Surveillance And Sousveillance (Control Vs. Freedom) In Little Brother

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Abstract

The world has become a global village. In a technologically advanced world, interaction, access to information and communication though, become so easy due to internet, yet it is not just an information superhighway. Not only it can be used for getting information and communication, it can also be used by non-state actors, terrorists, hackers and other criminal minded people. Internet is also an easy tool of creating fear, stalking, spreading fake news about others and damaging the status of the targeted people. Thus, it is also becoming a threat to human privacy and freedom. On one hand, it empowers us and on the other, it snatches the privacy and freedom of people. The present article explains this struggle at both the ends: to spy on others and to get freedom from spying. Close reading technique is used to dig out the relevant materials from the text for which conceptual framework is used as a lens. In the light of the concepts from different theories like: panopticism by Michael Foucault (1980; 2007) and Resistance and Sousveillance by Mann (2004), the novel Little Brother by Cory Doctorow (2008) is analyzed to reach to the intended results.

Background of the Study

No doubt, the age we are living in, is the age of science and technology. The whole world is enjoying its fruits. At the same time, what will be the consequences, if it turned out to be used as gathering information about its users or if one day, it is told that someone's activities are being watched online or if it is used as a tool to organize the non-state actors? There is usually a threat of using internet without the information of someone behind it who spies. Questions like these and others are pointing towards the fact that the advancement in science and technology also bears a dark side which is becoming a threat to human freedom. Human beings who are rebellious by nature are also in constant struggle to come up with counter measures. Thus there is a tug of war between those who are using technology to control others (spies) and those who are trying to subvert their plans (looking back the spies).

As literature is a powerful tool to highlight such sensitive issues of the time, many writers took pens to explain this problem of cyber surveillance which endangers human privacy and freedom. Doctorow is one amongst them. Little Brother is

an attempt to thoroughly explain this issue from both the angles of Surveillance and Sousveillance.

Statement of the Research Problem

Contemporary world observes remarkable changes. Everything has changed its dimension and is not used in the domains it was used in before. Terrorism is no more to terrorize someone, InfoTech and related advancements, and internet and artificial intelligence are not only in use to facilitate its users but also in use for surveillance and spying to kill the thoughts of the targeted users and threatening human privacy and freedom in the contemporary world. Doctorow is an American novelist and he has touched upon this problem in his work Little Brother (2008). He attempts to unveil the invisible enemy: spies in phones and computer systems. He also discusses the use of cyber surveillance and a side by side term to it i.e., 'sousveillance'.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the use of technology to gain power and subvert the illegal surveillance.
- To find ways in which cyber surveillance is challenging and effecting human's freedom.

Research Questions

In the light of the available extracts from the selected novel, this research aims at finding answers to the following questions:

(1) What are the ways in which humans can use technology to empower themselves and resist
it to avoid its illegal use?

(2) How does cyber surveillance affect and challenge humans, especially their freedom?

Significance of the Study

Surveillance is an act of keeping an eye on others and sousveillance is an opposite term to it. The study analyzes Little Brother (2008) and unveils that all social media sites, computer networks and the internet which connects them, can also be used to manipulate its users and to kill their intellect in one or the other way. The people, who use internet to get information and communicate, are directly or indirectly watched and monitored through the internet. The need is to bring awareness in them. Doctorow (2008) draws the attention of the social media users towards the secret war against their creativity and thoughts and the use of social media sites to control and catch them in its trap with even a single click. It helps the internet users to stop looking at the internet just as the 'information superhighway'. Researchers belonging to any field can benefit from this study by letting them know that social media sites are not only the means of getting information or communication but also as spies with 24 hours controlling, monitoring, and thought killing strategies. He tries to unveil this emerging threat to human privacy and freedom at stake and the human's attempt to subvert this in the form of sousveillance.

Literature Review

Technology has deeply integrated into our daily life and we are increasingly becoming dependent on the cyber space for social, political, religious, economic and personal interactions. Every aspect of life and services for those aspects of life are provided by the internet whether it is related to food, health, water, finance or communications with our loved ones or amongst different nations, sects or countries of the world. The increase in the use of internet for purposes like these and others has also increased users' privacy concerns. Privacy is in danger because of the surveillance which is becoming a common factor of our daily life which in turn, has changed the nature of

privacy which is everyone's birth right (Charlie, 2022).

As different organizations often seem busy in storing, processing and misuse of users' data, the concerns about personal data collection by the users, is the top trending issue amongst them (Thong & Hong, 2013). The fear is the exploitation of their collected data and the unauthorized access to their data (Smith, Milberg & Burke, 1996). Not only are we watched by others but also adopting ways of spying on others. Sites, on which we share our personal data like name, address, education and other information, can also become vulnerable to hackers who can use them to take out loans by using our name (Charlie, 2022). Different services are provided to us by different organizations by using our data. Online space is an open territory and has increasingly subjected to many threats. The reliance on the online space is creating new concerns as expert cyber criminals are busy in exploiting certain weak aspects in cyber space.

Apart from these, the changes in the face of technology with the passage of time has imposed new threat to humanity in the form of certain online risks – the threat to individual as well as national privacy, and the concerns about the individual and national security (Alegre,2021). Privacy is defined as the individual condition of life which is to be protected from publicity (Neetling et al., 1996). The concept is borrowed from the right of an individual to personal autonomy (Stair, 1992; Shank, 1986). Keeping in view all this, technology is no doubt becoming a threat to privacy rather than a solution as it was viewed ones (Rosenberg, 1993). The concern about personal privacy is increasing with the increase in the use of technology. A 1990 survey conducted by a biggest bureau company in USA found that 79% of the people asked about their concerns about the use of technology respond that their fear is about the use of technology becoming a source of processing their collected data (Frocht

& Thomas, 1994). Keeping in view the discussions on the concepts like cyber surveillance, privacy and security, Little Brother (2008) has also been analyzed in the light of the same discussions.

Karry Mallan (2014) analyzed Little Brother (2008) and has drawn our attention towards the concepts like espionage and spying been done in the past and its new form in the technologically advanced world as shown in the novel, with its special discussion on the use of technology, surveillance and espionage for the purposes like psychological warfare and brainwashing of the targeted individuals or nations. The tool in the modern world, according to his perspective, is the accumulation of data of the targeted nations by focusing on their daily activities. He also analyzed the novel as a resistance to the attempts of the state to snatch an individual's freedom and says that Marcus is in all of us.

Felix Larsson (2013) worked on the same novel from the perspective of the privacy under threat. He focused on the privacy becoming a myth in the modern world. He warns us from the dangers we will face in near future from the illusion of privacy shattering with the passage of time. So, he worked on the threat to privacy by analyzing the novel under discussion.

Similarly, Megan Lyann Isaac (2020) focused on the importance of privacy and the resistance against the promised comforts of security by the state and patriarchal surveillance in Little Brother (2008). He challenged the surveillance on the young people as a valuable goal and threw light on youth's independence. He worked on the importance of having an independent self and a balance between self-independence and society surveillance.

Keeping in view the above discussions on Little Brother (2008), its analysis from different aspects, and finding gap in research, the novel

under study has been analyzed with a new perspective i.e., the use of cyber surveillance and physical violence for purposes like targeting the best competitors throughout the world whom they considered a threat to their supremacy. This new dimension is explored by its focus on the aspects like: the importance of privacy and human freedom and the misuse of cyber surveillance and physical violence or torture for diverting the attention of the best competitors and targeting and mind-killing their intellect and waging a war on their thoughts in the name of security and war on terrorism.

DHS will be used as a metaphor for countries which want to maintain their supremacy on the rest of the world through the use of new technologies – cyber surveillance and torture against techno geeks. There is a cold war between these two extremes in the novel i.e., DHS and the Four Techno Geeks; one trying to control them, and the other to cope with this. Thus, the present study is going to make a relation between surveillance and sousveillance.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework is a lens through which any text can easily be analyzed and read. In order to derive facts and perceptions from a work, this is the best tool to be used. But, as the topic under study cannot be easily explained by using a single theory, therefore, concepts from other theories are also used to answer the intended questions. Theories by different theorists like: the concept of panoticism and controlled society by Foucault (1980, 2007) and Sousveillance and Resistance by Mann (2004) assist the researchers to analyze the work the novel.

Research Method for Data Analysis

Being qualitative in nature, the researchers have carried out close reading of the text. In addition to that relevant references, scholarly books and articles have been utilized to substantiate the findings of this research.

Analysis and Discussion

Human beings are born free and they want to remain free. This force leads them to gain power over others and those under this power also want to achieve their lost freedom. Thus, there is a constant struggle between these two opposite forces. In the novel, cyber surveillance is the aforementioned force and sousveillance is its opposite force.

The very title of the novel 'Little Brother' reminds us of a character of 'Big Brother' in the novel Nineteen Eighty Four (2021) by George Orwell. The title of the novel suggests that there is some connection between these two terms used differently by different novelists and the Little Brother seems a reaction to the 'Big Brother' as there is a strong relation between surveillance and sousviellance, where surveillance is depicted metaphorically by using the organization DHS as 'Big Brother' and sousviellance as a reaction to it by using the leading characters Marcus and his friends as 'Little Brother'.

As the story starts we meet a character Marcus Yallow, he is a student in Chavez high school situated at Sans Francisco. What he tells us about himself is what the story starts with, he says:

"I'm a senior at Cesar Chavez high in San Francisco's sunny Mission district, and that makes me one of the most surveilled people in the world … unless you're a clueless disciplinary officer who's far enough behind the curve that you still call the Internet "the information superhighway". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 6)

Closely looking at the choice of words by the author clarifies the intent with which the novel has been written in. Words like MOST SUREILLED, W1N5TON WINSTON,

SENIOR, INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY and phrases like "one of most survielled, people in the world, senior at Chavez, still call the internet the ,information superhighway", make it clear that there is something more than just the introduction of the leading character. In his introduction, he called himself the most survielled person which means that surveillance is at work in the novel, but then again as we see that he is a young boy studying in a high school, therefore, his becoming the prime target is not out of place. He draws the attention towards the use of the internet for purposes other than just considering it the information superhighway. He has called himself W1N5TON, rather than WINSTON and then he says that one will call him Winston if he considers internet and its use only for getting information. This monitoring of an individual is what Foucault (1980) calls as DESENDING phenomenon where the entire focus is shifted from a community to an individual as the main target; that is why Marcus says that "he is one of the most survielled people in the world". As the story progresses, many unusual activities like monitoring the very way one walks and tracking in the name of security are seen at work.

Marcus is trying to subvert the security systems at the school:

"Report to the administration office immediately" … anyway, never holds that against me (especially when I'm helping get with her webmail so she can talk to her brother who's stationed in Iraq)". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 7)

Where surveillance means monitoring or watching from above through installing the software: gait recognition software, snitch chips for tracking and school firewalls; sousvielance watching back to those who watch at you (Mann, 2004). In the above lines, it is done by Marcus using wet Kleenex, spoofing the gait recognition and nuking the snitch chips. The phrase "Rolling

eyes to each other" when Fred Benson tried to catch him when he was trying to disturb the security system shows that the two people are involved in this activity. Another phrase "the man was always coming down on me" shows that he is under surveillance for his activities that he has explained in next sentences. The overall understanding shows the struggle between the two parties, one trying to dominate and the other to subvert their plans. Thus, the struggle between freedom and control is explicitly present.

"W1n5t0n," he said, spelling it out again … No one at school ever called me w1n5t0n or even Winston. Not even my pals. It was Marcus or nothing". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 7)

As already discussed, the concern about personal privacy and freedom is increasing with the increase in the use of technology (Frocht & Thomas, 1994). No doubt, technology in this way is becoming a threat to privacy and not a solution as once it was believed (Rosenberg, 1994), that is why Marcus says that he is using a coded name W1N5TON that is his handle. This is the name in cyberspace that he has used for sneaking out of school and doing other cool stuff around school. Again, there is an intelligent use of language: the name WINSTON and using digits S similar to 5 and I with 1 is what a coded name can be confused in either WINSTON or W1N5ton.

"He slammed his hand down on the desk and then pointed his finger at me. … "You have 'reliable intelligence'? I'd like to see it". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 7)

Here again the struggle between surveillance and sosveillance is there. Marcus is investigated by the principal of the school, threatening him not to become like Uriarte and stop using security countermeasures. For resistance, radio jammers are used to set off the school hallway. Marcus as sosveillance laughed at the security systems in the form of all time surveillance and says that if

they have reliable resources, he would love to see it. Picking of words and the use of sentences show the hidden intentions of the leading character. One in the form of surveillance is threating the resistance in the form of violence and detention when the principal tells to Marcus that he will be liable to years in prison if he refused to cooperate with them. Another term "sweet hack" shows the implicit intentions of the main character and his struggle to subvert the security systems.

Marcus again is using an implicit way to tell the resistance he is going to show to the authorities and says that he calls authorities by the name "sir" only when he wants to mess with them which means when he wants to subvert their authorities. And he call this "tell" a way of knowing the intentions of the other person. "If there's evidence, sir, I think you should call the police and turn it over to them. It sounds like this is a very serious matter, and I wouldn't want to stand in the way of a proper investigation by the duly constituted authorities" (Doctorow, 2008, p. 7).

Looking for a culprit in the cyberspace is like looking for a needle in a hay sack. That is why, Marcus challenges the principal to give him evidence for his involvement in hacking the school security system.

Michael Focault has given a concept called normation which means conforming human beings to a certain behavior, habits or rituals. Disciplining an individual is considered as the utopia of a government. Here is an example of this normation in the novel for creating a disciplined society given by Foucault (2007):

"Gait recognition software takes pictures of your motion, tries to isolate you in the pics as a silhouette, and then tries to match the silhouette to a database to see if it knows who you are. … Plus you get a great reflexology foot massage in the process (I kid. Reflexology is about as

scientifically useful as gait-recognition". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 9)

The point Marcus raised here is that although gait recognition software are useful tools for identifying a threat from a suspect, but collision can make it more difficult. He gives reason that if this measurement matches more than one person, which happens in most cases, what will be the result? If at all, it can recognize you, Marcus again has the solution to look back at them and has the countermeasure against this kind of surveillance as well. He comes up with the solution as explained by Brands and Showeden (2014) that in big cities, to avoid the surveillance through CCTV cameras, the citizens accordingly make certain attempts. In the novel, Marcus is putting gravel into his shoes to change his walking style to avoid gait recognition cameras which is a way of sousveillance and freedom that he is trying to achieve.

"As Albrechtslund has given the concept and analysis about the importance of participatory surveillance he defines this kind of surveillance as citizens being involved amongst the watchers and being watched. … and as I launched it, it became invisible to Windows, and so invisible to the network's snoop-ware". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 10)

Surveillance has become a threat to human freedom and it is becoming more dangerous than terrorism. This is what Marcus has highlighted in the novel "they showed that universal surveillance is more dangerous than terrorism". (Doctorow, 2008, p. 10).

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, modern world is the age of science and technology and it has changed the very quality of our life and has made it comfortable. But at the same time, the most important technological gift i.e., the internet has not only interconnected the whole world but it has

also made our life vulnerable to threats of cybercrimes. The very act of surveillance on the targeted people and the nations has also become easy through the use of the internet. Surveillance through the internet is called as cyber surveillance. Cyber surveillance is a threat to human freedom. Human beings who want to live a life with freedom and liberty will never be happy with the fact that they are secretly watched and being monitored. It is high time to create awareness in the people of the less technologically advanced countries so that they may use the internet with the knowledge that they can be watched.

Internet, if it can be used to monitor human beings, can also be used the other way around. Thus, the third world war is in the form of cyber surveillance and sousveillance. The whole world has become a battle field in the form of cyberspace and every nation wants to defeat the other. The identification of the enemy in the cyber space is as difficult as finding a needle in the hay sac. Thus, winning this war becomes impossible. The use of social media has made it very easy to exaggerate the war between two countries to manipulate a targeted group of people to divert the attention of a targeted nation; and it can also be used to trace those who are becoming a threat to any monarchy or government. Cyber experts are also working for governments to target those people who are speaking the unspeakable truths and are threatening the authorities and their supremacy. Such people are then tortured and detained for years. In this way internet and its misuse is becoming a threat to someone's privacy and freedom.

The research is significant in a sense that it has highlighted all these uprising issues and threats to human freedom and human's resistance to this imminent threat to their privacy and freedom. It is paving a way for the future researchers to work on novels being written on cybercrimes or about technology becoming a threat to human privacy. This will help the people belonging to the area of literature to start thinking about something very common being in use by them all the time: it can be a CCTV camera. No one one wants to be watched and monitored all the time as almost all of us want to live a private life and enjoy some personal and private moments.

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