is displayed. The society that is created is nothing but an illusion of a perfect world which, in fact, dominates and restrains the citizens which is one of the significant notions of a dystopian world. After the awakening from the deep sleep of this constructed fake world, Lacie speaks for herself and is locked up in prison for talking about the facts of the society. However, she gets a sense of freedom there; she screams, swears and smiles genuinely in contrast to the beginning scene where she tries to pick her best (feigned) smile. Compared to people who live under the constant gaze and shape themselves to look their best while living with the fear of becoming an outcast if they violate the rules, Lacie actually becomes the free one who has the ability to talk about whatever she wants.