



A Gander Into The Surveillance Of Today's World: Insights From The Dystopian Divergent Trilogy Of Veronica Roth

Esme Robina R

Research Scholar, University of Madras Department of English, Madras Christian College, Tambaram, Chennai

Corresponding Author: Esme Robina R

ABSTRACT: Today's world is on the brink of a chaos-scenario. One cannot predict what will ensue in a blink as the future is unknown. Analyzing the present trend of science and advancement many writers have considered the possibility of a dystopia in the days to come. Even in today's blockbusters, we see Artificial Intelligence taking control of the whole world. Why is that? With the current vogue of a tech-clad quotidian life and with it the consequential obliteration of the natural resources, one can hardly assume that a serene world is possible. Technology keeps track of every move as one browses; one cannot escape it unless one goes under an incognito mode. This paper attempts to highlight the surveillance ability of the present world which lurks under the shadow of science and how it resembles the dystopian tale of Veronica Roth's Divergent.

KEYWORDS: Dystopia, Science Fiction, Technology, Future, Post-Apocalypse, Surveillance, Divergent, Insurgent, Allegiant, Veronica Roth, Young Adult Literature, Dystopian Literature.

"There will come a time when it isn't 'They're spying on me through my phone' anymore. Eventually, it will be 'My phone is spying on me'." - Philip K. Dick

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I. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt a need to constantly check around as if someone is watching your every move? The present world of advancement and technology abounds with knowledge at the tip of our fingers but the bill is costly. Not only has it affected our connection with nature about but also it has left an intense effect on our mental state. One needs to be constantly aware of every little detail that one does in life. The privacy of a person is just for name-sake, there is no authenticity to prove that everything one does is private. When this is the issue of today, then everyone wears a mask to hide their true identity in the public, thereby tarnishing the wonderful feeling of freedom. The small liberty which lit the hearts of people has been ripped apart due to science and technological advancements. One finds millions of people hiding behind a filter of sorts. Even the government today has digitalized everything to keep tabs on people. Due to all this, one can sense that a dystopia is possible. Many writers have thus, delved into this genre to bring out the grim reality of the future. A commended writer in this genre, Veronica Roth, has created an innovative saga of a dystopian world with her debut novel Divergent. This trilogy weaves a bleak future where a structure is formed so as to experiment on people to get a pure-gene-based people. And for this experiment observation and surveillance is indispensable. Exploring this dystopian world, this paper will comprehend today's world and its surveillance capabilities that limit the freedom of a person and questions individuality.

II. THE ANALOGOUS SURVEILLANCE STUDY

The Divergent world is set in a futuristic Chicago, which is a perfect utopia on the surface level. Only when the outer layer is peeled away, the concealed dystopian world is realized. What is said to be lost in humans due to their reckless past; the government believes that it could be brought out again through a structure of their own making where people are divided into five factions based on their virtues. They are Abnegation: The Selfless, Amity: The Peaceful, Candor: The Honest, Erudite: The Intelligent and Dauntless: The Brave. If a person shows an aptitude for more than one virtue than they are called divergent and they are considered as threats for the society as they cannot be defined and are unique. The government has created various serums like truth serum, memory-wipe serum, mind-controlling serum to control people and above all the surveillance

cameras that observe everything the person does is the worst. On top of that, they are locked under a fence that wraps the whole city.

People are restricted to go their own way, they are kept under control and if some rebel against the government, then they are eliminated. People's conformity is enforced by a propagation of a lifeless mindlessness that renders the citizens inept of the thought or feeling required to question the controllers. Even their choices are controlled. Beatrice or Tris, the protagonist of the novel faces all these restrictions and identity upheaval. Being an Abnegation, she is controlled a lot as they are meant to be selfless and each faction adheres to their own dress code. During the aptitude test, she is said to be Divergent and the Test administrator, Tori hides Tris' footage so as to save her from getting killed. Tris chooses to join Dauntless in the Choosing ceremony and after that her every move is monitored by the higher-ups as she chose something out of the ordinary. During the initiates test in Dauntless, she undergoes various troubles and somehow manages to keep going. In the Fear Stimulations, Four or Tobias, the trainer, helps her by deleting most of the footages from the records, so that they do not find that she is different.

Everything, thus, is monitored lucidly. Even Tobias warns her that "They are watching you. You, in particular." (D 310) Eric is the person appointed by Jeanine, the Erudite, who becomes the power holder, to monitor and kill the Divergents. When Tris finds out about it she discerns the truth behind that tough guise of Eric, "For the first time, I recognize Eric for what he is: an Erudite disguised as a Dauntless, a genius as well as a sadist, a hunter of the Divergent" (D 362). One of the jobs of the Dauntless is to protect the city on the contours, which are huge walls. When the initiates look over it, Tris particularly sees that they lock the gates from the outside. "The lock is on the outside. I bite my lip. Why would they lock the gate from the outside and not the inside? It almost seems like they don't want to keep something out; they want to keep us in." (D 128) This evidently pictures the dystopian confinement which doesn't allow anyone to think on their own.

All these things turn Tris into an insurgent and she turns against the government and with some friends, she decides to uncover the lies made by the government. In the course of the tale, Tris eventually goes outside into the unknown lands leaving the city to find a peaceful life. But there she tumbles about a truth that is far worse than the one she left behind; the bureau had been watching them all along. Twenty-four hours they were observing their every move so as to achieve their goal. But here too, Tris sacrifices herself so that the people she loves may have a life free of restraints and have a wonderful life. Divergent, thus, vividly pictures the grappling factors of the young adults and its bleak portrayal of life in conformity is aptly applicable in our world today.

The present world is running online; everything is connected to the digital world. When we browse the web, the browser knows our every move. In the same way, the government of today is embarking on a dystopian world by restricted people to exercise their own freedom. Many who are seen as threats to the government are silenced forever and this is due to the surveillance mechanisms. Everything one does is visible online unless one goes off the grid. M. Keith Booker in his book *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* says: "Science has played a major role in the history of utopian thinking and in the modern turn from utopia to dystopia." (Booker 5) He also says that "These technological advances well illustrated Bacon's dictum that "knowledge is power" by providing concrete demonstrations of the amazing capabilities of the human mind to understand, dominate, and control nature-but these same advances were dominating and controlling people as well." (Booker 6)

III. CONCLUSION

Futuristic tales such as *Divergent*, thus provide us with an alternative and cautions us to make the right choice. Gregory Claeys says, "The task of the literary dystopia, then, is to warn us against and educate us about real-life dystopias." (Claeys 501) The present leads to the future, so if our world today is damaged by surveillance, then people will turn into mere pawns and puppets. There will no freedom and individuality will turn into mere fantasy. People will act under a guise and veracity would never be seen. Before this world reaches such a dystopia, why don't we uphold the resources from which we designed all the technological innovations? These dystopian visions of the future help one to be prepared for whatever comes next. It acts as a mind-drill for the things yet to unfold. Avoiding them now will enhance a better future.

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