

The Panopticon Principle: Surveillance and Psychological Control in *Divergent*

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ABSTRACT

This abstract examines the application of Jeremy Bentham's 'Panopticon' principle as a framework for psychological control in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*. In the dystopian ruins of Chicago, the faction system functions as a macroscopic Panopticon, where the constant threat of being observed forces citizens to internalize societal norms and regulate their own behavior. This study explores how the state maintains order not through physical bars, but through the permanent visibility of its people. The 'Aptitude Test' and the daily performance of every faction serve as tools of classification, turning individuals into objects of knowledge that can be easily managed or discarded. Advanced technologies, specifically the mind-control serums developed by the Erudite, represent the ultimate evolution of the panoptic gaze, moving surveillance from the external environment into the human subconscious. This system relies on the fear of ostracization, as the threat of becoming "factionless" mirrors the social death of the prisoner who fails to conform. However, the existence of Divergents—individuals who cannot be categorized or predicted—represents a fundamental glitch in this surveillance system. Their resistance highlights the limits of institutional control and the resilience of human autonomy against the totalitarian systems. Ultimately, the narrative serves as a cautionary analysis of how modern surveillance can erase individual identity, replacing authentic choice with a state of anticipatory conformity. Through the journey of Tris Prior, the text demonstrates that reclaiming agency requires subversion of the central authority's gaze and the rejection of

a singular, classified identity. This research underscores the enduring relevance of Bentham in understanding the intersection of technology, power, and the psyche in contemporary dystopian fiction.

Keywords: Panopticon, Surveillance, Individuality, Rebellion.
