



# **The Self in the Cell: Narrating the Victorian Prisoner (Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory)**

*Sean C. Grass*

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Michel Foucault's writing about the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish* has dominated discussions of the prison and the novel, and recent literary criticism draws heavily from Foucauldian ideas about surveillance to analyze metaphorical forms of confinement: policing, detection, and public scrutiny and censure. But real Victorian prisons and the novels that portray them have few similarities to the Panopticon. Sean Grass provides a necessary alternative to Foucault by tracing the cultural history of the Victorian prison, and pointing to the tangible relations between Victorian confinement and the narrative production of the self. *The Self in the Cell* examines the ways in which separate confinement prisons, with their demand for autobiographical production, helped to provide an impetus and a model that guided novelists' explorations of the private self in Victorian fiction.

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