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"Please Don't Tell Mrs. Wattlesbrook": The Panopticon in Austenland (2007)

Abstract

Shannon Hale's perhaps most famous work, Austenland (2007), is a romance novel centered on Jane Hayes, an Austen aficionado, dissatisfied with her love life. In an attempt to remedy this, she travels to a faux-Regency getaway destination, Austenland. An abundance of regulations and the behavior of Mrs. Wattlesbrook, the owner, create a strictly ruled society. This paper aims to analyze how Austenland's Pembrook Park represents a society that monitors its subjects by using the concept of the panopticon. Drawing on the theories of Jeremy Bentham and Michel Foucault, the panopticon will be explained as a system in which subjects are under constant surveillance. The concept will then be applied to Hale's novel to show why the characters abide by Mrs. Wattlesbrook's rules even when she is not around, with only minor attempts at rebellion. Thus, the novel shows the effective use of a panoptic system in governing subjects in a given society.

Keywords: Austenland, Shannon Hale, panopticon, popular fiction, surveillance

1. Introduction

The universal popularity of Jane Austen and her works has spawned a plethora of adaptations and reimaginings of her life and novels. Austenland, a 2007 novel by the American author of popular fiction Shannon Hale, finds its place among the Austen-centered creations as a work that sets its protagonist, Jane Hayes, in a Regency holiday resort/immersive experience, allowing her to live out her Austen fantasy. Jane is a devoted Austen fan looking for romance. She travels to England to visit Austenland and gets entangled with two potential love interests, Henry, an actor embodying

a Regency gentleman, and Martin, a gardener. The popularity of the novel is evidenced by its 2013 movie adaptation directed by Jerusha Hess and starring Keri Russell, JJ Field, and Bret McKenzie.

Despite its popularity, Austenland has not been analyzed much in academic circles. Some scholarship exists, even though the level of the authors' engagement with the text varies, and the research is split between the novel and the movie version. For example, Margaret C. Sullivan (2022) and Cecilia Konchar Farr (2016) mention it only in passing. Maddalena Pennacchia (2017) investigates how the readers engage with a text in general, from reading to watching and ultimately participating in it, such as through visiting a theme park, as is the case in Austenland. Áine Madden (2023) places the novel within the body of work dealing with the experience of inhabiting an (allegedly) authentic Regency society. Similarly, Marilyn Francus (2010) writes about the potentially harmful obsession with Jane Austen (and Mr. Darcy) and how it is (not) dealt with in Hale's Austenland. Likewise, Rosa García-Periago (2023) concludes that, in the movie, the heroine's romantic struggles are resolved once she rejects the commodification of Jane Austen and abandons her obsession. Also writing about the cinematic version of Austenland, Karen Bloom Gevirtz (2017) discusses its pseudo-historical setting. Finally, Janice Wardle (2018) investigates how the film "utilises and interrogates the conventions of biopics and classic literary adaptations" of Austen (262). Evidently, while some authors have tackled Austenland and have done so from different angles, the work is frequently only touched upon instead of being thoroughly analyzed.

To fill in this gap, this paper explores the representation of the society in Austenland while connecting it with the concept of the panopticon. The society that Jane Hayes joins is isolated and characterized by strict rules that keep it veiled from the rest of the world, while also closely regulating its subjects. To ensure that the guests follow the rules, the owner of Austenland, Mrs. Wattlesbrook, has established a surveillance system evocative of the panopticon. Panopticism, developed by Jeremy Bentham and later extensively written about by Michel Foucault, refers to a system in which subjects are potentially constantly surveyed, while they themselves cannot see the surveyor. While the original panopticon referred to a prison house, the concept has expanded and can be applied to any institution; it has especially found much use in the contemporary era, in which "new technology has freed panopticism from architectural constraint" (Gold and Gold 225). The characters of the novel, including Jane, are aware of the implications and reach of the

surveillance operating in Austenland. Jane even goes so far as to make a reference to Big Brother (Hale 96), in a nod to George Orwell's seminal work Nineteen Eighty-Four, which famously dealt with constant surveillance. Because of the presence of a surveillance system in Austenland, this paper aims to analyze how Austenland's Pembrook Park represents a society that monitors its subjects through the concept of the panopticon. The paper thus contributes to the body of work about Austen adaptations and popular fiction in general, but also to the studies dealing with surveillance—it casts light on how even an unlikely candidate, a popular romance novel, can showcase a successful use of a panoptic system, proving that the panopticon is a versatile concept still relevant to various aspects of life. To achieve this, the paper will first explain what panopticism refers to and how it has already been applied in literary works, and then turn its attention to how Austenland successfully establishes the social rules and makes sure they are followed.

2. Big Brother Is Watching You: Panopticon and Its Application in Popular Media

In his intellectual aspirations, the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) largely focused on questions of punishments and penitentiaries. Fitting into the context of rationalism and empiricism of the Age of Reason and Enlightenment, his aspirations, in part, consisted of reforming the penitentiary system (Roth 108).

Bentham got the idea for the panopticon from his brother, Samuel, who was working in Russia, employed in the service of Prince Grigory Potemkin. As Bentham himself made sure to emphasize, it was Samuel who came up with the idea of a circular building that would allow the supervisor to monitor all of his charges at a glance. For Samuel Bentham, this was an idea that could be used in supervising and maximizing the utility of peasant workers; for Jeremy Bentham, who, in 1786, paid a visit to his brother in Russia, this was the ideal blueprint for a prison (Semple 99-100; Weinreich 4, Himmelfarb 201). Thus, in Samuel's invention, Jeremy found the vehicle through which he could "give substance to ideas that had been long maturing in his mind" (Semple 25), ideas he was forming during his long-term preoccupation with issues of punishments and incarceration.

Bentham worked out the details of the panopticon concept in a series of letters, written in 1786 and sent to England to his friend George Wilson to be published. After Wilson refused to participate, the expanded form of the letters was ultimately published only in 1791. Elaborating on the structure, Bentham imagines the building as circular, with an "inspector's lodge" at the center of the circle made of prisoners' cells. Windows on the outer walls of the cells and iron gratings as the entrances ensure that the cells are always visible; simultaneously, the central lodge is constructed so that its partitions prevent the inspector from being seen. Thus, the prisoner can always be seen, whereas the inspector cannot; furthermore, the prisoner can never be sure whether he is being observed or not (Bentham 35-37). He summarizes the design by underlining its two key components: "The essence of it consists, then, in the centrality of the inspector's situation, combined with the well-known and most effectual contrivances for seeing without being seen" (Bentham 43). Importantly, Bentham emphasizes that the effect of the surveillance does rely on the inspector truly being there and controlling (and punishing) the events and behaviors (44-45). Thus, the human "behavioral principle of avoidance" ensures that "so long as environmental cues can sustain the belief that one's behavior is being constantly monitored, successful avoidance behavior will be obtained" (Strub 52). Fearing the consequences of their deviant actions, the prisoners internalize the rules of proper behavior and impose the rules on themselves even when the authority figure is not visible or, perhaps, even present. In Foucault's words, this system works "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201).

Bentham offered a wide array of usage for his ideal surveillance building: according to him, it may be applied for institutions "punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected, employing the idle, maintaining the helpless, curing the sick, instructing the willing in any branch of industry, or training the rising race in the path of education" (34). Thus, prisons, asylums, jails, poorhouses, hospitals, and schools are only some of the institutions that may employ the panoptic system of surveillance. In his seminal study on the panopticon, Michel Foucault sublimates the concept of a building based on a panopticon into a system found in the society on the whole: "The Panopticon (…) must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men (…) Whenever

one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (Foucault 205). Freeing the panopticon from the bounds of a physical building enables the concept to be applied to other areas of life, such as the everyday experience of potentially being observed through security cameras on the streets, in the stores, or being monitored in any setting with a hierarchy of power.

2.1. "A Fiendishly Efficient Instrument": Panopticon in Literature

After Michel Foucault revived and popularized the concept of panopticon, it started permeating literary scholarship. Works such as Mark Seltzer's Henry James and the Art of Power (1984), John Bender's Imagining the Penitentiary (1987), and D.A. Miller's The Novel and the Police (1988) discuss the panopticism in the writing style of the chosen novels (Wrobel 5). More recently, Panopticism: Literary and Critical Approaches, special issue of Revue d'études benthamiennes (2022), brought together several texts about the literal or metaphoric manifestations of this system. In general, authors have analyzed novels dealing with prisons to show how they implement the structure and system of a panopticon, such as in Angela Carter's Nights at the Circus (1984) (see Toye) and Jenni Fagan's The Panopticon (2012) (see Leblond).

While the panopticon is a natural fit for narratives dealing with incarceration, authors also tend to apply it to the whole structure of their imagined literary society. Such is the case in many dystopian novels, where the protagonist inhabits an all-seeing, totalitarian society. Somewhat ironically, it was Foucault who said that "there is no risk (…) that the increase of power created by the panoptic machine may degenerate into tyranny" (207). He finds some merit in introducing the panoptic system, seeing it as a scaffolding for various aspects of socioeconomic progress, due to its ability "to strengthen the social forces – to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply" (Foucault 208). While panopticism may not necessarily lead to tyranny, it is certainly a tool frequently used to uphold a (totalitarian) regime. As Janet Semple explains, "surveillance is a tool of administration like any other and can be put to a bad or a good use" (144). Works that explicitly link totalitarianism with the panopticon exemplify how the latter "can too easily become the prototype of a fiendishly efficient

instrument of totalitarian control, of ruthless social engineering, and of psychological manipulation" (Semple 316). With its world-famous concept of Big Brother, Orwell's almost incomparably influential Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) remains the blueprint for surveillance in dystopia.[1] A more recent dystopian example is found in the society of Suzanne Collins's Hunger Games series (2008-present) (see Wezner).

3. Is It Surprising That Austenland Resembles the Panopticon?: Surveillance in Austenland (2007)

As apparent from these works of dystopian fiction, panopticon's "ceaseless vigilance (...) has too often been the instrument of totalitarian tyranny" (Semple 144). Interestingly, Semple also lists "the ever-wakeful, ever-watchful eye of Tolkien's Dark Lord" (144) as an example of a panoptic structure. Such a broad spectrum of genres and oppressive systems confirms that the panopticon's "great excellence consists in the great strength it is capable of giving to any institution it may be thought proper to apply it to" (Bentham 93). On this account, it is likewise possible to apply the panoptic system to a holiday resort/immersive experience like the one found in Shannon Hales's novel.

Jane decides to visit Austenland after the trip was received as a gift (paid for in full) by her rich late aunt. Importantly, the pamphlet inviting Jane to Pembrook underlines that there are "[n]o scripts. No written endings" (Hale 13), but this notion will be critically undermined throughout the novel. As the analysis will show, the rules are designed to lead the clients to an orchestrated ending. To ensure that the clients are abiding by the rules, and that they are behaving in line with Austenland's code of conduct, the owner, Mrs. Wattlesbrook, relies on a system reminiscent of the panopticon.

3.1. The First Rule of Austenland – You Do Not Talk about Austenland: Rules and Regulations in the Austenland Society

To begin with, the key principle is preserving the secrecy around the whole experience. The general public is not allowed to know the intricacies of the operation unless they become paying customers themselves. The clients and actors sign confidentiality agreements that prevent them

from spreading information to outsiders, as Jane finds out when she reads an online review of the experiences by a woman who says: “Back from Pembrook Park, my second year. Even better than the first, especially the ball (…) but I signed a confidentiality agreement, so that’s all I’ll say publicly” (Hayes 15). Upon further inspection, Jane finds “[n]o Wikipedia article about the elusive locale. No photos. This was the Area 51 of vacation resorts” (Hale 15). Much like in a dystopian society like the one in Nineteen Eighty-Four, where the government decides what the population knows in terms of history and politics or consumes, in terms of media entertainment (Booker 78), Austenland is built on strict control of information. Only once you purchase a visit do you receive a handbook about Austenland – including a set of rules defining the guests’ conduct. Thus, the rules are introduced even before the clients arrive at the destination. Jane experiences this firsthand when she comes to Heathrow and is welcomed by an Austenland driver. She attempts to chat with him but finds that the class distinctions have already been put in place; he is not allowed to engage in small talk since “[t]he servant class is invisible. Jane spent the drive going over her packet of notes, ‘Social History of the Regency Period’” (Hale 21). The notes in question are essentially rules on how to interact with people—who is introduced to whom, the proper way of addressing other guests, the allowed pastimes. The book emphasizes the severe adherence to the rules: “It is imperative that these social customs be followed to the letter. For the sake of all our guests, any person who flagrantly disobeys these rules will be asked to leave. Complete immersion in the Regency period is the only way to truly Experience Austen’s England” (Hale 22).

The appearance of the Regency society relies on several factors. It is, first of all, a game of pretend taking place in an inauthentic setting posing as an early-nineteenth-century country house. Next, people wear costumes to be more immersed in the experience. In this, it is highlighted that “[i]mmersion means what one has—corsets, coiffures, croquet—and has not, specifically electronics” (Bloom Gevirtz 79). However, there are exceptions in both cases: (historically inaccurate) makeup is allowed, and the house has electricity and modern sanitary facilities. These exceptions mark the arbitrary ruling of the powers that be. Instead of closely following historical circumstances, exceptions are allowed when the governing power (Mrs. Wattlesbrook) decides to allow them, thus marking her as an autocrat.

Finally, Austenland relies on the performance of the people populating it (Wardle 258). The actors are there to either ensure the functioning of the estate (servants, maids, gardeners, etc.) or to provide entertainment for the ladies (the gentlemen). The actors follow the rules of propriety, while also following the overarching script of whom they are supposed to woo and "propose to" at the final grand ball. At the same time, the experience hinges upon the performance of the guests, who change their names and their ages. Except for being able to change such core aspects of herself, Jane is also told to mold the way she behaves. Mrs. Wattlesbrook explains: "I expect all of you ladies to maintain appropriate manners and conversation even when alone. In other words, no gossip, no swapping university prank stories, no yo's and ho's and all that. I am very strict about my observances, hm?" (Hale 24). This admonition sets the stage for the analysis of surveillance in the Austenland society in two distinct ways. Firstly, Mrs. Wattlesbrook makes it clear that she wants the clients to follow her rules even when in private, with no one around to watch them. Secondly, she is "strict about her observances" in both senses of the word: she wants her rules to be observed (followed), and she will observe (survey) the clients to ensure it is so. She is, thus, hinting at the existence of a panoptic system.

3. 2. "Let's Hope You're Not Her Spy": Surveying Austenland

In terms of surveillance and panopticism, it can be said that Mrs. Wattlesbrook's rules have been drilled into the guests to such a degree that they have internalized them and will continue to regulate themselves even without an authority figure nearby. As Foucault explains: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-3). The surveillance is thus tied to discipline. Fearful of the consequences, disciplined people will follow the rules at all times so as to avoid being observed while breaking them. Discipline, according to Foucault, "arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways" (219). In the novel, Mrs. Wattlesbrook's instructions about proper behavior even in private prove to be effective immediately, not just for Jane, but for other guests, too. In her first encounter with a fellow client

Miss Eliza Charming, Jane introduces herself as Jane Erstwhile, adopting her temporary identity. Eliza, for her part, then promptly notes: “Oh dear (…) I don’t think I’m supposed to talk to you until we’ve been properly introduced. Let’s pretend we haven’t met” (Hale 37). Although the two women are alone in this scene, Jane adheres to her new identity, while Eliza recalls that parties who have not been previously introduced are not yet allowed to converse. This aligns with Foucault’s statement that the panopticon establishes the “automatic functioning of power” (201) on account of people being afraid of being constantly visible. Both women recall the need to follow rules, and they do so without the explicit presence of an authority figure.

Several instances prove even more explicitly that “the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action” (Foucault 201). In a panopticon, people should, ideally, be under constant surveillance, but if that proves impossible, the inspected “should conceive himself to be so” (Bentham 34). Characters are not, perhaps, always observed, but they feel that they could be. For example, when Jane decided to confide her fears about not being able to keep up the Regency pretense to Mr. Henry Nobley, an Austenland gentleman, “[s]he leaned forward, whispering, in case Mrs. Wattlesbrook installed microphones in the shrubbery” (Hale 52). When meeting another guest, Miss Heartwright, who lives in a separate, smaller house with her old, drowsy mother, Jane wants to find out why a high-paying customer would accept such a boring experience: “Jane had been about to ask why Miss Heartwright put up with this drab little existence (…) but Jane knew such questions were forbidden. Likely Mrs. Heartwright was only faking the snore and listened keenly for any illegal tidbits to pass on to the proprietress” (Hale 93). Here, it is clear that “the constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed” (Foucault 206). Jane has learned to hold her tongue for fear of being overheard by Mrs. Wattlesbrook’s devices or spies. Thus, the breach of regulations has been prevented by a well-established surveillance system.

While the system relies on disciplined subjects, it also works to keep the subjects separate. According to Foucault, discipline “must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions—anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions” (Foucault 219). Constantly in danger of being surveyed, the subjects are afraid to confide in one

another and the system then creates subjugated, isolated people. For example, Miss Charming later asked Jane if she was happy with how little amusement they were getting out of the experience and "Jane glanced at the lamp, wondering if Mrs. Wattlesbrook had it bugged. 'I am Jane Erstwhile, niece of Lady Templeton, visiting from America,' she said robotically" (Hale 104-5). Again, Jane refuses to let her real thoughts be known. Instead, she recites the lines given to her by the governing system. Importantly, she refuses to take part in Miss Charming's attempt at agitating. The fear of surveillance contributes to Jane's inability to "bond with the other guests at Pembrook Park" (Francus). Instead of potentially joining up in Miss Charming's protests, she proves herself to be a disciplined subject, and so the possibility of creating the "horizontal conjunctions" is eliminated.

However, Jane possesses a rebellious streak that occasionally endangers her. As Bloom Gevirtz observes, "Jane breaks the rules when they do not suit her" (85). Early on, she exhibits her rebellious spirit when she refuses to turn over her cell phone to Mrs. Wattlesbrook when the latter confiscates all electronics. Instead, she only turns in her MP3 player (Hale 27). This early revolt is partially caused by the fact that Mrs. Wattlesbrook has highlighted how Jane is not a typical Austenland customer, on account of being too poor to afford the experience on her own. Jane bitingly notes: "She wasn't the usual type of client, was she? Then she certainly wouldn't try to act like it" (Hale 27).

Importantly, the Austenland surveillance system does combine "apparent omnipresence" and "real presence," in line with Bentham's description of the observation (45). While Jane and other characters have exhibited the feeling of being watched, for the system to function properly, it is important that they actually are being watched. As Bentham stipulates, "the more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained" (34). In Jane's case, this proves to be correct. Days later, her phone is discovered, and Jane is to be escorted from the grounds: "'Your maid discovered an unmentionable among your things.' Mrs. Wattlesbrook dangled a cell phone between her pinched fingers. Jane glared at the maid Matilda, who smiled smugly" (Hale 113). The means of discovering the phone are particularly interesting because Jane is reported by a maid who has rummaged through Jane's things. The maid observing Jane's private chambers

aligns with Foucault's observation about "the penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power" (198). That is, privacy is an illusion when all aspects of life are surveyed. Additionally, this scene proves that anyone in Austenland could be a spy. Instead of Mrs. Wattlesbrook having to observe everyone, everywhere, all the time, she has agents who do that for her. This allows her to be in the know and stay in power. Moreover, as Foucault notes, there is a hierarchy in the observation: the spies report to Mrs. Wattlesbrook. Furthermore, as Jane guesses, the maid probably reports her because she will get a bonus (Hale 113). Harry Strub also explains how low-ranking individuals residing in surveillance systems "are mobilized to scrutinize and evaluate each other and to share power vicariously through identification with the entire organization" (43). For the maid, then, this is an opportunity not only to gain a bonus but to achieve a sense of power by fulfilling a task given to her. Jane is saved only by Miss Heartwright's intervention, as the other woman claims the phone is hers![2] From then on, Jane is more mindful about breaking the rules. As in Bentham's prediction, the discovery of being surveyed disciplines her into following the rules. When Jane does misbehave, it is generally in instances connected with her two potential love interests. The majority of these instances take place before the situation with the phone; yet even those show the overt fear of being discovered.

Her first love interest is Martin, a gardener apparently hesitant to break the rules. Unused to the life of minimal exercise, Jane decides to go for an illicit run but is observed by a gardener. He makes his presence known and she immediately thinks about the possible consequences if he turns her in: "You, uh, caught me there at an unladylike moment. Mrs. Wattlesbrook would probably box my ears" (Hale 49). This instance proves that Jane takes the rules seriously and believes that disregarding them is punishable. The gardener then proceeds to apologize for intruding and says: "Sorry, I shouldn't talk (…) I'm not supposed to talk to you" (Hale 49). Like Miss Charming earlier, the gardener is aware that they are not supposed to interact without introduction. His fear is doubled due to another aspect of impropriety—he belongs to the working class and should not converse with a lady visiting Pembrook: "I'm supposed to be invisible. You don't know all the lectures we heard on the matter—stay out of the way, look down, don't bother the guests (…) So, anyhow, how do you do, the name's Martin Jasper, (…) and please don't tell Mrs. Wattlesbrook. I

need this job" (Hale 50). Evidently, Martin is afraid of Mrs. Wattlesbrook just as much as Jane is. Both could suffer consequences for their improper behavior. This creates an atmosphere of fear and distrust among the members of Austenland society.

After this encounter, Martin seems to Jane like the only genuine person in Austenland. She begins to spend more time with him, but the fear of being surveyed persists. Like in the town described by Foucault at the onset of his chapter on panopticism: "Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere" (195). For example, Jane visits Martin when she notices that he has a TV and asks for the score of a basketball game. Martin is apparently startled: "Martin stared blankly for a moment, then looking around as if trying to spy out eavesdroppers (…) 'You are going to catch me at everything bad, aren't you? Let's hope you're not her spy. She'll have my balls for stew'" (Hale 64). In an inversion of the roles, Jane is also potentially the inspector. This exemplifies the over-arching feeling of distrust among the subjects of this society. Walking back home after her dalliance with Martin that same night, Jane feels "strange creeping through that big house at night, and she had the itchy sensation of being watched or followed" (Hale 67), further ossifying the sense of constant surveillance.

Jane also breaks the rules when in the company of her other potential love interest, Henry Jenkins, playing the role of a gentleman called Henry Nobley. He is the one she confides in about her worries of not being able to perform as a character in Austenland, despite the fear of microphones listening in from the shrubbery. Henry reciprocates by exhibiting genuine concern for her and inquiring about the reasons for her Austenland visit, thus breaking the character of a Regency-era gentleman (Hale 52). Later, the two end up having to perform together in a theatrical production. The piece being a romance caters to the guests and their desire to spend time with gentlemen. The guests and the actors practice their parts in private and the rules seem to have temporarily changed: "The mood of late had let a bit of Bohemia into Regency England, the usual strict social observances bending, the rehearsals allowing the couples to slip away alone and enjoy the exhilarating intimacy of the unobserved" (Hale 136). Yet this intimacy is not an organic one, as it was consciously sanctioned by the rule-makers. It is only a period of grace granted to the guests before a return to the strict adherence to the rules, evocative of how Orwell's O'Brien knew about Winston and Julia's illicit relationship all along but allowed it to carry on—for a time.

After returning to everyday life, Jane is again fearful of being caught transgressing. Henry asks to escort her to the drawing room, upsetting the established social order, yet she notes: "'It's not proper,' she whispered, the fear of Wattlesbrook in her. She didn't want to be sent home, not before the ball" (Hale 150). Evidently, she is now fully aware of the consequences. It is only because Henry says, "[p]roper be damned" (Hale 150) that she accepts his offer. Assumingly, Henry would take the fall and suffer the majority of the consequences, if they were to be meted out. Later on, Jane ultimately decides to ignore the rules one final time, but only because it is on the final night of her Austenland experience; meaning, she is leaving the experience in the morning anyway. The scene in question is one she shares with Martin, who wants to spend time with her, but their relationship is frowned upon due to the class disparity. Because of this, they are surveyed by Mrs. Wattlesbrook: "Jane followed his glance and saw Mrs. Wattlesbrook (…) eyeing them suspiciously" (Hale 166). Jane decides to go against the expectations and starts dancing with him, which apparently incites Mrs. Wattlesbrook's anger: "As the dance finished, Jane noticed Mrs. Wattlesbrook making her determined way toward them (…) Jane grabbed his hand and ran, fleeing" (Hale 166-67). Not only has Jane consciously danced with Martin while being observed, but she also stands up against the figure of power by escaping from the ball with him. At this point, it seems like Jane's rebellious character has revived and that she has successfully fought against the oppressive system.

However, it soon turns out that Martin has been Jane's intended match all along. This discovery casts a different light on all of their interactions. Although he is a servant there, he must be "always prepared for an unexpected romance," due to "contingency plans" put in place to ensure that guests experience a satisfactory romance (Hale 176). What Jane thought was a genuine attraction was in fact another pretend play. Mrs. Wattlesbrook explains that most of their interactions, as well as their shared interests, were engineered: "He reported to me regularly. We knew of your fascination with basketball and the New York Knickerbockers, and the rest was easy" (Hale 176). With such knowledge, it was easy to construe circumstances in which Jane would overhear a basketball game on Martin's TV and come to see how her favorite team was playing. Here, "Martin and Mrs. Wattlesbrook use her expectations and fantasies to manipulate her" (Bloom Gevirtz 82). All of Jane's apparent transgressions concerning Martin were observed, allowed, and even

encouraged. Furthermore, Martin's reports build upon the already explained de-centralized system of surveillance, confirming that anyone can be an agent of the panoptic system. Like in Nineteen Eighty-Four, "networks of human spies" (Strub 40), such as Jane's maid and Martin, hold up the system through spying and reporting to Mrs. Wattlesbrook. Therefore, in Austenland, the all-seeing system actually proves to be a successful, well-oiled machine.

4. Conclusion

While Shannon Hale's novel is primarily a romance both focusing on reading and experiencing Jane Austen and on replicating the plot of Pride and Prejudice, Austenland also represents a work ripe with examples of using a panoptic system to keep the subjects in line. Built on a society regulated by strict rules, it can be read alongside works such as Nineteen Eighty-Four to dig deeper into the structure and functioning of a panoptic system. Such surveillance societies use the concept of the panopticon but do not constrict it to institutionalized use. Austenland is not a prison, a hospital, or a school, where panopticism frequently finds its home, but it resembles one in terms of the constant, intricate surveillance taking place in it. Because the characters are familiarized with the rules and threatened with expulsion if they break them, they start to fear the consequences and internalize the rules, disciplining themselves. In this, they are exemplifying the human avoidance principle and proving Foucault's theses about the "automatic functioning of power" (201). Afraid that they may be observed at all times, but uncertain if they actually are being observed, the characters govern themselves. The abstract fear of surveillance proves to be a real danger when it turns out that Mrs. Wattlesbrook truly does employ spies to report back to her. Additionally, while Jane's remarks about potential technological devices having been installed to spy on the guests are not proven as correct, they also are not disproven, either; in the modern world brimming with technology, the fear of it being used to survey people is not inconceivable.

Crucially, the habitants of Austenland apparently do not try to rebel against the system that, with the strict imposition of sometimes arbitrary rules and the penetration into people's privacy, begins to resemble the dystopian or totalitarian societies found in other genres. Having internalized the rules, the subjects are not keen on standing up against them. After learning a harsh lesson, Jane does it only when the consequences, the punishment, would be minimal: being expelled on the last

night of her stay would not be a great loss. Furthermore, even when she finds out that she has been swindled into thinking Martin is truly interested in her when he is actually also an actor, Jane does not try to rebel. Instead of trying to dismantle the oppressive system, she merely leaves it. She is followed by Henry, who quits his acting job and pursues her. Through their romance, the novel shows that true affection grows outside of the playacting: Jane is first more deeply interested in Henry when he reveals his true thoughts early on, and he ultimately "wins the heroine by breaking character and taking real action" (Nachumi and Oppenheim), by leaving Austenland. Yet the novel fails to deal with the oppressive system itself.[3] Austenland will continue to thrive as a panoptic, totalitarian society. With the reliance on human spies and potential use of technology, the owner of Austenland has created a smooth-running panoptic system that ensures that the subjects internalize the discipline and fail to make horizontal connections necessary for changing the system; rather than reforming the society, the dissidents leave it. Thus, the novel proves that using the panopticon is still a viable way to subjugate people in a given society.

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[1]Orwell's novel has provided the name for the reality TV show Big Brother, in which contestants are filmed 24/7. Interestingly, it was already Bentham who, drawing parallels to peeking at passers-by from a window, speculates that the inspectors' job would perhaps be "not altogether an unamusing one" (45). He hints at the pleasure of voyeurism. Reality TV is the pinnacle of observing people exposed to the eye of the many (Lefait 96-97). Such mass media is emblematic of a system called synopticism. Building on the panoptic system, Thomas Mathiesen coins this term to refer to the contemporary "viewer society," where many survey the few (219). Engaging with mass media means that "Big Brother is not the only one watching you anymore; all of your Facebook friends—and friends of friends—are potential viewers" (Gold and Gold 227).Austenland also contains traces of this synoptic system. When Jane is at the airport, ready to go back to America, her two love interests show up looking for her. A clerk called for her over the loudspeaker and she "closed her book and stood up slowly, fearing to find a camera crew crouched behind her, that she was the victim of reality TV and had been duped not privately but in front of millions of viewers" (Hale 180-81).

[2]Here, the novel draws attention to another reoccurring social problem—social class. The proprietress quickly forgives Miss Heartwright, as the latter is a rich, repeat customer that Mrs. Wattlesbrook wants to keep (Hale 115). The movie adaptation also implies the importance of class difference, as even more rich people break the rules, yet go unpunished. For example, Miss Charming uses ultraviolet light to whiten her teeth, while Miss Heartwright uses a cassette player (Bloom Gevirtz 81). Both of these women are far above Jane's financial status and the proprietress is much more lenient toward them. Thus, "[b]y gesturing towards the socio-economic complexities of Pride and Prejudice—towards Austen's commentary on wealth, rank, class relations, and the social options for women," Hale "signals the limitations of reading the novel solely as a romance" (Francus).

[3] Here, the movie diverges from the novel. In the movie, Jane threatens to sue Mrs. Wattlesbrook (01:21:35-01:22:08) and the rich Miss Charming buys the entirety of Austenland and turns it into an amusement park (01:32:05-01:33:42). Instead of meekly accepting the way things are, the characters take action to reform the society that has oppressed them.



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