

### Chapter III

#### To See and Be Seen: The “Many-Eyed World”

*“ . . . it became understood that it was more efficient and profitable in terms of the economy of power to place people under surveillance [rather] than to subject them to some exemplary penalty” (Foucault, Power/Knowledge 38)*

*“But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, Power/Knowledge 39)*

*“Should she ever be allowed to hide her head, or should she be forced again to brave that many-eyed world?” (Yonge, The Clever Woman of the Family 268)*

#### *The Self-Reinforcing, Self-Regulating Power Structure*

The power pyramid which formed the infrastructure of hegemony in mid-Victorian England asserted control over its constituent population through an ecology of culturally integrated power. This power was animated through a program of omniscient surveillance combined with repercussive reinforcement in the form of both reprisal and reward. Within this structure, women were measured and codified against the domestic angel norm on the basis of reputation and appearances. The ideal of the domestic angel had been culturally normalized, requiring that women strive to cohere with a way of

being which, in Robert Browning's terms, exceeded their grasp. As a result, women routinely failed to meet this norm, reinforcing the concept of the lurking monster, the barely-leashed abject hidden within every woman. The failure of women to actualize themselves as domestic angels was blamed on the inherent monstrous portion of the feminine nature, not the ideology's impossible mandates and contradictory requirements. Sanctions for failure to meet the established norm included loss of power and agency within the power pyramid, and often meant the inability of a woman to marry or to find suitable work, leaving her with few options for survival.<sup>1</sup> Joanna Trollope remarks on the failure to meet the most important quality of the domestic angel—marriage:

to be a woman, to be middle-class, perhaps educated, and to be without either a husband or money was to be in a position for which society had no pity. . . . Such a woman not only carried a social stigma, she carried the immensely arduous burden of providing for herself in an age when legally it was extraordinarily difficult for a woman to make or retain any money of her own. It must be remembered that divorce was not possible until 1857, that any money a woman possessed could, with the law's full consent, be used or abused by her husband until 1882, and that, for a further nine years after that, a husband could by right imprison his wife in her own house if he so chose [even if separated or divorced]. . . . Single women might have escaped such tyranny, but they did not escape the very real threat of destitution. For most of them, the only means of warding it off was to teach in the schoolrooms of middle- and upper-class households, an outcast from life both below and above the stairs (61-62)

As Trollope indicates, the life of a single woman, or perhaps more accurately, the failed woman, was hardly desirable. She became a social pariah. For such a woman, legitimate (socially acceptable) survival became almost impossible, leaving her little choice but to join the growing ranks of British prostitutes, or die for lack of food, shelter and clothing. George Gissing's The Odd Women (1893) gives us shocking insight into the lives of such women: Virginia Madden quietly starving to death as she takes refuge from her loneliness and social position in alcohol, while her sister Alice loses herself in prayer, "her refuge from the barrenness and bitterness of life" (305). Thus a very real threat underlies the ideology articulating the domestic angel as the pinnacle of female achievement. Women who deviate from their designated feminine roles face terrible hardship and even death.

The following chapter will explore the structuring of power within the panoptical pyramid and examine how women were encouraged and coerced into becoming domestic angels. In particular, I focus on the surveillance system, investigating what I call the circulatory intelligence network for the ways in which information was gathered, archived, and circulated. The novels of this study reveal a sharp feminine awareness of this system. They dramatize the social application of perpetual surveillance and the consequent need to cultivate proper appearances and guard reputations. At the same time, they demonstrate the authors' cognizance of the rewards for qualifying as domestic angels.

*The Panoptical Power Pyramid*

Albert Memmi, in his biographical account of French colonization in Tunisia, cites the power pyramid as “the basis for all colonial societies” (xiv). According to Memmi, this pyramid places the colonizer at the peak and the least powerful of the colonized at the bottom, establishing a hierarchy in between. Anyone one privileged enough not to be on the base would seek to maintain his position or to move up the pyramid by cooperating with and participating in the colonizers’ imposed hegemony (xiv). One of the fundamental principles of this pyramid structure is that those who command power at the top never permit those lower down to move so high as to dislodge them, thus creating a situation of constant competition for the limited positions of prestige which may become available. Availability is predicated on a subject relinquishing the position, usually through failure to maintain the role, death or debilitation, or less frequently, disqualification.<sup>2</sup> There would thus be a natural—though limited—rotation of subjects filling the top agency positions, and by ripple effect, down the pyramid. The possibility of ascension would encourage close adherence to hegemonic regulations amongst hopeful candidates.

Because agent positions are defined in terms of exclusion, increasingly fewer subjects are qualified to occupy them as we progress up the pyramid’s hierarchy. The selection for any given position is determined by whether the candidate may be trusted (in terms of proven credentials) as the proxy of hegemonic power. That subject rises from the limited pool of available candidates on the immediately lower level of the pyramid. These subjects have already met a substantial number of the criteria of the position, if not all, and are prepared to move up when the opportunity allows. Those

criteria might be predicated on gender, religion, class, wealth, and education, as well as precedents of conforming behavior.<sup>3</sup> The competition thus encourages hegemonic service as means of further credentialing a subject and thereby increasing the likelihood of upward mobility.

At the same time, each subject who has a place above the pyramid's base seeks to protect that position through compliance and by suppressing the upward movements of those below. This doubled strategy of self-advancement reinforces participation with and adherence to hegemonically dictated social regulations. A subject's participation helps her to accrue what Pierre Bourdieu has termed "symbolic capital" which is measured by "the recognition [she] receive[s] from a group" (106). The sum of symbolic capital assigned to any given position on the pyramid is proportional to the power and influence of that position. From that position, an individual acts as a delegated representative of the group, "giving a biological body to a constituted body" (106-7). The individual thus becomes a physical representation of hegemony, her investiture of power a "*guarantee of delegation*" granted by the group consensus (107). However, there is a certain measure of danger to hegemony in delegating power to agents. Because authority is mediated through hegemony, which at its most basic level is a kind of ontological and ideological group consensus, the individual subject "creates the group which creates him" (106). This means that the more symbolic capital a person acquires, or more specifically for my argument, the higher up on the pyramid a person advances, the greater possible impact he or she might have on the total hegemonic structure. However, the system anticipates the danger of subversion by proportionally increasing both incentives and punishments with pyramidal ascension, decreasing the likelihood of transgressive behavior.

Foucault argues that structuring power in the form of a pyramid “increases its possible effects” (Discipline 174). He writes that:

the pyramid was able to fulfil, more efficiently than the circle, two requirements: to be complete enough to form an uninterrupted network—consequently the possibility of multiplying its levels, and of distributing them over the entire surface to be supervised; and yet to be discreet enough not to weigh down with an inert mass on the activity to be disciplined, and not to act as a brake or an obstacle to it. . . . (Discipline 174)

Through the combination of delegation of authority and preemption of subversion, this system integretated itself with every element of mid-Victorian life, encouraging self-surveillance and willing participation amongst its constituent population. It transmitted itself in such a way as to appear transparent and natural, even ontological. It effaced itself under the disguise of normalcy, of common sense, to ensure hegemony’s continuing existence..

Integrating Memmi’s power pyramid with Foucault’s concept of the Panopticon provides a useful model with which to examine the circulation of power in Victorian culture.<sup>4</sup> The desire to maintain position on the pyramid inherent to Memmi’s construct, combined with the pervasive sense of constant scrutiny and suspicion inherent to the Panopticon, produces an environment of complicity and self-discipline within the culture. Within the Panopticon, power is distributed to the inmates; “they are themselves the bearers” of their own containment (Discipline 201). The inmates become responsible for patrolling themselves. They are compartmentalized, separated into individual units, and

therefore unable to plan “an attempt at collective escape . . . new crimes for the future, [or spread] bad reciprocal influences” (Discipline 200). Fundamental to the structure of Memmi’s pyramid is each member’s desire to retain his position and seek ascension, strengthened by the constant fear of sliding down. If we introduce into that pyramid the element of disciplinary surveillance, where power is “everywhere and always alert . . . [and which] constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising,” then we have the architecture of mid-Victorian hegemony (Discipline 177). In this system participation and compliance are induced through the possibility of personal advantage and the coercive nature of panoptical surveillance.

The middle class women who are the focus of this study both cooperated in and were subject to this system of panoptical surveillance and reprisal. In participating, they maintained their place within the cultural power pyramid, while at the same time their cooperation helped to patrol and preserve the borders of their various discourse cells, guaranteeing the continued endurance of the pyramid, and by implication, patriarchy and hegemony. Like the panoptical penal structure, also designed to generate self-surveillance and internal or peer deterrence, this structure “frame[d] the everyday lives of individuals; [was] an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behaviour, their identity, their activity, their apparently unimportant gestures” (Foucault, Discipline 77). This surveillance decreases the danger of hegemonic subversion as a result of commonplace transgressions. Foucault goes on to say that in a traditional system of punishment “there is a scarcity of great crimes; on the other hand, there is the danger that everyday offences may multiply” (Discipline 93). Heinous crimes such as murder and theft would without a

doubt result in public castigation; however lesser offenses which are not criminal, may be allowed because they seem less dangerous, and the consequence of this is the proliferation of small but disruptive offenses.<sup>5</sup> Further, Foucault argues that the “influence of a crime is not necessarily in direct proportion to its horror; a crime that horrifies the conscience is often of less effect than an offence that everyone tolerates and feels quite ready to imitate” (Discipline 93). Thus the emphasis in Victorian hegemony on the minute surveillance of daily activities, mannerisms, words and gestures. In Elizabeth Gaskell’s Ruth (1853), the revelation of Ruth’s deception and dissimulation comes through such surveillance, and would have remained hidden without it. It is through careful observation of Jemima that Mrs. Pearson confirms her suspicions about Ruth: “[Jemima] felt that Mrs. Pearson’s eyes were upon her, watching her; not with curiosity, but with a newly-awakened intelligence” (Gaskell 321).

The imbricated systems of redundancy, of reward and punishment, and of surveillance and discipline, protected Victorian hegemony by promoting a threatening ideology of public omniscience: even the smallest act of transgression, whether premeditated or merely accidental, would be noted and circulated, and would eventually lead to some consequence, depending on the severity of the transgressive act. The determination of severity is computed against the degree of danger to both the immediate discourse cell and the larger hegemony. Punishments and/or disciplines are therefore assigned through the systemic machinery of the locally available, best informed senior agents of the hegemonic panoptical power pyramid. The possibility of a recurrence or resurfacing of corruption, or that others might perceive a discursive or hegemonic sanctioning of the transgression, is too hazardous to be allowed.

The Panoptical pyramid model helps us to understand how the domestic angel role functioned in service to hegemony and why women would cooperate and seek to conform to such an impossible role. The traditional suspicion surrounding women intensifies in the panoptical pyramid system, emphasizing the submerged monstrous nature of women—the abject. In circular logic, this evidence of the feminine abject justifies the perception that the ontological composition of women is inherently corrupt and that therefore women require increased surveillance and disciplinary controls. This construction of women as figures of menace functions as a strategy of containment. Women, codified in a doubled classification of morality and menace, must consistently strive to appear harmless and inoffensive, incapable of transgression. Thus they are coerced into ‘willing’ participation in the discursive structures which limit their involvement in the realm of public discourse. They do so partly because of the power, safety and security which the domestic sphere offers, partly to avoid a punishment which would exile them from the domestic realm, and partly because, without an attachment to a domestic situation, women have no roles, no legitimate discourse in which they might participate.<sup>6</sup> They become circumscribed by the domestic sphere and its related subject roles. The seat of woman’s power lay within the family and home, giving her enormous power over the nation through her influence on her children and husband, the vulnerability of hegemony and nation being directly proportional to how well she adhered to the strictures of true femininity. Ultimately she must be made to conform to the domestic angel role in order to serve hegemony and to defuse the feminine menace.

*Crime and Punishment*

According to Foucault, “The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible” (Discipline 170-1). Observation coerces; fear of deficiency engenders scrupulous conformity. Foucault’s statement indicates that the correlative of surveillance occurs in the form of publicly administered reinforcement, whether that be reward or punishment. This is because the efficacy of a power structure which relies on individual complicity depends on the general public’s awareness of certain repercussion, that “everyone . . . see[s] punishment not only as natural, but in his own interest; everyone must be able to read in it his own advantage” (Foucault, Discipline 109). Thus, as a whole, the public willingly endorses punishment for personal benefit. This is an effect of the pyramid system. Individuals who perform the duties inherent to their positions on the power pyramid protect that position and gain reward. At the same time, transgressors are categorized as subversives and dangerous to society. Their punishment preserves ‘good’ society, which benefits all ‘good’ citizens. Thus, supporting hegemonically sanctioned punishment allows individuals to prove their loyalty and adherence to social regulations and also protects them from danger. An added benefit is the resulting pyramidal shift upwards to fill the agency position opening as a transgressor descends the pyramid.

Similarly, the dispensation of rewards encourages individual participation, again, for personal benefit. Rules and punishments are defined through transdiscursive negotiation within set parameters, whether within a town, county, country, or other

grouping of people, but contained within the overall hegemonic regulatory apparatus.<sup>7</sup>

Because there is a majority consensus, these rules and punishments are therefore viewed as natural or organic, giving rise to an ideology of axiomatic essentiality, or for the mid-Victorians, divine prescription. In this way each member of society perceives a personal stake in his or her participation in the panoptical power pyramid, in surveillance, and in the process of rendering punishment, engendering increased complicity and cooperation.

The punishment for a woman's transgression of discursive or hegemonic codes in the mid-Victorian period often took the form of social ostracism, leading to the impossibility of engaging in marriage, of achieving a living wage, or of gaining access to community services. Under these conditions, a woman must do one of two things: she must die, which effectively suppresses the turbulence caused by her actions, thereby removing the danger to the discursive or hegemonic formation. Examples include Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*, who eventually dies as a punishment for her illegitimate child and subsequent conspiracy to hide her sin. Yonge's *Bessie Keith*, Braddon's *Lady Audley*, and Wood's *Isabel Vane* come to similar ends as a result of their transgressions. The second possibility for a woman who transgress is that she must live in a constant state of recurring punishment which would act as a cautionary signifier in the public milieu. Such a recurring punishment would be intended "to supervise the individual, to neutralize [her] dangerous state of mind . . . and to continue even when this change has been achieved" (Foucault, *Discipline* 18). Though Foucault is referring to penal rehabilitation, the application of a penalty to the social transgressor functions in the same manner. The punishment extends beyond mere penalization into the realm of the public

semiotic with the intention of deterring other transgressors. Without a visible indication of punishment, the woman would become a negative example, a public invitation to follow in her footsteps, the penalty appearing easy enough to bear. Punishment, therefore, can never end. Safety for the community is guaranteed by the continuing affirmation of the paramount danger involved in transgressive behavior, and the visible price which accompanies it. Foucault says that “one must calculate a penalty in terms not of the crime, but of its possible repetition. One must take into account not the past offence but the future disorder. Things must be so arranged that the malefactor can have neither any desire to repeat his offence, nor any possibility of having imitators” (Discipline 93). Once a violation has occurred, there can be no rehabilitation in which the violator is permitted to be socially identified as ‘normal’. The possibility of a recurrence of corruption, or that others might perceive a discursive or hegemonic sanctioning of the transgression, is too hazardous to be allowed.

#### *The Circulatory Intelligence Network*

The viability of the surveillance and repercussion system depended on the existence of a network which accumulated, distributed and archived all of the miscellaneous information gathered through surveillance. Without such a network, not only would an assigned punishment carry less signficatory impact, but the crucial component of immediate omniscient surveillance would be lost. The Victorian hegemony’s pyramidal infrastructure efficiently enveloped and permeated every level of society, coercing compliance through both fear of punishment and desire for reward. The consistent rendering of such punishments and rewards, so necessary to the preservation of

the power pyramid, was made possible through both a system of surveillance and the networked circulation of the information gathered. These combined systems allowed for minute, detailed control of individuals on a moment-to-moment basis. Foucault likens this control to “a microscope of conduct” (Discipline 173).

The power pyramid not only functioned as a system of continuous surveillance, but also made information useful by keeping it in continuous circulation through both formal and informal channels and relays. Formal channels included systems of reporting within institutional settings, newspapers, business connections and professional relationships; informal channels consisted largely of gossip and rumor, overheard conversations, or the revelation of personal writings. The difference between the two types of communication lies in the nature of the information. Formal communication implies fact: the contributing agents possess a certain amount of social endorsement or delegated authority, and have either authenticated the information, or have the means to do so. On the other hand, informal communication is more likely to be false, though often the report is based in truth. Both the source and the informant may be unreliable, if they are known at all. Yet more people may participate in informal channels than formal, and thus the amount of information generated through informal channels is far more prolific, though less reliable.

In particular, gossip served an important means of data transmission within the mid-Victorian surveillance structure. It was particularly important to the success of the circulatory intelligence network because it exposed those secrets which might otherwise remain hidden.<sup>8</sup> Though Patricia Meyer Spacks contends that gossip is more a means of

subversion, of secrecy, of “giving voice to the dominated as well as the dominant” (263), she admits that gossip may be

an instrument not of subversion but of control. Intimate talk about other people can . . . challenge assumptions of the powerful; on the other hand, such talk also serves interests of governing classes. . . . Both friendly and malicious anecdote can purvey information useful in preserving dominance. (172)

In the case of the Victorian panoptical power pyramid, an extensive complex of intersecting gossip capillaries functioned as part of the circulatory intelligence network, gathering and contributing information to the flow of accumulated knowledge for regulatory purposes.

Gossip tends to be rooted in reality, incorporating elements of truth, according to Meyer Spacks. It “attaches the names of real people to its characters; therefore, it has potential effects in the real world” (51). Unlike stories couched in fictional terms with fictional characters, gossip focuses on the real, attributing events and behavior to real people. Because this information inevitably enters into the circulatory intelligence network, it becomes a “powerful weapon in the politics of large groups and small” and “can effect incalculable harm” (4). Meyer Spacks suggests that gossip’s power lies in its potential to damage, and the “social mythology” which “evokes the terror of the self as agent or as victim of such power” (51). The threat of being singled out, of being subjected to heightened social scrutiny, encourages scrupulous conformity to hegemonically legislated codes of behavior. The combination of a “primitive terror of reprisal” and the seductive promise of reward for conformity engenders cooperation and

participation because social subjects “dread an all too readily imagined danger” (Meyer Spacks 51). Given the social emphasis on reputation in the mid-Victorian period, gossip could have quite harmful consequences for the subject(s), and therefore must be avoided at all costs. One way to avoid becoming the subject of gossip would be to scrupulously conform to social regulations, both privately and publicly.

While gossip is not always factual, the speakers believe that their information is truthful, based on the “social realities” of their lives and culture (Meyer Spacks 52). In voicing the gossip, they align themselves with the power pyramid by contributing to its knowledge base, and not only reap the rewards of their complicity through social and economic opportunities, but also demonstrate their willing participation in the power pyramid. Often gossip revolves around the speakers’ immediate peers and thus those who report to the circulatory intelligence network—even through informal channels—may also gain ascension in the power pyramid by sabotaging the reputations of their competitors. This occurs because the exposed secrets are often those which would subvert hegemony and therefore require sanctions, thus the subject’s authority and power within the pyramid decreases while the speakers accrue more authority, more capital, by way of reward. Further, gossip “incorporates the possibility that people utterly lacking in public power may affect the views of figures who make things happen in the public sphere” (Meyer Spacks 7), thus presenting opportunities to accumulate power through influence.

All increments of information, from the most innocuous scraps of kitchen gossip to the number of handkerchiefs in a woman’s trousseau, were passed into this intelligence network to be distributed, evaluated, and aligned with other contributions to make new

information. This new information was then resubmitted to the process, remaining in circulation until aligning with other information, and thus continuing to cycle through the process until needed: i.e., requiring action by a hegemonic agent within the appropriate level of the power pyramid. Once made available to the power pyramid, however, no information is ever lost to its use, but remains accessible and readily available indefinitely within the circulatory process. This lends a certain omniscience to the structure, reinforcing the public conception of continuous surveillance and thus helping to create a condition of coerced compliance, of cooperation based on immediate fear of discovery, as well as on the less concrete, often less attainable, reward of ascending through the hierarchy of the pyramid. An example of this omniscience may be found in Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth. Though her affair with Mr. Bellingham occurred years before, and across the country, it remains current within the circulatory intelligence network. Thus the dressmaker recognizes her by her description, and reports that information through gossip relays, leading to Ruth's social ostracization and eventual death. Similar revelations occur in each of the five novels in this study, as we shall shortly see.

To increase the efficacy of the surveillance system, each member of the panoptical power pyramid must be made to participate in the circulatory intelligence network. Deputization of each individual member increases the possibility of total surveillance, even into the private realm. Not only could anybody be watching, but everyone was *required* to watch and report. Toward that end, each member is inculcated into hegemonic codes of duty and responsibility to report information, and encouraged to do so with the lure of reward, of ascending the power pyramid and thereby increasing economic and social opportunity and power.

The function of the circulatory intelligence network is to maintain the currency and availability of information, and to relay it to the proper agents of the panoptical pyramid. The system is informal, decentered and homogeneous, with no central collection nexus, no central point of distribution. However, despite the lack of a central organizational nucleus, it succeeds because it coerces participation and cooperation on a micro level. Individual members of the pyramid understand that they are continuously subject to scrutiny, even in their most private moments. This panopticality combines with the perpetual circulation of information across discursive borders to produce individual accountability: each person must answer for his or her behavior, both in terms of standards of social behavior, as well as in terms of participation in the surveillance system. Further, complicity in the name of preserving and protecting hegemony results in rewards. Individuals who supply information to the intelligence network also serve themselves by maintaining and promoting their own positions within the power pyramid.

Qualified agents of the power pyramid utilize the information generated through the circulatory intelligence network to suppress resistance and turbulence which might endanger hegemony. They occupy the superior hierarchized subject positions on the pyramid, if we define superior in relation to the response required by the reported information. Foucault's discussion of the hierarchy of discourse applies equally to that of the power pyramid: each position is filled by an individual who has "satisfied certain conditions . . . if he is not, from the outset, qualified" by virtue of his class, education, economic standing, or political associations. (Foucault, *Archaeology* 225). In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Pierre Bourdieu expands on this notion of authorized agents, saying that these subject positions are invested with power "in proportion to their symbolic

capital, i.e., in proportion to the recognition they receive from the group” (106). This recognition is structured through the specific agenda of a given hegemony, an agenda which arises from the needs and desires of the group—in this case the Victorian imperialist nation. Bourdieu further contends that “the representative [agent] creates the group which creates him” by imposing a reality “which allows the consensus concerning the meaning of the social world which [in turn] grounds common sense to be imposed officially, i.e., in front of everyone and in the name of everyone” (106). Specifically, in a given region defined by the population’s social identity,

Even when he [the agent] merely states with authority what is already the case, even when he contents himself with asserting what is, the *auctor* produces a change in what is: by virtue of the fact that he states things with authority, that is, in front of and in the name of everyone, publicly and officially, he saves them from their arbitrary nature, he sanctions them, sanctifies them, consecrates them, making them worthy of existing, in conformity with the nature of things, and thus ‘natural’. (Bourdieu 222).

In this statement, Bourdieu points to the stabilizing function of the qualified agent within a community.<sup>9</sup> By sanctioning a particular version of ‘natural’ social reality, one which grows from grassroots discursive consensus (i.e. hegemony), a qualified agent helps to prevent chaotic disruption and turbulence within the social economy.<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu’s theory of representation and identity helps us understand the essential function of qualified agency within the panoptical power pyramid: “what is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision [sic] which, when

they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group” (221). The authorized agent has the power to “*make and unmake groups*” (Bourdieu 221), or to literally disperse and destroy those foundational discourse cells which create hegemony. Thus the person who fills a given position of authorized agency on the panoptical pyramid must be fully committed to hegemony. He must have demonstrated his allegiance to hegemonic codes and values without critical deviation. Any transgression undercuts an individual’s eligibility for authorized agency, though as Foucault argues in his discussion of institutional discipline and punishment, the “micro-economy of a perpetual penalty operates a differentiation that is not one of acts, but of individuals themselves, of their nature, their potentialities, their level or their value” (Discipline 181).<sup>11</sup> Foucault also argues that “disciplinary apparatuses” position individuals in “hierarchized . . . relation to one another” (Discipline 181). For Victorians, the matrix of individuals is predicated on their value: on their usefulness to the deployment, maintenance, and preservation of hegemony. Therefore the qualifying standards for holding a position of authorized agency within the panoptical power pyramid are relative to the specific needs of a given hegemony, and the local requirements of a particular discourse cell.<sup>12</sup>

In the panoptical power pyramid, no disguise is impenetrable; nothing can remain hidden under the panoptical gaze. This gaze is imbricated, redundant, and omni-directional, which is why Lady Audley cannot succeed, why Isabel Vine must be revealed, why Mauleverer must be convicted, why Mr. Cavendish must be exposed, and why Mary Forrester must be exonerated. A multiplicity of intersecting gazes guarantees

that eventually the evidence of duplicity (or in the case of Mary Forrester, innocence) will make its way into the circulatory intelligence network. This pyramidal structure of what Foucault identifies as “hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance. . . . rests on individuals . . . [but functions as] a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network ‘holds’ the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors perpetually supervised” (*Discipline* 177). The effects of power in this structure can be collectively defined as pervasive coercive obedience. The induced paranoia—a sense that anyone could be looking at, recording, and interpreting the appearance and behavior of someone at any given time—is a powerful incentive to conform.

### *The Value of a Good Reputation*

Because of the duality of female nature—the angel and the monster dichotomy—and women’s integral role within the family and the stability of hegemony, in the mid-Victorian period women were subject to more intense scrutiny than men. At any moment the abject might reveal itself in a woman, if only momentarily, and for some women, fatally. Therefore, a sharply observant gaze becomes necessary in ferreting out the first indications of an escaping abject nature. Caught in time, correctional disciplines and punishments might be brought to bear to ‘salvage’ the woman, though the revelation of such innate inadequacies would forever disqualify her from many pyramidal privileges.<sup>13</sup> Even rehabilitated, she would be singled out for heightened surveillance, a

calculated program of observation specifically aimed at detecting a relapse or reversion to the abject.

In her introduction to *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, Martha Vicinius argues that the ideology of a dual feminine nature served as a form of social containment: “Nineteenth-century women were not always the passive, submissive and pure creatures of popular idealizations [i.e., the angel in the house], but neither were they ever completely free from this stereotype. Its most pervasive and effective form of control was through the social and individual demand for respectability” (xix). During the Victorian period, respectability was the quality which made everything else possible. It was a necessary element in marriage, business, social intercourse, politics and public interaction. It allowed individuals to function within their discourse communities, and served as a means of calibrating the amount of symbolic capital or power which could be invested in any given person within the panoptical power pyramid. Respectability is a slippery and fluid term that must be discursively negotiated. What constitutes respectability for some may not serve others.<sup>14</sup> It is formulated according to specific hegemonic or discursive needs. At the same time, the slippery nature of the concept and the difficulty in articulating its specific requirements contributed to the cultural anxiety engendered by the panoptical surveillance system. It did so by imposing cautious conservatism on Victorian behavior—it was better to be too careful rather than to blunder into costly mistakes.<sup>15</sup> Thus, though respectability often remained a fuzzy concept, anchored as it was in the particular mores of a given community or discourse cell, fears of transgression and consequent repercussions lent it a veneer of rigidity and implacability.

Respectability served as a dividing line between and within classes. It was a means of establishing and maintaining hierarchy, particularly within the new middle class. As the middle class formed itself, its members needed to distinguish and separate themselves from what they had been previously—the working class—and to create an internal hierarchy. Methods of credentialization, of forming systems of restrictions to keep interlopers out and allow only those who qualified for membership to pass through, developed. In her study The Best Circles: Society in the Nineteenth Century, Lenore Davidoff points to the increase of privacy and selectivity amongst the upper and middle classes during the nineteenth century which allowed them segregate and exclude undesirable elements of society, while giving them a means to prove their own social qualifications. This exclusivity culminated in the strict codes of respectability of the Victorian period. She says that there were “developments towards greater exclusiveness, privacy and controlled social interaction” (24). These restrictions revolved around codes of respectability: proper behavior, speech, dress, social associations and alliances, and manners. The rising middle class strove to distance itself from its former ‘working class’ associations and align itself with the traditions of nobility. Amongst those things which became markers of middle class status and middle class respectability were cleanliness, servants, proper language skills, education, etiquette and manners, dress devoted to leisure and travel. Though the middle class did not deny its professional connections, it negotiated a middle ground of more genteel occupations—more intellectual and less manual—and adhered to more of the traditional conceptions of gentility. The explosion of etiquette books during the mid-Victorian period gives testimony to the middle class desire to become gentle, to establish codes of respectability which would articulate

measurable differences between themselves and the working and lower classes.<sup>16</sup> Thus, according to Davidoff, the divisions between and within classes, particularly the newly formed middle class, became quite formalized and rigid during the Victorian period:

The formation of a formal social life confined to private locations and rigidly defined by convention which was embraced by aristocratic and middle classes in both town and country made it possible for upwardly mobile individuals and parts of families to gain access to new groups if they had the necessary qualifications. Before this period, the problem of maintaining barriers against newcomers [the *nouveau riche*] was never so important. The whole basis of social relations was family (or pseudo-family) ties between equals in the elite, or patronage across well-defined hierarchical lines. (27)

The surge in the publication of books regarding manners and conduct during this period suggests the extent of the desire of the untutored middle classes to learn refinement, to become respectable, and to thus earn symbolic capital and a higher place within the power pyramid.<sup>17</sup>

Manners, appropriate dress, appropriate language and gentility—all of these insubstantial qualities make up the core of respectability. According to Michael Curtin in Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners,

certain habits were identified with the aristocracy and others with the middle class; a person observed with certain manners was recognized by others as of a particular class; individuals tried to make their own habits conform to the usages of the class they preferred. . . . A skillful observer

might be able to recognize another's class of origin despite the latter's attempt to adopt the manners of his preferred class. (53)

Categories of respectability serve as a kind of language, hegemonically negotiated and approved, and correspond to Bourdieu's theory of symbolic expression, which "through a system of social differences . . . . expresses the hierarchy of corresponding social groups. These . . . systems of differences which are both classified and classifying, ranked and ranking, mark those who appropriate them" (54). A system of symbolic power predicated on values of respectability depends on the panopticality of the power pyramid, as well as on its rigid hierarchization. The mid-Victorian middle class eagerly claimed codes of respectability as a means of self-promotion as they jockeyed for higher positions on the pyramid. Those who achieved greater status within the pyramid had proportionally stronger reputations than those below. Their reputations essentially pre-certified a certain level of respectability required to qualify for their position within the power pyramid, and therefore they did not suffer as great a level of scrutiny.

The danger of exempting anyone from strict surveillance is highlighted in the fictional characters of Lady Audley, Isabel Vane, and Bessie Keith. All four of these characters pretend propriety and are lent a margin of protection by their level of authorized power on the pyramid. Though eventually all are punished for their transgressions, they succeed in causing a great deal of social damage. Bessie Keith hides her transgressions behind the facade of the domestic angel, while in reality she has run herself into debt, neglected her husband's ill health, and put Rachel in the hands of Mauleverer. Her death comes as a result of her dalliance with the unfortunate Mr. Carleton when she tries to hide her indiscretion from her brother. Though Alick Keith

warned his friends of his sister's duplicity, their observations told them otherwise.

Yonge draws a significant comparison between Bessie and Rachel: Alick made a

stronger effort to curb Rachel's abject, and she succeeded in becoming a domestic angel.

The question remains, had he been more strict with Bessie, would she also have become a

domestic angel rather than dying as a result of her transgressions? Lady Audley

sabotages the Audley family, dividing them and exposing them to gossip and ridicule.

Her success in deceiving Michael Audley discredits his ability as a leader within his

discourse community; it weakens public trust in his judgment and his ability to influence,

and thus destroys his usefulness as an authorized agent at that level. Isabel Vane's sordid

affair and consequent divorce exposes Mr. Carlyle to public embarrassment, and thus he

suffers a similar challenge to his reputation. Further, because the circulatory intelligence

network continuously refreshes its data, reviewing and renewing it, and because of the

relational stigma of transgression, Isabel's children will always suffer suspicion and a

heightened scrutiny as a result of their mother's monstrosity.

With marriage advocated as the most important goal in a Victorian woman's life,

it was imperative that a woman establish and maintain a good reputation in order to be

considered eligible by prospective husbands.<sup>18</sup> Because of the exorbitant cost of

establishing a household, and given the surplus of marriageable women in England, men

could and did demand high standards of respectability from prospective wives,

particularly if the size of the girl's dowry or her family's connections could not overcome

her deficiencies. A man might turn a blind eye to certain flaws in a woman's personality

or behavior if it were economically sound to do so.<sup>19</sup> However, such a woman could

prove a liability if she transgresses the lines of respectability too far and too publicly.

Her corruption then becomes socially contagious, the stigma of her transgression tainting both family and friends. Those people in contact with her might be shunned or ‘cut’—excluded from important social contacts. As Davidoff notes, much of a man’s business life grew directly out of his social connections. Private social gatherings and the private clubs gave a man associations which led to business transactions in the public arena: “It was in the course of calling that wives made the contacts which led to dinner invitations which in turn might mean entry into important houses” and lead to opportunities, both social and economic (44). To be excluded from this social network would mean not only the embarrassment of social isolation, but economic disaster. It would lead to disqualification of authorized agency as well as loss of privileges within the panoptical power pyramid, resulting in a lowering of status within the pyramid and consequently a loss of power.<sup>20</sup> Thus a woman’s concern for the endangerment of family and friends through relational stigmatization serves as a deterrent to possible transgression, just as the possibility of furthering the ambitions and careers of family and friends through the positives of reputation encourages adherence and conformity to hegemonic codes of feminine behavior.

Perhaps one of the most memorable examples of this relational stigma in all of nineteenth century British literature occurs in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice when Jane’s and Elizabeth’s marital opportunities suffer from the undignified conduct of their sisters and mother.<sup>21</sup> As amusing as that situation continues to be for readers, without intervention both girls face a bleak lifelong spinsterhood without a home or income. At the end of the century George Gissing in The Odd Women (1893) offers a dark portrait of just what might have happened to Jane and Elizabeth. His novel follows two genteel

sisters who have not married and must attempt to make a living for themselves. Virginia and Alice live pitifully, constantly verging on starvation. They take work as companions and governesses, but such jobs not only pay very little, they are ephemeral; children grow up, those in need of companionship die or take in spinster relatives. But these are the only respectable jobs available to middle class spinster women (those who are independently wealthy are an exception), and thus they are locked into a cycle of poverty, insecurity, and hopelessness. If we apply Gissing's eventualities to Jane and Elizabeth, we gain dreadful insight into the real danger of relational stigmatization.

The system of respectability and surveillance functions microcosmically, applying restrictions, coercion and rewards individually. Individuals respond by conforming to hegemonic requirements and thus fortify hegemony. They also participate in the system of panoptical surveillance, denying their own and others' rights to privacy in an effort to garner more symbolic capital and thus advance up the power pyramid. This competitive system of surveillance assures that all information will be yielded up to the circulatory intelligence system. Those who refuse or neglect to report their observations are subject to punishment in the form of loss of stature within the power pyramid, and with that demotion, a loss of power.

### *Appearances Are Everything*

It is not only a misconception but naïve to believe that all women could and would achieve the status of the domestic angel. Rather, the ideology served to encourage adherence to hegemonic codes of femininity by formulating an ecology of desire and fear

within which women who more closely conformed to the ideology of the domestic angel achieved greater status and reward, while those who failed suffered and even died.

The ideal was normalized into routine hegemonic expectation, with the understanding that the abject continued to exist beneath the surface, that the monster could escape without warning, that constant discipline and self-patrol would be necessary. Though the domestic angel was hegemonically accredited to be a natural condition for a good woman, at the same time, it was culturally understood that girls must be trained to control themselves, to become the domestic angel and suppress the abject. Thus the ideology of the woman as domestic angel served hegemony by insisting on the need for outside control of women and by generating internal complicity and desire to achieve. With such success came recognition and power within the panoptical pyramid, and often financial security, prosperity, and social success. This two-pronged method of control and containment guaranteed the general cooperation of women, and defused possible turbulence (and a consequent loss of hegemonic stability) by undermining the validity of any protests by attributing them to the monstrous side of female nature.

Ascension to domestic angel status was demonstrated through a woman's outward appearance—through empirical evidence—for as the cases of Lady Audley and Isabel Vane make very clear, knowing the mind of a woman was not practicable. However, according to Foucault, the panoptical system of surveillance provides the means of collecting “a whole corpus of individualizing knowledge” (Discipline 126). This knowledge separates, defines and categorizes any given individual within a community. As we have seen, hegemonic power was applied at an individualized, or microcellular, level, justifying the pyramid's system of stratification and hierarchy for the delegation of

authority and power. Perhaps more importantly, it also generated a discipline of complicity and obedience requiring that each member of the pyramid live in a constant state of self-awareness and self-patrol.<sup>22</sup> Because even the slightest perception of misbehavior would be circulated through the intelligence network and could have a profound effect on a woman's reputation, and therefore on her accrued authority, every woman must therefore scrupulously maintain appearances. Every woman must guard her reputation with fanatical—or perhaps more appropriately for the Victorian era, puritanical—zeal. The fear of contagious corruption only added extra impetus to a woman's obedience to and compliance with hegemonic social mores.

Though personal reputation was also important to Victorian men, in the case of women (whose lives and livelihoods depended on their reputations) maintaining appearances was even more important than for men.<sup>23</sup> As Michael Curtin says, “breaches of either morality or propriety redounded most heavily against women. This was one reason why late Victorian feminism was so strongly puritanical and why it attacked the double standard by urging greater purity of men rather than by lowering the moral demands on women” (214).<sup>24</sup> This paradoxical double standard of morality, where women were at once both the moral heart of the nation and the site of corruption, led to severe punishments for women who crossed the bounds of respectability. Foucault's investigation of penal theory becomes important here. He argues that such a transgressor—one in which so much social trust has been invested—“has broken the pact [with society], [she] is therefore the enemy of society as a whole. . . . The least crime attacks the whole of society” (*Discipline* 90). Because women were considered the center of morality in Victorian Britain while men were considered morally weaker, a

fallen woman was punished more harshly because of her greater responsibility.<sup>25</sup> Judith Rowbotham argues that “throughout the nineteenth century . . . feminine influence was [believed to be] more essential to the daily moral health and strength of the family unit and of the nation than that of a man” (21). Thus feminine transgression was all the more heinous, even treasonous, and necessitated a severe punishment for the overall “defence of society” (Foucault, Discipline 90).<sup>26</sup> At the same time, such a punishment was advertised as being for her own benefit, since it squelched the emergence of her abject nature, essentially saving her from herself.

Empirical evidence concerning any given individual was screened through a particular kind of filtering consciousness which, according to Foucault, sorts the masses of information on the basis of “the potentiality of danger that lies hidden in an individual and which is manifested in his observed everyday conduct” (Discipline 126). David Spurr’s analysis of the gaze of the Western journalist in a colonized territory is useful here in understanding how information is chosen, gathered and sorted when the gaze is situated within a particular hegemony. He explains that:

the eye remains mobile and selective, constantly filtering the visible for the *sign*, for those gestures and objects that, when transformed into the verbal or photographic image, can alone have meaning for a Western audience by entering a familiar web of signification. The journalist is literally on the lookout for scenes that carry an already established interest for a Western audience, thus investing perception itself with the mediating power of cultural difference. (21)

Spurr's journalist is an authorized agent of imperialism, of western control. And though this journalist is not necessarily "clearly or consciously the instrument of colonial authority," he continues to assert "a commanding, controlling gaze" (Spurr 20). This is because "the sympathetic humanitarian eye is no less a product of deeply held colonialist values, and no less authoritative in the mastery of its object, than the surveying and policing eye" (20). Thus the western journalist is very much akin to the Victorian observer—an authorized agent of a particular hegemony, applying a "commanding and controlling gaze" which grows naturally from his basic ideological structure. By likening an observer within the Victorian panoptical power pyramid to Spurr's journalist, we get a clearer understanding of the hegemonic filter through which information is gathered and its relevance assessed. Like Spurr's journalist, the observer collects and sorts information of interest to the members of the panoptical power pyramid whose 'web of signification' is the imperialist Victorian hegemony which gives rise to all rules, codes, taboos, and criteria of culture. For women, the hegemonically ordained criteria of respectability were evoked transdiscursively from the parameters of the domestic angel: selflessness, meekness, prudence, obedience, morality, kindness, generosity, purity, modesty, and above all, self-sacrifice. Throughout the five novels of this study, the writers evince an awareness of the importance of respectability and the importance of maintaining proper appearances..

### *Under Surveillance*

Throughout the five novels of this study the writers evince an awareness of both the existence of the surveillance system and its coercive power. Whether offering a

sympathetic villain—like Isabel Vane and Lady Audley—or whether offering a more correct version of womanhood—like Lucilla Marjoribanks, Ermine Williams, and Helen Teviot—these authors write with a consciousness of the effects of surveillance. They each devote extensive attention to the importance of appearances and reputations. In fact, much of the action in all five novels occurs in reaction to gossip or as an effort to preempt the production and circulation of incorrect information. As specifically pertaining to women, the system is devoted to the production of domestic angels; to encourage women to actively conform to the code of the domestic angel. A closer examination of the novels reveals specific techniques of control and containment involved in the hegemonic promotion of the domestic angel ideology; techniques made possible by the foundation of surveillance within Victorian society.

When Mr. Carlyle learns of the his sister's sabotage of his wife's housekeeping, not from his own observation living in his home, but through gossip, he tells Mrs. Hare:

Cornelia will quit East Lynne. . . . I have not spoken to her yet, but shall do so now. I have long made up my mind to that; that if ever I married again, I and my wife would live alone. It is said she interfered too much with my former wife: had I suspected it, Cornelia should not have remained in the house a day. Rest assured that Barbara shall not be subjected to the chance. (Wood 309)

Carlyle here acknowledges his own failure to maintain surveillance of his wife and sister. As a result, Isabel elopes with Frances Levison, deserting her husband and children. Yet the blame lies not only on Isabel herself, but on Carlyle's failure to observe and take appropriate preventative action.<sup>27</sup> As the narrator notes, "Lady Isabel was endowed with

sensitively refined delicacy, with an innate, lively consciousness of right and wrong; a nature, such as hers, is one of the last that may be expected to err; and, but for that most fatal misapprehension regarding her husband . . . she would never have forgotten herself” (Wood 238). Had Mr. Carlyle been more observant of his wife, he might have noticed hints of jealousy, small revelations of her hidden abject, and taken steps to protect her from herself.

There is danger in Carlyle’s laxity, in his failure to vigilantly observe. He fills one of the highest positions of qualified agency in his discourse cell. By the end of the novel, when he is elected Member of Parliament, it could be said he holds *the* highest position of qualified agency. Yet when he fails to maintain the integrity of his own household, when his wife and sister transgress the boundaries of proper femininity right beneath his nose, he reveals himself to be flawed, perhaps even incompetent. In that incompetence lies the threat to the stability of his community.<sup>28</sup> If he cannot safeguard his own household, how can he protect the community? Wood finally excuses him, laying the blame on Levison, Isabel and Miss Corny. Carlyle missed the clues because they also held superior positions of agency on the power pyramid. He assumes that because they have proven their qualifications and been delegated such high positions of authority on the power pyramid, that they do not require such strict surveillance. He is wrong.

Carlyle’s incompetence also places his children in social danger. Isabel’s corruption is contagious, damaging the reputations of her still small children, particularly her daughter. Barbara Hale (Carlyle), in an ironic scene, details the damage to Madame

Vine (who is Isabel in disguise) following the train accident which left her supposedly dead. Barbara says:

‘Of course the disgrace is reflected on the children, and always will be; the shame of having a divorced mother—’

‘Is she not dead?’ interrupted Lady Isabel.

‘She is dead. Oh yes. But they will not be the less pointed at, the girl especially, as I say.’ (340)

Because of the folly of their mother and the lack of appropriate surveillance on the part of their father, the children will forever carry the taint of Isabel’s transgression. Just as Lucy Audley feared that she had inherited madness from her mother, these children must fear the genetic taint of their mother by virtue of the relational stigma attached to transgressive behavior. Her transgression suggests the probability of a sinister abject within them, and therefore they will arouse constant suspicion and intent scrutiny almost as if they wore a scarlet letter. Indeed Barbara impresses on Madame Vine that Lucy in particular, more than her brothers, must be carefully watched and disciplined so as to “keep her from a like fate” as that of her mother (340).

Like Carlyle, Michael Audley also assumes the authenticity of Lady Audley’s credentials and qualifications, only to discover that despite her outward angelic appearance, she is a murderer, an arsonist, a bigamist, and a madwoman.<sup>29</sup> Worse, she committed most of her criminal acts while in his home, as his wife. Small clues reveal her personality to Robert Audley but are missed by her husband, step-daughter, father, and friends. The difference lies in the lackadaisical nature of their surveillance and the insistent calculation of Robert’s. The consequent harm of negligent observation

emphasizes the importance of vigilant monitoring of all women, and by implication, the necessity of maintaining a mode of perpetual doubt and suspicion, particularly toward those women whose past lives, or elements of them, are hidden.<sup>30</sup> When Lady Audley at last confesses her abusive childhood and her insane mother to her husband, he is more than stunned:

He sat silent and immovable. What was this story that he was listening to? Whose was it, and to what was it to lead? It could not be his wife's; he had heard her simple account of her youth, and had believed it as he had believed in the Gospel. She had told him a very brief story of an early orphanage, and a long quiet, colourless youth spent in the conventual seclusion of an English boarding-school. (Braddon 349)

Michael Audley believes what his wife has told him about her past without question, despite clues which indicate a different reality. These clues are revealed in her appearance and behavior, and are equally available to any observer, yet only Robert collects and assembles the information into a coherent chain of evidence which exposes her crimes and monstrous nature. By the time she reveals herself, he has already discovered most of her past. In fact, there can be no doubt that he would have ferreted out the rest of her secrets in a short period of time, had not he forced Lady Audley's confession. As a means of forcing her to confess, he informs her in a short message of his further investigation:

Should Mrs. George Talboys [Lady Audley] really have survived the date of her supposed death, as recorded in the public prints, and upon the tomb-stone in Ventnor churchyard, and should she exist in the person of

the lady suspected and accused by the writer of this, there can be no great difficulty in finding some one able and willing to identify her. Mrs. Barkamb, the owner of North Cottages, Wildernsea, would no doubt consent to throw some light upon this matter, either to dispel a delusion or to confirm a suspicion. (Braddon 305-6)

Because he is correct that witnesses to Lady Audley's past are available, she realizes the futility of carrying on her masquerade and makes a complete confession. Yet the availability of such witnesses only serves to emphasize Michael Audley's incompetence and culpable gullibility. In the course of hearing his wife's confession, Michael Audley comes at last to understand his own negligence to his assigned agency responsibilities: "he began to understand it all now. A crowd of unheeded words and forgotten circumstances that had seemed too insignificant for remark or recollection, flashed back upon him" (Braddon 351). Yet despite the fact that he clearly defaulted on his obligations as an authorized agent of hegemony, the narrator offers to mitigate his culpability, saying:

I do not believe that Sir Michael Audley had ever really believed in his wife. He had loved her and admired her; he had been bewitched by her beauty and bewildered by her charms; but that sense of something wanting, that vague feeling of loss and disappointment which had come upon him on the summer's night of his betrothal, had been with him more or less distinctly ever since. I cannot believe that an honest man, however pure and single may be his mind, however simply trustful his nature, is ever really deceived by falsehood. There is beneath the voluntary

confidence an involuntary distrust; not to be conquered by any effort of the will. (Braddon 352)

Yet rather than mitigating Michael Audley's fault, the narrator confirms it. In recognizing his underlying awareness of Lucy Audley's monstrous nature, the narrator acknowledges Michael Audley's intentional disregard for his assigned duty within the power pyramid. He fails to maintain proper surveillance; he fails to record and distribute information which would have prevented much of the harm that Lady Audley accomplishes. He has not only failed, but willfully refuses to acknowledge the evidence he himself gathered, thus withholding pertinent data from the circulatory intelligence network, and thus essentially creating a temporary blind spot within the structure. At the same time, he allows Lady Audley to move up in the power pyramid, lending her power—specifically a spotless reputation, an authentic and irrefutable name, influential connections, and wealth—all by virtue of the privileges accorded to her as his wife. In permitting her ascension, he threatens the viability of the structure, authorizing and allowing an unqualified agent into a position of power which she in turn abuses and subverts in an effort to preserve her secrets.

### *Building a Reputation*

When Mary Forrester jilts Colonel Stuart in Emily Eden's The Semi-detached Couple, she does so having discovered that “he was extravagant, that he played, and that he was totally without religious principle” (Eden 116). His true nature exposed to Mary by his jealous mistress, Mary calls off their engagement. Several weeks later she becomes the heiress of a small fortune. Colonel Stuart, unwilling to reveal his fault in the

situation, allows it to be publically understood that she jilted him once she came into her fortune because she did not wish to tie herself to such a poor man. As a result of his emotional distress, he claims that he then turned to excessive gambling and liaisons with married women. The public accepts this story as truth, assigning Mary a reputation as “cold-hearted and capricious” as well as vain and selfish (116). Not only did she jilt a fine man, but drove him to immoral acts.<sup>31</sup> Such a reputation undercuts her eligibility for marriage. And though she is publicly exonerated, the incorrect information will continue to circulate through the intelligence network. She will be forever marked her as having revealed monstrous qualities, and therefore requiring a higher level of critical surveillance, and limiting her ability to qualify for symbolic capital. An axiomatic understanding within Victorian culture was that once a reputation was damaged, no matter how deserving or undeserving, it could never be repaired. Women then strove all the harder to maintain appearances and never give any observer a reason to question their respectability.

In each of these five novels, the reputations of the central female characters come into question. Each author explores the importance of maintaining a good reputation, as well as pointing to its vulnerability. For instance, in East Lynne, when Barbara first goes to Mr. Carlyle’s offices to discuss her brother, her immediate concern is that she not be seen, for “it was *not* the custom for ladies, young and single, to come there after Mr. Carlyle” (33). Barbara knows that she will be observed and that that information will be reported to the circulatory intelligence network. She also knows that it could be misconstrued and misinterpreted, and that like Mary Forrester, her reputation will probably be mistakenly damaged, never to be fully restored. And she is correct. When

Miss Carlyle sees Barbara leaving, she grills the other woman suspiciously, not believing Barbara's explanation, but rather inferring that Barbara was chasing Mr. Carlyle romantically, exhibiting wanton (monstrous) behavior.

Rachel Curtis, in Charlotte Yonge's The Clever Woman of the Family, exemplifies the unrecoverable reputation. Despite her marriage and rehabilitation, Rachel continues to suffer the suspicions of her family and friends. When Bessie dies following childbirth, having been in the care of Rachel, the letters between Rachel's family and friends indicate their continued distrust. Ermine writes to Colonel Keith saying "pray, if you can say anything to exonerate poor Rachel from mismanagement, say it strongly; her friends are so engaged in wishing themselves there, and pitying poor Bessie for being in her charge, that I long to confute them, for I fully believe in her sense and spirit in any real emergency that she had not ridden out to encounter" (Yonge 326). Ermine's last words of support for Rachel are qualified in terms of Rachel's ability to maintain her new status of domestic angel—Ermine believes in Rachel so long as the younger woman does not relapse into monstrous independence or "cleverness." However, her family cannot trust her ability to care for Bessie and become suspicious of Rachel's care when Bessie dies. Thus Rachel's reputation remains irreparable, no matter how she has evolved.

Lucilla, in Margaret Oliphant's Miss Marjoribanks, demonstrates her awareness of proprieties and the need to maintain her reputation, not only for her sake, but because any stains on her reputation extend automatically to her father and even her friends. When her father naively challenges her invitation to Mrs. Chiley for a dinner party, Lucilla responds correctly, saying: "I must have a chaperone, you know. . . . I don't say

it is not quite absurd; but then, at first, I always make it a point to give in to the prejudices of society. That is how I have always been so successful . . .” (72). Without a chaperone, even in her father’s house, Lucilla would have crossed the boundaries of impropriety and thereby reduced her standing within the power pyramid, undermined her eligibility for marriage, and clouded her father’s reputation as a man of morals and propriety. Mrs. Bury underscores the need for constant self-awareness and self-patrol when she tells Lucilla, “I could only hope that I had impressed upon your mind that an account must be given of every careless word” (79). This last advice comes hard upon the heels of Tom Marjoribanks’ denouncement of religion, a conversation which Lucilla attempts to pass off as the result of his weaker male morality, though she fears “the possibility of her religious principles being impugned, which [is] dreadful in itself (‘for people can stand a man being sceptical [sic], you know . . . but everybody knows how unbecoming it is in a woman . . .” (83). Because she realizes that Mrs. Bury will report the occurrence and that the incident will be contributed to the circulatory intelligence network, she seeks to preempt any damage to her own reputation by distancing herself from Tom’s opinions. Yet Tom’s lack of propriety in this instance and others lowers his position within the power pyramid and invalidates his eligibility for marriage with Lucilla, something he deeply wants. But neither she nor her father consider him eligible. Though Dr. Marjoribanks admits a fondness for Tom as a nephew, his opinion of Tom as a son-in-law is less than positive:

the last person in the world that he would choose to see dancing attendance on his daughter was Tom Marjoribanks. . . .He took a great deal too much interest in Tom Marjoribanks to let him do anything so

foolish; and as for Lucilla, the idea that, after all her accomplishments, and her expensive education, and her year on the Continent, she should marry a man who had nothing, disgusted the Doctor. (69)

In spite of his jeer at marriage as “foolish” and the expression of his affection for Tom, the doctor is firmly opposed to any marriage between Tom and Lucilla.<sup>32</sup> It is not until the end of the book when he returns (having succeeded in his business in India) that Tom can ascend high enough socially to propose. At the same time, by the end of the book Lucilla has lost a great deal of her social capital with the death of her father and the loss of his wealth, thus lowering her status within the pyramid. Thus the two equalize onto a level which makes marriage between them possible.

As I stated earlier, the definition of the respectable—or proper, or decorous, or fitting—whichever Victorian term you choose to assign to the concept, was fluid at best, and difficult to maintain. Robert Audley voices his antipathy for its ideological constrictions, describing day-to-day expectations of propriety monolithically as “this unflinching regularity in the smaller wheels and meaner mechanism of the human machine, which knows no stoppage or cessation, though the mainspring be for ever broken, and the hands pointing to purposeless figures upon a shattered dial” (Braddon 205). His description underscores the proliferation of rules, traditions, and taboos which allows for the individualized regulatory system of the panoptical power pyramid. He goes on to lament the growing mass of madhouses which he argues “are large and only too numerous; yet surely it is strange they are not larger, when we think of how many helpless wretches must beat their brains against this hopeless persistency of the orderly outward world, as compared with the storm and tempest, the riot and confusion within”

(Braddon 205). The ‘storm and tempest, the riot and confusion within’ grow out of the slippery nature of the rules of propriety, the shifting values assigned to behavior and appearances. What may be done now without impunity may generate painful reprisal later. What is respectable for some may not be respectable for others. For instance, when Mr. G., an influential politician, visits the Teviots in Emily Eden’s The Semi-attached Couple, he immediately develops an overt and public flirtation with Helen. He says to her husband, “I never saw such perfection. I cannot take my eyes from her” (157). Rather than responding jealously as has been his practice, Teviot is “delighted” (157). The narrator exonerates Mr. G, explaining that he

had established a right to make a little solemn political love to all the distinguished beauties of the day, and it was by no means a mere measure of custom and courtesy. He was as busy about his little flirtations, and as absorbed in his little sentiments, as if he had been . . . doing his first London season, and nobody thought it odd. Half the women in London unblushingly paid court to him, and nobody said it was scandalous. (157)

The diminutive language of this passage suggests the minor nature of his offenses: “little solemn political love,” “little flirtations,” and “little sentiments.” Combining a benignly innocent tone, a frankly open approach, and a public venue, Mr. G. manages to disarm the rules of flirtation, if only for himself. Thus despite the fact that he flirts openly, particularly with married women, and that they respond enthusiastically, none of the participants suffer censure from angry husbands or the public. This seems to challenge accepted Victorian social codes of behavior, particularly viewed through the ideological construction of the domestic angel. Yet what this passage really reveals is both the

slippery nature of social codes of behavior, and the real danger of misinterpretation. Anyone unfamiliar with Mr. G. or his flirtations could easily believe in their reality and contribute that misinterpretation to the circulatory intelligence network. In doing so, not only would Mr. G's reputation be damaged, but those women with whom he flirted would come under suspicion. And though, like Mary Forrester, none of the parties would have actually committed any offenses, the taint of suspicion would nevertheless cling to them, undermining their authority and agency within the power pyramid.

Misinterpretation of information is an important theme in these five novels. When Robert Audley first meets Clara Talboys, she appears to him to be "cold, hard and unwomanly. . . . a stately and heartless automaton" (Braddon 204). Her apparent disbelief and indifference to the evidence Robert provides of her brother's murder disgusts and repulses Robert. Yet when she runs outside to speak with him privately away from the oppressive eye of her father, her feminine flush, emotional entreaty, and her love for George convince Robert that she is the epitome of the domestic angel.

Robert originally concludes that Clara's stoicism during his meeting with her father is a consequence of her lack of emotion and thus he determines that she is an unnatural woman—the worst kind of woman. He also describes Lady Audley as unnatural, a correlation which cannot be lost on the readers. In the general mistaken conception of Lady Audley as the domestic angel, and Robert's original impression of Clara Talboys, we can see the inherent danger of basing 'facts' the interpretation of appearances.<sup>33</sup> Because these 'facts' are often incorrect and invariably are also deemed to be factual until proven otherwise, a woman must not only seek to appear respectable,

but she must also anticipate how her appearance might be misinterpreted and her reputation damaged by the circulation of inaccurate and erroneous information.

Oliphant repeatedly dramatizes the misinterpretation of Lucilla's appearances and behavior by society. Because she can eat in a socially difficult situation, she cannot be emotionally invested in it: "Mrs. Chiley, who watched her [Lucilla] with grandmotherly interest, was comforted to perceive that Lucilla, as on the former occasion, had strength of mind to eat her dinner" despite her supposed nerves (118). When observation fails to elicit information, the community relies on hindsight to make sense of a situation. Thus because she unexpectedly accepts Tom's proposal in the end of the book, Lucilla was always secretly emotionally attached to him:

And by degrees the Grange Lane people came to see that they knew a great deal about Tom, and to remind each other of the abrupt end of his last visit, and of his going to India immediately after, and of many little circumstance in Lucilla's looks and general demeanour which this *dénouement* seemed to make plain. . . . Going back upon their recollections, most people were able to verify the fact that Miss Marjoribanks had borne her little disappointments very well, and there was sometimes a preoccupation in her eye. (494-5)

In both instances, the social interpretation is incorrect, and is based on what is known personally about Lucilla and what is expected of a middle-class domestic angel.

Oliphant's dramatization of this social misconception exposes the ironies of social 'facts' which are dependent on observation and interpretation. Yet at the same time, Miss Marjoribanks demonstrates that in spite of individual personalities and the day-to-day

transgressions which occur in any given community, the system of the panoptical power pyramid serves to protect the community from real damage caused by transgressors. The unworthy Mr. Cavendish is prevented from taking a position of power; Barbara Lake is forced into exile through community ostracization; the Archdeacon is prevented from exposing misinformation concerning Mr. Cavendish and thereby ruining the reputations and credibility of many senior citizens of the town.

Yonge also focuses on the dangers of misinformation in The Clever Woman of the Family. For instance, upon hearing of Colonel Keith's and Ermine's relationship, Rachel wishes to withdraw from the company and ponder the situation. However, "consciousness and fear of the construction that might be put on her change of purpose [forced] her on" (Yonge 170). Rachel fears that her sudden change in plans will elicit a misinterpretation of her behavior and thus harm her reputation. Grace is equally conscious of the danger of misinformation when, following the revelation of the abusive conditions at Rachel's charity school, Grace "could not see three people talking together without blushing with indignation at the construction they were certainly putting on her sister's scarlet cheeks and absence from the drawing-room" (228). The scarlet is easily explained by Rachel's humiliation, the absence by her concern for the sick child upstairs. Nevertheless, the public interpretation is that she has been complicit in the fraud and abuse, and gossip that neither Rachel nor Grace anticipate, that Rachel is involved in a romantic relationship with Mauleverer.

Both Rachel and Grace prove wiser than their cousin Fanny in the matter of appearances. Both are aware of the possibility of false interpretations and both attempt to forestall them before the misinformation is circulated. Yet while Rachel is certainly the

character Yonge uses to denounce feminism and the 'new woman', Yonge finds her an insufficient illustration in stressing the importance of appearances. In the character of Rachel, Yonge has created a caricature of the outspoken, aggressive and controlling woman with whom readers would not wish to be identified. Rachel is expected to make blunders of appearances and so when punishment befalls her, the readers are encouraged to feel she has received her just desserts. Rachel serves as a negative example. However, in order for Yonge to impress on her readers the need to examine their own appearances and behavior, she must show that even domestic angels must be ever on guard.

In the following lesson, Yonge's main concern is to stress the importance of maintaining appearances, the importance of anticipating the interpretation someone might place on behavior and appearances, and the consequences to a woman too lax in this area. Even the best of women. Yonge's target for this lesson is unusual—Fanny (Lady Temple). Hitherto Yonge has represented Fanny as a domestic angel, second only to Ermine Williams. She demonstrates most characteristics of the domestic angel, although she does not exhibit as much prudence as she should. However, her faults are attributed to her innocence and her emotional state at the loss of her husband. Both of these characteristics are associated with the domestic angel, and thus Yonge is also in a sense criticizing a paradoxical ideology when she demonstrates that those characteristics have led Fanny into transgression.

Yonge's lesson begins when Lord Keith proposes marriage to Fanny. Oblivious of his interest until his proposal, Fanny examines her own behavior for what might have given him the impression that she might wish to again marry—a course of action she is adamantly opposed to. She says "it must have been my fault! I was so childish; and

when I've got my boys with me, I can't help being happy. . . . I know I have not been as sad and serious as my aunt thought I ought to be, and now this comes of it" (Yonge 154). Fanny quickly locates the fault in her own demeanor and behavior, crediting Lord Keith with making a reasonable interpretation. She believes that she has acted inappropriately and consequently curbs her behavior toward stricter propriety and self-restraint. Thus later, upon being invited to a party, she refuses. She "never for one moment thought of going, or even supposed that any one could imagine she could. Indeed, if she had accepted it, it would have been a decisive encouragement to her ancient suitor [Lord Keith]" (Yonge 176). Her refusal has the desired effect on Lord Keith: "Colin saw that he [Lord Keith] regarded her refusal, in its broad black edges, as a further clenching of the reply to his addresses" (Yonge 176). As a result, Lord Keith turns his attentions to Bessie.

However, Fanny's romantic troubles are not yet over. The bumbling Mr. Touchett has also fallen in love with her and soon makes his proposal. Fanny of course refuses, but again takes the blame: "I am afraid I can't be what I ought to be or people would never think of such nonsense" (Yonge 163). She then turns to Colonel Keith and begs, "please will you tell me how I could have been more guarded" (Yonge 163). The doubled proposals suggest that indeed Fanny should have been more aware, that the blame does rest on her for not anticipating how these men would read her appearance and behavior. That two men came to the same conclusion about her only serves to confirm her fault in the matter—her lack of propriety. Indeed Colonel Keith admonishes that she ought to have been more thoughtful about her invitations, and that she should not have allowed so much social interaction with Mr. Touchett. Fanny willingly accepts his

criticism, saying “If I had only thought in time” she might have modified her behavior and prevented the proposals (164).

The result of the two proposals, in spite of her attempt to suppress any public knowledge of them, is a welter of gossip and public speculation. The public continues to interpret the behavior of the principle characters in the matter and arrives at the correct conclusion. While Fanny’s reputation does not noticeably suffer, she has still lost credibility and now it becomes necessary that she be more closely monitored. At the same time, or perhaps more accurately as a consequence, she is required to develop stricter measures of self-patrol and self-restraint. She and her friends agree that these two unwanted proposals grew out of her own selfish desire to participate in various social activities. Rather than sacrificing her personal pleasure and refusing to participate, she had ignored the admonitions of her aunt and cousin to be more modest and less frivolous. Therefore, as a result of her transgression of the social codes, she must suffer through a difficult social predicament and public embarrassment.

### *Living Inside the Panopticon*

When Rachel attends court to testify against Mauleverer in The Clever Woman of the Family, she does so not only as a legal obligation, but also to refute the prevailing gossip which identifies her as an accomplice to fraud, the schoolmaster’s lover, and, perhaps most disturbing, an unnatural woman who starves and beats children. While she explains her part as a victim of fraud, the real refutation of her guilt is conveyed in physical terms, rather than verbal. The crowd gathers its information not from what she says, but rather from her outward appearance:

All the world indeed was curious to see the encounter between Rachel Curtis and her impostor, and every one who had contributed so much as a dozen stamps to the F. U. E. E. felt as under a personal wrong and grievance, while many hoped to detect other elements of excitement, so that though all did not overtly stare at the witness, not even the most considerate could resist the impulse to glance at her reception of the bow with which he greeted her entrance. (Yonge 251)

Under the microscopic scrutiny of the audience, Rachel's demeanor is self-possessed and she maintains her outward composure: "there [is] no change of colour on her cheek" and she appears "impassive" throughout her testimony (Yonge 251). The Victorian ideological assumption behind such an examination argues that had she been guilty, there would have been a tell-tale color fluctuation in her face. Nor could she have maintained composure, but would have revealed to those dissecting gazes some outward evidence of her guilt. Innocence, guilt, evil, goodness—the Victorians believed that a person's character and mind could be read on her outward appearance, given sufficiently incisive scrutiny.

Positioning Rachel within the legal milieu as a witness emphasizes the importance of appearances within Victorian culture. She is being observed for the veracity of her answers, she is recounting her observations of Mauleverer, a confidence man who has maintained all appearances of respectability while manipulating Rachel into public activities which suggest her guilt. She recounts her observations of him even as the court observes her as means of discovering signs of her guilt or innocence. Because she reveals herself only to be negligent, her own appearance and answers showing naïveté

rather than criminal culpability, her observations of Mauleverer are perceived as accurate, if not discerning. Even so, the court requires corroborating testimony, emphasizing Rachel's loss of credibility. Because there are no other witnesses, Mauleverer is acquitted; his appearance of respectability and her lost of agency contribute to his credibility. Eventually, however, further investigation produces evidence and witnesses which convict Mauleverer of more crimes than the one for which Rachel testifies against him, demonstrating the effectiveness of the pervasive surveillance of the panoptical power pyramid.

Rachel's public exposure serves as punishment for her guilt, though not of fraud and child abuse. Rather she is guilty of unwomanly or monstrous behavior. Specifically, she acts too independently of male instruction and guidance. Her punishment helps discipline her, serving as a corrective and facilitating her metamorphosis into a domestic angel by the end of the novel. As Colonel Keith notes at the end of the trial, "the absurdity of her whole conduct was palpable. I hope she has had a lesson" (Yonge 262).

Following Rachel's testimony against Mauleverer, she wishes only to isolate herself. This is impossible. Isolation would give credence to the gossip surrounding her relationship with Mauleverer. Mrs. Curtis, her mother, tells her: "After all, my love, one can't so much wonder! You have always been very peculiar, you know, and so clever, and you took up this [charity school for girls] so eagerly. And then the Greys saw you so unwilling to prosecute" (Yonge 264). Rachel responds by attending the dinner party that evening, saying "I will give as much ocular demonstration as I can, that I am not pining" for Mauleverer (Yonge 264). Rachel becomes aware of the constant surveillance of society, of her friends, family, and husband. She responds to that surveillance by

conforming more and more to the role of the domestic angel. In a final soliloquy of confession, she articulates the changes which she has undergone, offering the reader a moral lesson in proper femininity:

I had a few intellectual tastes, and liked to think and read, which was supposed to be cleverness; and my wilfulness made me fancy myself superior in force of character, in a way I could never have imagined if I had lived more in the world. Contact with really clever people has shown me that I am slow and unready. . . . I should have been much better if I had had either father or brother to keep me in order. (Yonge 367).

Rachel learns humility, dependence, and meekness. As a result, the surveillance becomes rewarding rather than punishing as the looks turn approving by the end of the novel.

Ermine Williams, who is Yonge's representative domestic angel in the novel, says "it is beautiful to see her [Rachel] holding herself back, and most forbearing where she feels most positive" (365). Rachel no longer has a need to fear surveillance, because she has reformed into a domestic angel. As such, her actions and appearance are always above reproach, always conforming to the hegemonic codes of proper femininity. In this way the panoptical power pyramid coerces women into willing compliance with hegemony.

Perhaps it is amusing in East Lynne when Judge Hare attempts to force Barbara into marriage because the gossips have come to the conclusion that "the unhappy crime attaching to her brother was the sole cause" of her remaining single (Wood 261).

Hearing the gossip, fearing that it will be believed, Judge Hare insists that she refute the gossip by marrying Major Thorn whom she has just refused. The coercive power of gossip and the importance of reputation are revealed in the Judge's complaint to Mr.

Carlyle: “One would think, rather than lie under the stigma and afford the parish room to talk, she’d marry the first man that came, if it was the parish beadle—anybody else would” (Wood 262). How long Barbara would have been able to resist her father’s demands remains unknown, for shortly thereafter Mr. Carlyle finally proposes and she accepts, but out of her long-unrequited love for him rather than the pressure from her father. The reader’s amusement at Judge Hare’s reaction is tempered by the reality of his fears: he cannot afford damage to his reputation, or he risks losing his livelihood as a judge and his position of power within the community.

The system of interpretive surveillance inherent to the panoptical power pyramid works to hegemonic advantage by creating an atmosphere of constant menace, of a Damocletian sword hanging over every woman’s head. The ability to micro-focus power on an individual is much the same as the individualized inspection allowed by the segmentation of space in Bentham’s Panopticon. Though in Victorian society an individual might move about freely, her person is under constant surveillance as though she were in a fixed space: “the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded . . . [and] each individual is constantly located, examined” (Foucault, Discipline 197). The dynamics remain the same because of the diffusion of surveillance. The gaze of the panoptical power pyramid is as “omnipresent and omniscient” as the prison (Foucault, Discipline 197). The necessary anonymity of the observer and the continued threat of surveillance and discovery are preserved in the profusion of possible watchers. Indeed, in the panoptical power pyramid, there is more likelihood of consistent observation by the multiplicity of observers which make up society than there is a possibility of going unobserved. This creates the effect of “conscious and permanent

visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, Discipline 201). Because, as Foucault points out, observation is “unverifiable . . . the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (Discipline 201). This sense of imminent danger encourages a kind of manic state of constant dread of discovery—of real or imagined offenses. As a result, there is more strict adherence to the social codes of respectability, increasing the likelihood of complicity and participation within the power pyramid. As David Spurr argues, “sight confers power; for the observed, visibility is a trap” (16). Further, there is a fear, not only of what truth shall be observed, but what will be construed by watchers.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The only real options for middle class women's work included becoming a companion or governess, both of which depended on references which required respectability and propriety. Lucy Graham (later Lady Audley) attempts to circumvent the requirement by changing her name and arranging for forged references, enabling her to find work as a governess. However, she is eventually discovered and dies in madhouse. Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth becomes a governess on the basis of the local dissenting vicar's recommendation, though he knows she has committed adultery and has borne an illegitimate child as a result. She also eventually dies following the revelation of her improprieties. Both women are punished severely for transgressing against the domestic angel ideal, for being unnatural women, and then for subverting hegemony by undermining public faith in the competency of the system. See also Joan Perkin, Victorian Women, Washington Square: New York UP, 1993, and Judith Rowbotham, Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guidance for Girls in Victorian Fiction, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989.
- <sup>2</sup> Those people who hold top agency positions would be intent on protecting their positions, taking few risks which would lead to disqualification.
- <sup>3</sup> Queen Victoria is of course a striking anomaly in this architecture of power. However, she was perceived as largely ornamental, allowing her husband to perform the political duties of the monarchy, while she acted as the domestic angel. As Adrienne Munich states "Many traditional powers of the monarchy were transferred to Parliament during Victoria's reign, although the publication of her letters after her death challenged the public perception of the powerless queen" (2). However, appearances in the Victorian

period, those cultural elements subject to scrutiny and gossip, created cultural reality. As Munich goes on to point out, unlike Elizabeth I, Victoria is “not regard[ed] . . . as central to her [political] era, though no one denies her function as a cultural icon” (2).

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) formulated the idea of the panoptical prison. The cells would be built in a circular building surrounding a tower ‘axis.’ Prisoners would be placed in the cells which would be backlit to make the prisoners always available to the gaze of the central tower. The watcher within the tower would always be hidden, the gaze discontinuous. Because the prisoners would never know when or if they were being watched, their uncertainty would encourage constant adherence to the rules for fear of being discovered. Foucault examines the circulation of power within Bentham’s design of the Panopticon, arguing that:

the Panopticon . . . takes account of the chief inspector’s surveillance of his staff and the constant watch kept over everyone through the windows of the tower, an unbroken succession of observations recalling the motto: each comrade becomes an overseer. . . . In the Panopticon each person, depending on his place, is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust. (Power/Knowledge 157-8)

<sup>5</sup> Adultery or bigamy would fall into the ‘heinous’ category, while refusing to marry, or failing to meet the requirements of a social role would be considered more moderate transgressions. Because my argument does not revolve around real crime, but social

transgression, it is important to emphasize the danger of ignoring ‘minor’ appearing transgressions.

<sup>6</sup> Women excluded from what I have termed legitimate discourse might turn to illegitimate forms of discourse to survive: begging, criminal activities such as prostitution or theft, or they might drop from their middle class status and become laborers of some sort (though such work might be difficult to find; employers would be suspicious of women who had slid from their class). In any case, she becomes ‘unsexed’ in the terminology of the period. She loses her cultural value.

It might be argued that women could participate in missionary work, and had begun to attend schools which allowed them professional careers. However, the missionary woman was very much the domestic angel and thus retained her class status and cultural value. Indeed, postcolonial writers have argued that the white woman in the colonies, particularly the missionary woman, conformed more rigidly to the codes of the domestic sphere than their counterparts in Britain. These women served as symbols of England to the colonized natives, representing purity, divine righteousness and racial supremacy. According to Deirdre David, Victorian women acted “as emblems of correct colonial governance” (5).

Professional careers were not really a viable option because so few were publicly accepted and profitable during the mid-Victorian period. The largest exception would be the traditional role of the governess and companion. However, these roles marginalized those women on the edges of a foreign domestic space, one that belonged to women who better exemplified society’s expectations of womanhood.

As George Gissing masterfully portrayed in his novel The Odd Women (1893), to be a governess was not particularly desirable, since those women had little contact with eligible bachelors and so did not have access to the authorized feminine domestic sphere; they lacked financial security—and often physical security when forced to suffer the attentions of male family members and guests; and they often became, particularly as they grew older or ill, incapable of supporting themselves. See also note 56 in Chapter 4.

<sup>7</sup> The rules created within any given discourse cell could not contradict or challenge hegemony without endangering the cell's own integrity, which is governed by and contained within the larger hegemonic structure.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that some gossips may be making an attempt (whether consciously or unconsciously) to play “with reputations, circulating truths and half-truths and falsehoods about the activities, sometimes about the motives and feelings, of others” in order to “further political or social ambitions by damaging competitors or enemies, gratify envy and rage” (4). Thus while gossip may contain truth, it is often biased by the motives of the gossips. The information retrieved in this way must be reprocessed through formal channels for corroboration, or to separate the fact from rumor.

<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu is specifically concerned here with ethnic and/or national identity (depending on how the boundaries of a social collective (country or nation) are drawn.

<sup>10</sup> Hegemony depends on such discursive consensus—it is, always, transdiscursive.

- <sup>11</sup> Foucault's discussion here revolves around elementary education, specifically focusing on the methods of teaching and correction involved in training students to behave appropriately.
- <sup>12</sup> In Chapter Five, I discuss further the concept of hegemonic service value. Specifically, in that chapter I examine those female characters within the novels who do not suffer reprisal for transgression, as reprisal would do more damage than good. Thus these characters have greater value unpunished than punished.
- <sup>13</sup> Ironically, though all women were believed to harbor monstrous qualities inherent to feminine nature (contradicting the ideology of the domestic angel), only those women who revealed those qualities in some way were subject to reprisal, though of course all women were subject to particular scrutiny.
- <sup>14</sup> Specifically, there were divisions of respectability according to such considerations as political association, religious affiliations (broad church, low church, dissenting church, etc.), class, economic status, urban or rural communities, gender, and education. For a detailed discussion of the concept of respectability in Victorian England, see F. M. L. Thompson, The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.
- <sup>15</sup> In the case of women, however, respectability was more clearly defined, based as it was on the tenets of the domestic angel and fear of the feminine abject.
- <sup>16</sup> For more information concerning etiquette books and the evolution of Victorian manners amongst the middle class, see Michael Curtin's Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners.

- <sup>17</sup> Michael Curtin's extensive study on Victorian manners shows that there were a great variety of these books available, and many went through multiple printings. For example, he says that in "1848 the New Monthly Magazine reviewed three etiquette books, the first in its twenty-ninth edition, the second in its thirty-fifth, and the last in its seven-thousandth copy" (40).
- <sup>18</sup> A major consideration of a prospective wife was her usefulness in terms of social contact. A woman could establish social contacts which would further a husband's career in business, and establish connections within the power pyramid which would allow him to increase his delegated authority and ascend higher within the power structure. For further reading on women's social roles, see Joan Perkin's Victorian Woman, Washington Square, NY: New York UP, 1993; Judith Rowbotham's Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guidance for Girls in Victorian Fiction, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989; Pat Jalland's Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914, Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986; and Françoise Basch's Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel, New York: Schocken Books, 1974.
- <sup>19</sup> There was a conception that a husband could train his wife properly, so those behaviors which could be curbed as Alick does with Rachel in Yonge's Clever Woman might be overlooked. However in Miss Marjoribanks, Mr. Cavendish considers marriage to Barbara Lake a ludicrous idea because her flaws involve her class standing, her family, and her uncontrollable passions. He does eventually decide to marry her, but only under the condition that they leave English society altogether, since such a wife could only undercut his precarious social position. He thinks that Barbara, "if she were well

dressed, would still be a fine woman . . . and that about Naples, perhaps, or the baths of Lucca, or in Germany, or the south of France, a man might be able to get on well enough with such a companion, where society was not so exacting or stiff-starched as in England” (464).

<sup>20</sup> For instance in Pride and Prejudice when Lydia elopes with Mr. Wickham and proceeds to live ‘in sin’ with him in London, her sisters suddenly lose all chance at marriage. Mr. Collins sums up the situation in his letter to Mr. Bennet: “this false step in one daughter, [sic] will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others, for who, as lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family[?]” (262).

<sup>21</sup> It is important that Jane and Elizabeth are the only real candidates for marriage amongst the sisters. They aspire to the qualities of true womanhood, and present an appearance of the domestic angel. Once married, Elizabeth attempts to rescue her younger sister, training her in the attributes of the domestic angel, and thereby making her marriageable.

<sup>22</sup> Self-patrol includes self-surveillance and self-discipline.

<sup>23</sup> James Eli Adams explores Victorian codes of masculine identity in Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Feminists and non-feminists alike reacted strongly against the Contagious Diseases Acts which allowed military men to continue in sinful vice while persecuting the women (prostitutes in particular) with whom they engaged in sex. The Acts are credited with uniting women in a common protest as they had never been previously.

- <sup>25</sup> In this context, the fallen woman refers less to the traditional corpus of prostitutes which Amanda Anderson (Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) and Judith Walkowitz (City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) each explore in their studies of fallen women. Rather here it indicates the woman who fails to adequately meet the requirements of the domestic angel. Therefore in the context of this study, ‘fallen’ refers less to sexual misconduct, than to transgressions of hegemonic standards of true femininity as discussed in chapter two.
- <sup>26</sup> Foucault discusses the shift in punishment strategy from the “vengeance of the sovereign” to one which focuses on social protection.
- <sup>27</sup> Carlyle invites Levison into his home and serves the other man in a legal capacity. Had he become aware of Levison’s Iago-like manipulations of Isabel, Carlyle could have thrown the other man out and declined his business. He also, as he acknowledges, never saw the depth of Isabel’s uncertainty and fears, and so never gave her the reassurance that she needed.
- <sup>28</sup> And depending on the amount of damage, this could become a threat to the larger hegemonic structure. Hegemony is structured on a relational hierarchy, like a spider web. When one side of the web is twitched, the entire web feels it; if enough collateral damage occurs, the entire spider web can collapse. With hegemony, if not quickly subdued or contained, corruption could spread transdiscursively and threaten the stability of the larger structure.

<sup>29</sup> Lady Audley explains that her insanity is hereditary, that her mother had been suffered the same illness. In describing a visit to her mother, she says

Before my father sent me to school in Torquay, he took me to see my mother. This visit served at least to dispel the idea which had so often terrified me. I saw no raving, strait-waistcoated maniac, guarded by zealous gaolers; but a golden-haired, blue-eyed, girlish creature, who seemed as frivolous as a butterfly, and who skipped towards us with her yellow curls decorated with natural flowers, and saluted us with radiant smiles, and gay, ceaseless chatter. (Braddon 349-350).

Like herself, Lady Audley's mother has the physical appearance of an angel hiding a monstrous nature. Braddon represents Lady Audley not as a singular, anomalous case, but instead suggests a certain regularity of occurrence within society of such monstrosity.

<sup>30</sup> As a requisite of becoming a governess, Lady Audley fabricates a past for herself which falls apart when Robert Audley investigates. Thus, in spite of physical evidence of the authenticity of a person's past and character such as letters of reference or a family name, vigilant observation must not be relaxed, as that evidence may prove to be false. For instance, Mr. Cavendish pretends to be related to a socially revered family, and as a result gains the social trust of Carlingford, only to betray it. In a panoptical system, there is no sufficient proof of character except the daily actions which support a good reputation.

- <sup>31</sup> The public perception of the danger involved in delegating women power is revealed in this story. Mary is condemned more for corrupting Stuart than for jilting him.
- <sup>32</sup> Dr. Marjoribanks' own marriage to Lucilla's mother, whose death initiates the novel, was an irritant to him. It is not long before "the faint and daily lessening shadow of poor Mrs [sic] Marjoribanks was removed altogether from the house" (28). He feels "a painful heaviness," not from grief, but because "he [becomes] aware how little real sorrow [is] in his mind, and how small an actual loss [is] this loss of his wife" (28). His marriage to Mrs. Marjoribanks had "wearied his life out" (31).
- <sup>33</sup> The growing cultural authority of the empirical scientific method lends credence to the truth of facts drawn from observation during this period.