



"Darkness is different for me now. I know all its depths and textures": the panoptical gaze in Sarah Waters's "Affinity" [

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text (article)

Analítica

The aim of this essay is to analyse Sarah Waters's novel *Affinity* (1999) from the perspective of the panoptical system of surveillance, based on the controlling power of the gaze, that was widely employed as a system of repression in Victorian society. It seeks to explore Millbank prison as a perfect example of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon and Michel Foucault's ideas about punishment and imprisonment. Drawing on Laura Mulvey's notion of scopophilia, the essay goes on to explore the characteristics of the interaction and mutual attraction felt by two of the main characters, with the aim of proving that the gaze can be a powerful weapon to subjugate another person. Finally, it tackles the relevance of the third protagonist, Ruth Vigers, a lady's maid whose job makes her invisible both to the readers and to other characters in the novel. The analysis shows that it is precisely her social invisibility that allows her to escape the gaze of this panoptical society and become the master puppeteer controlling everything from the shadows

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