Chapter Three

Visual Empowerment in *Wives and Daughters* Television Adaptation

In the previous chapter, I have demonstrated how the photographic impulse interrupts the narrative structure of the novel; in this chapter, I will examine how visual techniques in the adaptation work in the opposite direction, namely, to empower the image of the heroine. Although many critics attribute the heroine's new image to the structural manipulation by the adaptation, I will argue that instead, it is visual techniques that shape the final image of the heroine. In the following sections, fist of all, I will examine existing reviews on the television adaptation and their problems, proposing to turn to investigate the mechanism of representation embodied in it. Then through McFarlance's theory of transposition, I will demonstrate how the adaptation conforms to the original text in terms of narrative structure. Finally, following Monaco's method of visual analysis, I will investigate how the techniques of visualization in the adaptation sanction more autonomy to the heroine, and create a lively image for her.

I. Feminist Criticism and Its Limits

When the BBC and WGBH Boston co-production *Wives and Daughters* was launched in 1999, it immediately received positive feedbacks as a successful television adaptation, winning three awards from BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts)—also known as the Academy Awards of the Britain—for best design, best make-up and hair, and best photography and lighting ("Behind the Scene"). In addition to the popular recognition, reviewers and critics alike acknowledge that this serial faithfully transforms the novel into a TV form. Banks-Smith praises it as "a faithfully made, exquisite drama" (*The Guardian*), while Monahan recognizes that the adaptation has "translated [the novel] charmingly to the

small screen" (*The Telegraph*). As Patsy Stoneman points out, this adaptation is "on the whole perceived as an accurate and sensitive rendering of Gaskell's novel" ("Wives" 2). However, in spite of the attention it draws, reviewers seldom mention the fact that the image of the heroine on television is quite different from that in the novel. Even for those who carefully investigate the difference, they never consider it as a problem, but rather try to justify that the adaptation makes a successful interpretation of the original.

Patsy Stoneman's analysis on *Wives and Daughters* is an explicit case here. In her in-depth analysis, Stoneman discusses how the adaptation makes an alteration from "Molly's passive endurance… towards her active pursuit of goals," and tries to justify each change by the adaptation (3). Stoneman emphasizes the innovative ending scene, in which Molly follows Roger to Africa to conduct his second scientific expedition. She praises this ending to be "a stroke of genius, bringing together all of Gaskell's interest in the advancement of science, her restless 'gypsy-scholar' side which leads her to long for 'wings like a dove to fly away,' and the tough independence of her heroine, Molly Gibson" (5). In other words, Stoneman argues that although these changes do not exist in Gaskell's original, they function well to bring out Gaskell's true intention. Besides, Stoneman welcomes this modern version of the ending from the perspective of audience's responses. She explains that audience today "are impatient with the endurance of Victorian heroines…and wish they had taken their lives in their own hands" (4). And since the adaptation presents a heroine who decides her own destiny, it will fulfill the modern audience's expectation. Finally, Stoneman is satisfied to see a successful and popular rendition of Gaskell's novel, concluding that a good adaptation like this one would entice more audience to re-discover and appreciate Gaskell's work.

I want to make three comments in response to Stoneman's article, an in-depth

analysis from the academy. First, Stoneman's argument is based on the assumption that the "original" Molly in the novel is an independent character, while the adaptation is doing a good job to restore her true character. But without referring to the original text to illustrate Molly's independent nature, Stoneman merely argues that if Gaskell were alive to see the modern adaptation, she would agree with this new way of ending her novel. I think Stoneman's method is to speculate about Gaskell's intention, rather than analyzing textual evidence within the text. And this is a case similar to an article by the same author back in 1987, when she dedicated a chapter to Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* in a book, arguing that Molly Gibson is actually a courageous and respectable heroine. In both situations, Stoneman takes a historical approach, trying to excavate Gaskell's feminist thinking from her personal letters and documents. Unlike Stoneman's approach, my analysis will conduct a close reading on the cinematic text—in this case, the narrative structure and image composition of the television adaptation.

Second, when Stoneman uses McFarlance's theory to examine the narrative structure of the adaptation, her central focus is on the ending. She argues that the brilliant arrangement at the end of the adaptation brings out the heroine's self-reliance and independence—it lets Molly run after Roger's carriage, and courageously speaks out her true feeling. Despite her convincing argument, nevertheless, I think Stoneman's analysis puts too much weight on the ending, while most of her examples are taken from the end of the adaptation. Indeed, since the original text does not end in Gaskell's words, but in a synopsis based on Gaskell's idea, its open-ended state sanctions different possibilities. But since the ending is open to interpretation, textual evidence from the ending could only serve as a subsidiary example, rather than the focal point of analysis. It is not sufficient to look at the ending without considering other parts of the story. As a result, I challenge Stoneman's analysis by

shifting the emphasis from the ending to the main part of the adaptation. I will analyze the image composition throughout the television serial, and investigate how and why Molly's image becomes different in the televised version.

Third, there is a contradiction in the thread of Stoneman's argument. On the one hand, she argues that the adaptation is an accurate representation of the original text; on the other hand, she dedicates a great proportion of the argument to justify why the adaptation changes some of the plot designs so as to make the heroine more independent. Stoneman seems to suggest preposterously that the adaptation could achieve faithful representation only because it has made some changes to the original: to inject a new spirit into the heroine is to make her become close to the original text. I suggest that Stoneman's attitude reveals an ambivalent policy within the tradition of adaptation criticism via feminist approach. For instance, if a film adaptation ignores the independent spirit of the heroin in the novel, or emphasizes her feminine part of the character, this kind of politically incorrect adaptation is bound to arouse dissatisfaction. Feminist critics could easily argue that it mistakenly betrays the spirit of the original text. A famous example is Troost and Greenfield's criticism that Hollywood industry has turned Jane Austen's intelligent and independent heroines into conventional and girlish women (7). Yet on the contrary, if an adaptation eliminates anti-feminist elements in a novel, it would be considered as in alliance with feminists, and could be exempt from relentless bombardments. Feminist critics are prone to considering it as a testimony of feminism, and would choose either to ignore its "unfaithfulness" to the original, or to rediscover feminist spirits out of the original so as to justify the adaptation's choice. In short, analyzing an adaptation that adds an independent spirit to the heroine, critics usually do not consider this kind of change as distortion, even though it does alter something from the original. It is an ambivalent policy when treating adaptation works.

II. Structural Fidelity of the Adaptation

Perhaps it is time to break from the limited framework of feminist conventions. My purpose here is not to argue for or against certain version of the story, nor do I intend to defend the importance of sticking to the original. Rather, I hope to examine the relationship between novel and film as different media, exploring the mechanism of textual and visual representations, and probing their effects on characterization. As Steve Wurtzler points out acutely, an ideal work on film adaptation would be useful because "it can simultaneously teach us about literature, about film…and about reading" (94).

In his book *Novel to Film* (1996), Brian McFarlance develops a theory of "transposition" to indicate the process of transforming novels into films. McFarlance argues that there are two different mechanisms involved in the process of transposition, namely *transference* and *adaptation* (13). Transferable elements are narrative elements that can be shifted from one medium to another without significant alteration. For instance, dialogues in the novel could be put on the screen directly without changing. The plot sequence of a novel could also be copied easily in a cinematic form, as long as it is the producer's wish to follow the original text. On the other hand, adaptable elements must have gone through some changes before being rendered by another medium. For instance, a film must transform descriptions of a room into visual images, and usually it has to rely on theatrical properties and interior design so as to visualize these descriptions. Depictions of how a person or a setting looks like usually belong to elements that have to be adapted.

And then McFarlance elaborates on the mechanism of transportation by incorporating Barthes's concept into his theory. On the one hand, he suggests that both cardinal functions and catalysers are transferable (14). Since they consist of the "bare bone" of a story, they become the key elements for viewers to make a

connection between an adaptation and the original (13). They are also crucial elements in terms of a producer's choice, because any changes in cardinal functions would easily result in a "new" or even "subversive" film version of the novel. For instance, if a producer changes a sober ending into a happy ending, it would immediately "occasion critical outrage and popular disaffection" (Stoneman, "Wives" 3). On the other hand, indices and informants usually belong to elements that need adaptation. For example, a film has to transform "pure data" such as a character's name, age, or occupation into visual performance (Barthes, "Structural Analysis" 96). It follows that any adaptations that aim at faithful representation would try hard to get as close to the original descriptions as possible. And if a novel's setting happens to be in the historical past, then its production team is bound to travail much to make everything on screen look authentic to that period.

Therefore, with McFarlance's theory in mind, it becomes clear that *Wives and Daughters* television adaptation takes advantage of transferable elements in the original novel. The adaptation preserves major cardinal points of the novel, follows the novel's narrative sequence, and transfers a great amount of dialogues onto the screen directly—these are basic steps to achieve a faithful adaptation. Besides, to encompass major cardinal functions of the novel, the production team makes a breakthrough on the length in order to achieve faithful adaptation. As Mark Monahan quotes the screenwriter Andrew Davies's words:

> The anxiety is that you have to do justice to the book. You have to do it slowly. I tried to start writing it in 50-minute episodes. But it didn't work, because, in getting all the plots in, you were losing the things that make the book what it is. So we decided to gamble on it, and develop it gradually. (*The Telegraph*)

The result is a 301-minutes miniseries that covers almost all the contents and details

of the book. By so doing, the adaptation overcomes the limitation of length that might have restricted the story development. As James Monaco points out, because average commercial films "cannot reproduce the range of the novel in time," many things would be lost along with details during the process of transposition (45). Nevertheless, he also adds, "Only the television serial can overcome this deficiency" (45). Perhaps Davies's decision has proven to be correct in the sense that it enables the screen version to preserve the spirit of the original successfully.

Besides, in terms of adaptable elements, the adaptation also endeavors to present the story accurately by paying attention to details, sparing no efforts to achieve historical accuracy. The adaptation treats adaptable elements with great respect—from the shooting location, properties, and costume—every detail is given great care so as to reconstruct the spirit embodied in the novel. To begin with the shooting location, the adaptation has to visualize the setting, Hollingford, an imaginary provincial town of the novel. Before the actual shooting began, a group of production crews arrived at a small town called Marshfield in the English countryside, and transformed it into a Victorian town. They removed signs of modern facilities, covered up tarmac roads with tons of dusts, and replaced modern shop signs with that of the 19th-century design ("Who the Dickens is Mrs. Gaskell"). After they restored every historical detail carefully, they created an authentic backdrop for the adaptation, and successfully transported Gaskell's Hollingford on the screen. In terms of properties and interior design, the production team carefully established settings according to the informants and indices the novel provided. For instance, in order to shoot the Hamley Hall, the team rented an estate in the lake district of the central England. When the crews turned the grand house into a shooting location, they purposely preserved the existing old furniture and wall decoration that gave a sense of decline. This arrangement perfectly matched the

novel's description of the Hamley family: a "land rich and cash poor" folk that were proud of their ancestry but confronted the rise of the new middle class with their economic power (Davies). Last but not least, the adaptation was meticulous on the costume. Each piece of cloth was tailored according to individual character's temperament, and different dresses were designed according to different occasions. In a nutshell, the production team's enthusiasm could be described in Robert Giddings words: "Much of the attention which the BBC had always given to historical feature programs was transferred to classic serial production—sound effects, music and general production values—in a genuine attempt to recreate a convincing sense of the past (ix).

III. Visual Techniques that Empower the Heroine

Inferred from the discussion above, the major difference between the adaptation and the novel lies less in the sequence they delineate stories, than the ways they visualize characters. Even though the television serial arranges narrative sequence and changes scenes according to the original text, the result is a different image of the heroine. It follows that in this section, I will examine visual techniques in the adaptation, demonstrating how the sum effect of mise-en-scène in the television serial results in a lively and wholesome image of the heroine.

My analysis on visual techniques is based on James Monaco's method of analyzing moving images. In his work *How to Read A Film* (2000), Monaco proposes to study films with the same method that linguists use to study language system, on the premise that "film is structured like language" (157). The idea that film is like language has been advocated by many film critics: they argue that film images, like linguistic expressions, have denotations and connotations, and it is the

critic's job to read implicit messages out of the film. [5] This semiotic approach is indebted to Roland Barthes, who begins with still images, trying to decode layers of messages from an advertisement ("Rhetoric of the Image"). In addition, film is analogous to language because it tells stories in such exquisite and perfect ways that it forms a self-sufficient system of expression, like language system itself. As Christian Metz emphasizes, "It is not because cinema is like language that it can tell us such fine stories, but rather it has become language because it has told such fine stories" (47). Based on these reasons, therefore, Monaco holds that a semiotic understanding of cinema would be fruitful (157).

Monaco's work indicates a clear path for film criticism, equipping film critics with tools to *read* a film, namely, to decipher the codes imbedded in the film language. Like language, the meaning of a film depends on difference rather than similarity (161). For instance, "paradigmatic connotation" of a film comes from the difference between a choice by the film and other "unrealized possible choices"; "syntagmiatic connotation" is the result of difference between a choice and other choices that happen elsewhere in the same film (162). Therefore, to read a film involves an incessant process of comparison. As Monaco puts it, much of the film's meaning comes "not from what we see (or hear) but from what we don't see or, more accurately, from an ongoing process of comparison of what we see with what we don't see" (168-69). As a result, if the viewer is equipped with the knowledge of film language, and understands the codes that the film uses to convey meanings, then he or she will get more from an image than the average filmgoers do.

My analysis of *Wives and Daughters* will focus on its "mise-en-scène" rather than "montages," namely, on the techniques concerning "space arrangement" rather

[5] G. Bluestone (1973); Robert B. Ray (2000); Dudley Andrew (1984).

than “time arrangement” within the adaptation. [6] The reasons are twofold. First, since the purpose here is to examine characterization of the heroine, and since mise-en-scène determines how the images look like on the screen, it naturally becomes the primary focus here. By analyzing different facets of mise-en-scène operated in the adaptation, it would be helpful to explain why the heroine is given a stronger impression. Second, the adaptation strictly observes the timeline of the novel to present stories. Because the novel first appeared in a serialized form, it divided stories into chapters, and thus became a clear guideline for the adaptation to follow. In other words, in terms of time arrangement, the adaptation arranges episodes in an identical way to the original text. As a result, our focus here would be mise-en-scène, namely, the visualization of a scene, rather than montages, the editing of time sequence.

The following section investigates how the techniques of mise-en-scène contribute to the visualization of the heroine. I will first analyze techniques that directly shape the heroine’s character: the uses of costumes, properties, image compositions, camera movements, and shot angles. Then I will analyze techniques that function to empower the heroine in terms of her relationship to the society. They include techniques of spatial arrangements, lightings and outdoor settings, shot distance, as well as shot angles. I will show that the sum of these decisions and combinations of techniques results in a lively and self-reliant image of the heroine.

A. Characterizing the heroine

I will begin with a sequence shot to demonstrate the first three techniques of

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[6] “Mise-en-scène” and “montage” are two important concepts of film language. On the one hand, mise-en-scène means “putting in the scene,” that is, the ways images are arranged and presented in a scene (Monaco 172). It concerns the spatial composition of a scene, and asks questions such as “What to shoot?” and “How to shoot it?” (172). On the other hand, montage means “putting together,” indicating the ways different scenes are edited together. It concerns the temporal composition of images, and asks the question “How to present the shot?” in terms of time sequence (179). Hence, mise-en-scène and montage “are the tools with which the filmmaker alters and modifies our reading of the shot” (179).

mise-en-scène—costumes, properties, and image composition of the scene—that cooperate to create a lively image for Molly. It is the time when Mr. Gibson is trying to persuade Molly to pay a long visit to the Hamley Hall, and the adaptation transports it into a gardening scene. Technically speaking, this sequence shot is composed of two different shots within one camera movement: it begins with a close shot of Molly's hands, and then pans to frame her face, and finally it zooms out to reveal a full shot of Molly and her father talking in the garden. More importantly, this sequence can be regarded as an establishing sequence—a sequence that aims at providing basic information of characters and the setting, so as to "establish place, often time, and sometimes other necessary information" (Monaco 210). This establishing sequence not only presents Molly's physical traits when she grows up into a young woman, but also builds up an iconic image for the heroine. The followings are three visual techniques in the sequence, as well as their effects on characterization.

First, through the costume design, this sequence shot brings Molly's unpretentious nature onto the screen. Molly's appearance in this sequence is noteworthy—she appears as a young woman wearing a straw bonnet, a pair of working gloves, and is coated in a gardener's apron. As Allen Rowe reminds us, the costume is tightly connected with characterization, and can be used to "anchor" characters into particular meanings (102). Here, the bonnet Molly wears is plain in appearance. Unlike Cynthia's or Mrs. Gibson's bonnets that are always decorated with ribbons and flowers, Molly's bonnet is meant to maintain its basic functions, and thus becomes an evident index to her unpretentious character. As the camera reveals, the brown gloves she wears are obviously made of some durable material. It is not a pair of fashionable gloves that ladies would wear as a part of their dress, but a pair of working gloves to protect her hands when she weeds the garden. To zoom out a

little more, Molly is seen coated in a gardener's apron, and it is her curly hair and print dress under the apron that reveals her female identity. This gardening clothing echoes a comment on Molly from Cynthia in the novel: "You look more like a delving Adam than a Spinning Eve" (345). In other words, the sum of these details not only conveys Molly's unpretentious nature, but also constructs her as a down-to-earth character.

Besides, along with the costume design, theatrical properties in this sequence work to construct a healthy image of the heroine. As the camera zooms out further, Molly is seen squatting among flowers, energetically using a spade to tend the ground. It becomes evident that Molly's costume makes her fit in her surroundings perfectly. She looks comfortable when staying in the open air, and seems to gain a sense of achievement from her job. The pictorial arrangement implies that Molly is capable of dealing with physical tasks as well, rather than being confined in the house due to the lack of strength. Besides, under the bonnet is Molly's face radiant with smile, while her rosy cheeks indicate that she is very healthy. When Molly talks to her father, she has animated facial expressions and energetic tones. She also talks with some gestures, such as waving her hands while talking, which convey her lively spirit. As a result, with the enhancement of properties and costume, this sequence shot successfully gives the heroine a wholesome look.

Moreover, the image composition of this gardening scene strongly conveys a harmonious pastoral life of the heroine. When the camera zooms out further and then stays still, it reveals a full shot of Molly and her father in a conversation. This still shot looks like a beautiful painting saturated with pastoral messages. It consists of parallel layers of horizontal lines: in the foreground are Molly and her father, one squatting on the ground while the other stands and bends down a little to speak to her. In the middle ground are some flowers bathed in sunlight; the background is the

silhouette of their house and a magnificent old tree. This image composition fulfills the "square" composition of the geographic planes within an image frame, [7] in which the horizon of the ground is paralleled to the horizontal lines of the image frame, generating a balanced view. Thus the message conveyed here is calmness and stability, rather than tension or suspension. What's more, this pictorial image is constructed by warm colors with high saturation: the green colors of the plants convey steadiness and fertility of the earth, while the yellow daffodils among them signal vitality and exhilaration. The colors of the characters' outfits are in accordance with the greenish hue of the scene, and there is bright sunlight that enlivens the setting. Consequently, the whole shot gives an impression of a peaceful pastoral life. When Molly's image merges perfectly with her surroundings, the image frame communicates a harmonious relationship between the heroine and nature.

In addition to the tree elements of mise-en-scène discussed above—the costume, properties, and image composition, *Wives and Daughters* television adaptation relies heavily upon static camera, which brings out a vivacious image of the heroine. It is worth noting here that according to André Bazin, the camera movement is closely related to ethical questions, because it determines the relationship among the artist, the subject, and the viewer (23). If the camera changes its position to trace the movement of a subject, it would direct the viewer's attention from the character to the artist. The moving camera is a reminder of the artist's manipulation. It is like making an announcement that the artist's will has overridden the character's autonomy, and that the viewer is watching what the artist decides to show them. On

[7] Monaco explains that because a film must cope with three dimensions, he uses a diagram of "three planes of composition" to analyze elements in a cinematic image (136-38). "The frame plane" is the two-dimensional screen that the audience directly confronts; "the geographical plane" is the horizontal plane that is parallel to the ground; "the depth plane" involves the depth of perception, and is the plane "perpendicular to both the frame plane and the geographical plane" (186). According to Monaco, when the geographical plane is "square" rather than "oblique," the result would be a balanced view (189).

the other hand, if the camera remains stable and simply allows the characters to develop themselves, it will call attention to the characters instead of to the artist (Monaco 201). With static camera, it is like making viewers forget about the existence of the artist, and therefore giving an impression of objective representation. Thus static cameras might be used to ensure that characters are in the limelight.

With this concept in mind, it becomes clear that the television adaptation limits the interference of camera to the lowest point. There is hardly any movement that shows human manipulations, while techniques that are considered to be artificial are scarcely used in the adaptation. The camera allows the heroine enters or leaves the frame freely, and the result is a lively and vivacious heroine. Framed by the static camera, Molly's steps are always light and agile, whether she is accompanying the Old Squire strolling in the garden, or running up and down the stairs at home whenever she is needed by someone, or rushing out of the door to meet her new sister Cynthia for the first time. Through these "catalysers," to use Barthes's terms, the television adaptation embodies Mrs. Gibson's description of Molly: "very apt to come upstairs two steps at a time" (*W & D* 247). Furthermore, in an episode that is not found in the novel, the adaptation successfully demonstrates the "tomboyish" part of Molly by using static camera. During Molly's first stay at the Hamley Hall, Molly once happens to be left alone in a large room; and seeing nobody else is around her, she begins to hopscotch in the empty room. The camera captures Molly's little game without disturbing her. As she jumps from the left to the right side of the frame, and then jumps out of sight, the stationary camera appropriately captures her life force and youthfulness. This shot vividly transports a young and carefree Molly from the novel, who may dance away delightfully when she feels happy (*W & D* 79). It also faithfully visualizes some descriptions on Molly in the same chapter of the novel, according to which both Mr. and Mrs. Hamley find much consolation "having a

young girl dancing and singing inarticulate ditties about the house and the garden" (*W & D* 79). With the static camera, the adaptation brings a sense of vivacity out of the heroine.

Furthermore, throughout *Wives and Daughters* television serial, a typical way of representation is to frame Molly against a pastoral background through a medium shot; this method always brings out an independent nature from the heroine. Unlike a close-up that enlarges a character's existence, or a long-shot that minimizes one's statues in nature, the medium shot allows coexistence between the character and its surroundings. And the adaptation abounds in medium shots of Molly against beautiful pastoral views—whether she is roaming on a country path, feeding herself some berries she gathered in the field, or leaning on a bench in the garden while reading. In these natural scenes, Molly appears being able to enjoy herself even though she is alone: she could obtain spiritual nourishment from nature, and thus replenish her mental strength. The message from these shots corresponds to what Annis Pratt describes: "Nature becomes an ally of the woman hero, keeping her in touch with her selfhood, a kind of talisman that enables her to make her way through the alienations of the male society" (21). Thus, employing medium shots to frame the heroine, the adaptation makes it possible to present a heroine who is under the bliss of nature, and is self-reliant when she is solitary.

B. Visualizing the heroine's relationship with the society

The visual techniques discussed above work together to characterize an independent heroine. Now I am going to introduce other visual techniques that contribute to maintain an equilibrium power relationship between the heroine and other people in the society, and to guarantee that she keeps a wholesome subjectivity in spite of much pressure from the society. As will be demonstrated below, there are at least four visual techniques that strengthens the heroine's power—the uses of

spatial arrangements, outdoor settings, eye-level shots in terms of the camera's angle, and medium shots in terms of shot distances.

First of all, the spatial arrangement of the adaptation is an important method that allows the heroine to keep her autonomy in the family. The adaptation creates a space that belongs to Molly exclusively, which entitles the heroine to use her power of control, and thus symbolizes some degrees of freedom. According to the story, Molly is in charge of the domestic life in Mr. Gibson's "bachelor household" during a long period of his widowhood (Stoneman, *Elizabeth* 5). She takes care of her father's meals as well as his daily habits, and leads the servants to do the household chores. But when Mr. Gibson decides to marry again, Molly has no choice but relinquish her power to the new mistress of the house. The new Mrs. Gibson is eager to establish herself in the family, and to make sure that she is the only person who gives orders. First, Mrs. Gibson takes over the control of the house by replacing the old servants of the family with new hires who would submit to her authority. Then Mrs. Gibson's dominance even intrudes into Molly's personal space: by renovating Molly's room, Mrs. Gibson not only discards old furniture in the house, but also destroys all the souvenirs that would remind Molly of her own mother. While the new mama decorates Molly's "boudoir" with fashionable *toilette*-table, glass and wallpapers, she also deprives Molly of her memories of childhood happiness (*W & D* 190). It seems that Mrs. Gibson not only has a hand in every aspect of Molly's existence in the house, but also threatens Molly's living space in the family day by day. Molly feels uneasy and sometimes even breathless in the house: "She loathed the small vanities with which she was surrounded, and would wander out into the frosty garden, and pace the walk, which was both sheltered and concealed by evergreens" (227).

Despite the fact that Mrs. Gibson has taken over Molly's status as the mistress

of the family, the adaptation preserves a small room for Molly as her retreat, which does not exist in the novel. Created out of a deserted room, the retreat is located in an unnoticeable corner of the house, with a large window open to the garden. Because it is situated on the upper floor, whenever Molly leans against the window-still, the view of the garden is just beneath her feet, making Molly a little queen, looking over her territory from the top of her fortress. If Mrs. Gibson dominates the house, then Molly has her power over the little retreat; if the interior space is under Mrs. Gibson's command, then the opening garden and luxuriant outdoor scenery all belong to Molly. Moreover, this retreat of Molly's symbolizes "a room of one's own," a space where the heroine could dominate completely, and where she could choose to retreat from the household quarrels, or any unwanted disturbance. For instance, Molly has definite control over this little world. She decorates her place with natural materials from the fields, bringing in herbs and flowers from the meadow, and drying them up as bouquets to decorate the walls. Thus, the simple style of this setting faithfully transports Molly's love of pastoral life, to borrow McFarlance's term, and sets itself apart from Mrs. Gibson's worldly taste. Last but not least, Molly's retreat even represents a space where she could exercise the power of choice, determining who to include and who to exclude from her realm. As a result, when the adaptation uses Molly's retreat as the backdrop where Osborne entrusts his dying words to Molly, it visualizes her exercise of power to help others. That is to say, the adaptation strengthens Molly's autonomy through this spatial arrangement.

Moreover, the adaptation makes use of many outdoor scenes, through which it creates a sense of openness that counterbalances the enclosed society. It has been a consensus that the shooting location contributes greatly to an overall impression of the film: whereas the outdoor settings would deliver a feeling of openness, the abundant

lighting within the scene would elevate its spirit. Rowe even suggests the location of a setting is so important that "it could instill meanings into a scene" (101). And throughout the adaptation, except some other scenes that are arranged intentionally to create gloomy atmosphere, almost every scene is set in outdoors and brightened with sunlight. Even when shooting indoor shots, so long as the scene is not a night scene, the adaptation still attempts to borrow daylight from the outside to light the interior setting. The most commonly used method is making the sunlight pouring into the house through the windows, or using white curtains that elevate the brightness of a setting, so that characters in the house are lit as naturally as they are in the outside. As a result, by allowing abundant sunlight to enter into the house, the boundary between interior and exterior space seems to be minimized. Thus, this lighting arrangement removes claustrophobic atmosphere, avoiding the sense of confinement.

Furthermore, the adaptation employs deep focus[8] of the camera to maintain Molly's subjectivity as an integral whole. Taking the opening shot for instance, it begins with the six-year-old Molly in the Hollingford garden, who is attentively observing a caterpillar creeping on a leaf. Through the use of deep focus, the bustling voices and moving images of many guests in the distance contrast the serene and self-contended Molly in the foreground. Although the image of her little figure is put together with many adults in the same frame, she does not seem a bit disturbed by their clamor. Obviously, the image composition of this sequence symbolizes Molly's relation with the society: she is in the center of the hubbub, but she is not entangled in the complexity of the social web. She always looks at the world

[8] In cinematography, the term "deep focus" is borrowed from photography, which refers to the long focal length of the camera that allows the foreground, middle ground, and the background to be in sharp focus in a picture (Monaco 198). Deep focus guarantees that the background remains clear to the viewers, even if the character stays in the foreground as the center of attention. Sometimes deep focus can be used to suggest openness in the cinema—it is "comprehensive" because it can include more space and information into one single frame (Monaco 198).

understandingly, observing people around her with knowing eyes, just the same way as she looks at the caterpillar in this episode. What's more, even though occasionally Molly may be found staying away from the crowd, she never cuts off her connection to the warmth of friends and family, just like that she is needed and summoned several times during her sojourn in the garden. And she would wait patiently for the turning of tide when in adversity. In short, this small episode in the adaptation forcefully conveys the heroine's self-sufficient nature.

Last but not least, the adaptation makes an abundant use of eye-level shots[9] that establish an equal relationship between the daughter and father. Taking the episode of Osborne's death for example, where the father and daughter are exchanging opinions several times on how to help the old squire. Because Molly's position is lower, Mr. Gibson has to look down when speaking to her. Yet the adaptation rules out high-angle shots from the viewpoint of Mr. Gibson, so as to avoid belittling Molly's image. Instead, with the assistance of eye-level shots, the adaptation manages to elevate Molly's position to the same plane with Mr. Gibson. It eliminates any trace of unequal footings, and treats each character with same respect. In addition to eye-level shots, sometimes the camera would zoom out to use long shots with deep focus that frame two characters altogether. By so doing, both characters are aligned on the same level, so that their status looks equivalent, without anyone outweighing another. All in all, in the adaptation, eye-level shots are the

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[9] Shot angles refer to the angle from which a camera frames characters, and it is also considered as an important element of misè-on-scene (Monaco 199). Different shot angles signify different power-relationship between the viewer and the viewed. Generally speaking, there are three major shot angles, namely high-angle shots, low-angle shots, and eye-level shots. High-angle shot is to camera a character from a higher vantage point. By so doing, the character's figure is easily dwarfed, and his image belittled. Thus high angle is often used to stress the viewer's dominating power over the viewed. When shooting a character from a lower point, on the contrary, it is easy to magnify the character, and thus have an effect of worship or elevation. The eye-level shot, simply enough, is to shoot a character from the viewpoint paralleled to the beholder's eyes. And comparing to high or low angle shot, eye-level shot may be used to signify an equal relationship between the viewer and the viewed (Monaco 200). It is worth noticing that when two characters are talking with each other on screen, it is easy to evaluate their relationship through shot angles.

most commonly used method when presenting the heroine's conversations with others. And more often than not, this technique creates an impression of a balanced power relationship between Molly and her father.

To sum up, through many techniques of mise-en-scène, the adaptation characterizes Molly as a self-sufficient heroine. First of all, in terms of the heroine's temperament, many techniques of representation reinforce her mental and physical strength. The costumes and properties strengthen Molly's unpretentious nature and healthy physical state; when framing the heroine, the image composition within a frame always conveys her affinity with nature. And whereas the employment of medium shots brings an independent nature out of the heroine, the use of static cameras highlights a vivacious image of the heroine. In addition to image building, when depicting the heroine's relationship to the society, several other visual techniques contribute to maintain a balanced power-relationship, as we have discussed above. First, with the use of many outdoor scenes that create a sense of openness, the adaptation counterbalances the enclosed atmosphere of the rural society. Besides, the spatial arrangement allows the heroine to keep her autonomy in the family. By creating a retreat for the heroine, the adaptation grants Molly a room of her own, a space that would shelter her from the worldly disturbance and ensure her exercise of power. Furthermore, when presenting the heroine's situation in the society, the adaptation employs deep focus of the camera that functions well to maintain Molly's subjectivity as an integral whole. Last but not least, in depicting Molly's relationship with her father, the adaptation makes use of eye-level shots that elevate Molly's status and thus achieve an equal relationship. The total result of these visual techniques not only reinforces Molly's character, but also strengthens her power in the society.

Comparing the strategies of representation in the novel and the adaptation, one

may find that the same practice of vision results in different images of the heroine: while the novel prescribes a semi-independent subjectivity for the heroine, the contemporary adaptation sanctions an autonomous and wholesome individuality to her. Obviously, the practice of vision is subject to the prevailing ideology of the time, while it materializes the ideology in the realm of literature. In other words, both the novel and its adaptation are the material ground in which an ideal female image specific to its era is visualized.

There are some possible factors that stimulate the formation of an independent heroine in the modern rendition, in spite of the production team's efforts to stick to the original text. First, with a global broadcasting network and the circulation of the DVD formats, the BBC production actually targets the global audience, rather than the viewers in the Western hemisphere. The visual techniques in the adaptation concretize a cross-cultural aspiration—that women are supposed to be as self-reliant as men, with the equal opportunity to pursue, and the same power to achieve. Besides, the adaptation appeals to female audience in the similar way that soap operas attract middle-class housewives. The female protagonist on the screen becomes a persuasive iconic image, which encourages viewers to believe that female autonomy does exist and is feasible in the reality. Eventually, it is through the visual media that the "standard" ways of representing women are circulated.

Therefore, although Molly's image in the modern rendition seems to have more autonomy than that in the Victorian novel, this image still could be regarded as a product of the modern practice of vision—a mechanism that categorizes and enhances the circulation of stereotypical images. With Armstrong's theory in mind, one might assume that through the empowerment of visual techniques, similar images of the new heroine will continue to circulate globally, reinforce each other, and result in stereotypical ways of seeing, or even being women.

Conclusion

To sum up, both the novel of *Wives and Daughters* and its television adaptation appropriate the mechanism of observation when presenting the heroine—several visual techniques in the novel, such as the use of observer and framing devices, are parallel to the techniques of mise-en-scène in the adaptation to visualize characters. Nevertheless, the same visual technique functions differently in the novel and the adaptation, and thus creating different images of the heroine in the two versions of representation. When exposed to the gaze of the observer, the heroine in the novel looks fragile and almost on the verge of emotional breakdown: she is easily agitated, and her eyes are often filled with tears. But under the same mechanism of observation, shots on Molly face's in the adaptation manifest her vivacity and cheerful looks. Since Molly in the adaptation does not cry easily and never faints as the novel portrays, her general impression to viewers is wholesome and lively. And whereas the omniscient narrator in the novel captures Molly's vulnerable state of mind when she is alone, the camera in the adaptation finds Molly alone but captures her strong will.

This thesis also demonstrates versatile potential of the visual technology: it might either empower or disempower an individual's subjectivity. As the discussion above reveals, the visual techniques in the novel and the adaptation interact with the narrative techniques in different ways. In the novel, the visual techniques form an antagonistic relationship with the narrative framework—whereas the novel's structural design attempts to compel Molly to develop toward matured womanhood, the photographic impulse emerges as hindrance. Thus, due to the tension between narrative and visual techniques, Molly's image wavers between courage and dependency: although she was determined to be strong, sometimes she looks fragile and needs protection. Even though the narrative structure tries to present Molly's

helpfulness, the visual techniques keep hindering the development. At the end, the heroine's development is incoherent, and her potential is never fulfilled. On the contrary, visual techniques in the adaptation complement the structural design to accomplish Molly's development. Even in the moment of crisis, Molly's compassion outweighs her fear: she is agile and quick to response, her mind clear, and her manners composed. The effect is, whereas the clash between narrative and photographic techniques in the novel makes the heroine look like a "girl-woman" (Dickson 56), the cinematic technique of the adaptation transforms Molly into a young woman strong in mind, possessing the kind of power in heart that supports her through critical moments of life.

Therefore, comparing the image of the heroine in the novel with that in the television adaptation, interestingly, one may find that the visual techniques in the adaptation are not as disempowering as that employed in the novel. In the novel, the operation of the gaze establishes an uneven power relationship between the viewer and the viewed. It dwarfs the heroine's image, confiscates her potential, and thus subordinates her into an inferior status. However, the camera in the adaptation does not exercise the belittling power of the gaze: many photographic images of the heroine in the novel, such as "her pretty lips," "pretty feet," or "her lips trembling," are simply omitted by the adaptation. Instead, the gaze in the adaptation highlights the character's self-sufficiency and independent characters. Therefore, Molly in the adaptation is an equal to her social companions in terms of power-relationship: she is not a vulnerable creature who needs protection, but an independent individual with the power of action and thinking. In short, it is the heroine's capability rather than her lack of power that becomes outstanding.

After illustrating different images of female characters in Gaskell's novel and its modern rendition, this thesis concludes that the modern practice of vision not only

sways the uses of visual techniques, but also determines the visibility of female characters in the realm of literature. Thus the formation of an ideal vision of female characters specific to each era: while the nineteenth-century visuality prescribes a semi-independent subjectivity of the heroine, the contemporary visuality sanctions an autonomous and wholesome individuality to her. Although the modern version of the heroine seems to have more autonomy than the Victorian one, both images of the heroine could be regarded as products of the same practice of vision—a mechanism that categorizes and enhances the circulation of stereotypical images. What might be excluded or obscured during this process of visualization might warrant further investigation.