

# **Elizabeth Gaskell, Citizen of the World: Civic Lessons**

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This thesis examines in what ways and to what extent Elizabeth Gaskell, with her Unitarian ‘citizen of the world’ perspective, used her knowledge about social aspects of life in England, Europe and America to teach her readers moral and social citizenship skills. Gaskell’s writing career encompassed major upheavals such as the revolutionary year 1848, the Crimean War, the American Civil War, the Lancashire Cotton Famine, and rapid industrial and social change, and her works are seen to interact with current events. Her wide variety of genres and themes are explained by the fact that she, like her forbears the eighteenth-century rational Dissenters, aimed to bring about a more just and inclusive society.

The thesis explores how Gaskell evokes earlier social critics’ work through quotes and allusions, and transforms it into a civic message for her own time. Whereas much critical attention has been focussed on her ‘industrial’ novels, this thesis demonstrates that Gaskell’s short fiction and non-fiction similarly aims to influence her readers’ perception of the state of the nation and encourages them to engage with society. Gaskell’s fiction and non-fiction, essays, short stories and novels work together and develop themes across time. She uses historic examples of injustice and social problems from a wide range of countries to provide lessons in citizenship. As the rational Dissenters had encouraged the American and French revolutions as harbingers of a freer and more just society, so Gaskell repeatedly refers to revolutions, and illustrates ideas of transatlantic and European citizenship.

The thesis shows how Gaskell’s philanthropic, social and literary works inform one another, and how interaction with other social critics and reformers such as William and Mary Howitt, Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Florence Nightingale, F.D. Maurice and the Christian Socialists, Mme Mohl and her French acquaintances, Charles Eliot Norton, Maria Susanna Cummins and J.S. Mill influenced her. The periodicals in which her stories appeared affected the way they were read – in England but also in America. Some of Gaskell’s works were edited to appeal to another audience, following which their original civic message changed. Gaskell is shown to be a conscientious chronicler of injustice, while providing lessons in good citizenship to help eradicate evils and transform the nation.

## Acknowledgements

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## Contents

Frequently Cited Texts and Abbreviations.....	v
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### **Introduction:**

<b>Gaskell's Eighteenth-Century Rational Dissenting Heritage.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Critical Heritage.....	2
Key Terms Explained: Citizen of the World and <i>Civic Sermons</i> .....	7
Family Influences.....	13
Gaskell's Civic Ideas in Embryo: A Case Study of <i>The Moorland Cottage</i> .....	15
Chapter Outline.....	20

### **1: 1838–1849 Apprenticeship with the Howitts.....**

Literary Building Blocks: Letters, 'Cheshire Customs' and 'Clopton Hall'.....	26
Entering the Howitts' Circle of Radical Activists.....	32
The Howitts' European and Transatlantic Consciousness.....	34
<i>Howitt's Journal's</i> Quest for Equality.....	37
What's in a Name?: Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.....	39
Contributing to <i>Howitt's Journal</i> : Promoting Co-operation.....	40
Contributing to <i>Sartain's Union Magazine</i> : Wit and the Critical Voice.....	45

### **2: 1850–1856 Battling Patriarchal Notions.....**

Gaskell and the Woman Question.....	52
Dickens's Literary Influence.....	56
From 'Lizzie Leigh' to <i>Ruth</i> : Jobs for Women, Fallen Women and Illegitimate Children.....	57
Turning the Tables: The Fallen Man in Patriarchal Society.....	62
Cranford in Hawthorne Territory.....	66
Eradicating Prejudice and Superstition: The Need for Enlightened Education...	69
A Happy Ending?: Women's Open-Ended Story.....	72

<b>3: 1853-1856 Fighting Religious Discrimination.....</b>	<b>78</b>
Gaskell and Mme Mohl's Salon: Developing a European Consciousness.....	81
Setting the Scene: Religious Prejudice in England .....	85
F.D. Maurice's Influence on Gaskell's Work.....	90
<i>North and South</i> and the Problem of Religious Discrimination.....	93
Gaskell's Short Non-Fiction Works in Context.....	97
 <b>4: 1858-1860 Scrutinising the Dissenting Past.....</b>	<b>103</b>
Old and New England: Bridging the Gap with <i>Mabel Vaughan</i> .....	106
History's Lessons: Revolution versus Moral Enlightenment.....	111
Sins of the Fathers: Gaskell's Civic Lessons for America.....	115
'Curious, if True': Releasing the Past to Herald in the Future.....	120
Christian Leadership Defined.....	124
Misinterpreting the Past: Personal Lessons Learned.....	125
 <b>5: 1863 Fashion Versus Emancipation.....</b>	<b>129</b>
The Distress in Southern Lancashire, the American Civil War and Abolitionism.....	130
<i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> and the Rights of Man.....	135
'Shams' and 'The Cage at Cranford': The Shackles of Queen Fashion.....	138
'Robert Gould Shaw': Liberating the Outcast.....	147
Civic Lessons: The Culmination.....	150
 Conclusion.....	151
Publication Details of Short Works Used in this Thesis .....	155
Bibliography.....	158

## Frequently cited texts and Abbreviations

References to the following books will be inserted parenthetically in the text:

Joanne Shattock, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Journalism, Early Fiction and Personal writing*, Volume 1 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005)

Alan Shelston, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Novellas and Shorter Fiction*, Volume 2 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005)

Charlotte Mitchell, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Novellas and Shorter Fiction II*, Volume 3 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005)

Linda Hughes, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Novellas and Shorter Fiction III*, Volume 4 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006)

Joanne Wilkes, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Barton*, Volume 5 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005)

Deirdre d'Albertis, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Ruth*, Volume 6 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006)

Elisabeth Jay, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell: North and South*, Volume 7 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005)

Linda H. Peterson, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Volume 8 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006)

Marion Shaw, ed., *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell: Sylvia's Lovers*, Volume 9 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006)

*DNB: The Dictionary of National Biography*

*ELH: English Literary History*

*GJ: Gaskell Journal*

*MLA: Modern Language Association*

*PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*

## **Introduction:**

### **Gaskell's Eighteenth-Century Rational Dissenting Heritage**

This thesis aims to determine in what ways and to what effect Elizabeth Gaskell, with her Unitarian 'citizen of the world' perspective, used her knowledge about social aspects of life in England, Europe and America to teach her readers moral and social citizenship skills. Gaskell's ideas, though informed by her own times and looking toward the future, were influenced by the culture and concepts of late eighteenth-century rational Dissent. Living through perplexing and turbulent times which saw great social, moral and industrial change, she wrote about topical issues in an easily digestible format with a view to making people aware of problems, to help them reflect, and to offer ways to improve 'evils'. Gaskell touched on many social rules and customs that kept people apart and prevented them from moving forward. This introduction is intended to lay the groundwork for a discussion of the factors and people that influenced Gaskell and helped her develop her ideas of citizenship.

Though the thesis mainly focuses on Gaskell's shorter works, many of which have received scant critical attention, links to the novels illustrate how her works interact. Gaskell wrote about thirty shorter works which include short stories as well as reviews, essays, an obituary, novellas, and a trick essay in the style of the *Spectator*. Her work uses an array of styles and encompasses gothic, mystery, detective, tragedy, comedy, romance, pastoral, realistic, and historical elements. I contend that not the genre, but the message is Gaskell's main concern, and that her whole oeuvre is written with ideas of citizenship in mind. I suggest that Gaskell's overall theme of citizenship and good government – her hidden agenda as it were – influences both her fiction and non-fiction, and unifies her work. Therefore, instead of trying to categorize her works thematically or stylistically, this thesis analyses her oeuvre chronologically with a focus on the civic lessons it contains. Considered in this way, the stories provide insight into the state of the nation and its citizens, and into Gaskell's ideas and interaction with current events.

Gaskell makes the theme of citizenship a strong presence in her work through allusions, quotations and references, and takes forward the debate on this topic in ways which are reminiscent of the rational Dissenters of the previous century. Like them she

focuses on disseminating knowledge, advocating justice and liberty, and writing truth. She is alive to events unfolding around her, and when discerning injustice or other evils, she is quick to respond. This makes the shorter works more potent ‘civic lessons’ than the novels, as character and plot development can be made subservient to the message. Gaskell’s global perspective is evident from numerous works that enlarge on ideas of European citizenship or display an American consciousness. Like the earlier rational Dissenters she looks to France and America for new ideas and uses history as a socio-political device. Gaskell uses the terms ‘rights of citizens’, ‘good citizens’ and ‘good citizenship’ in *North and South* (1854-1855), ‘An Accursed Race’ (1855), *My Lady Ludlow* (1858), *Lois the Witch* (1859), *Sylvia’s Lovers* (1863), and *French Life* (1864). Though the terms are seemingly casually used, as will be described later, there may be more to them than at first meets the eye. The works in question allude to or are (partly) set in France or America, demonstrating the influence of those countries on Gaskell’s civic ideas. Moreover, these works depict times of radical upheaval such as riots, mutiny, rebellions, industrial and political revolutions, in which citizens are compelled to make conscious decisions as to their preferred government style and what constitutes justice.

This introduction will first provide a short overview of how ideas of citizenship and the shorter works have been reviewed in Gaskell criticism. This is followed by a focus on Gaskell’s Dissenting background. First I analyse key terms and their origin, then I will look into family and ideological influences which inspired Gaskell as a person and writer. A close reading of chapter seven of *The Moorland Cottage* (1850) provides a key to the methodology used in this thesis. Important themes that the rational Dissenters advocated, such as a citizen’s duties, the brotherhood of man and abolitionism, appear in the novella and Gaskell would continue to explore and develop these throughout her writing career. By looking back to the past, Gaskell looks forward to a brighter future for England. I conclude with a chapter outline.

### **Critical Heritage**

Three key stepping stones in my research have already been discussed by critics in some detail: the rational Dissenting tradition into which Gaskell was born,<sup>1</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); John Chapple, ‘Unitarian Dissent’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. by Jill L. Matus (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 164-77; Jenny Uglow,



international network of friends that influenced her,<sup>2</sup> and her aim to transform society through her writing.<sup>3</sup> The contention that Gaskell follows in the tradition of the eighteenth-century Dissenters and that these civic beliefs and aims underlie and bind together her entire oeuvre is a new critical angle, which will be explored in this thesis.

Considering Gaskell's works in the light of citizenship solves the problem stated by Shirley Foster and Koustinoudi that the short stories' 'generic variety and narrative versatility defy easy categorization.'<sup>4</sup> Koustinoudi argues that Gaskell struggled to reconcile the warring members of her 'mes' and that 'harmoniz[ing them] constituted a lifelong endeavour.'<sup>5</sup> Stoneman lists critics like Wendy A. Craik, Margaret Ganz and Enid L. Duthie who deplore the industrial /pastoral split in Gaskell's works, 'but [as] no one of them is able to produce a formula which heals the breach' they then 'fall back on the "universal" values of "art".'<sup>6</sup> In fact, so do Hughes and Lund in their groundbreaking work on Victorian publishing as they list the varying forms in which Gaskell addressed her ideas, arguing that these represent her 'continued search for the best material form of her own self-expression.'<sup>7</sup> Unlike these critics d'Albertis argues that Gaskell's oeuvre should be considered 'as a "whole", but a self-contradictory whole', as she notes a lot of 'contradiction and self-canceling'.<sup>8</sup> I contend that Gaskell's ideas of citizenship encompass all her work, be it pastoral, historic, industrial, gothic,

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*Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993); Michael Wheeler, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Unitarianism,' *GJ*, 6 (1992), 32-39.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth S. Haldane, *Elizabeth Gaskell and her Friends* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1930); Annette B. Hopkins, 'Mrs Gaskell and her Friends', *Social Service Review*, 6:2 (1932), 345-46; Annette B. Hopkins, 'Mrs Gaskell in France 1848 -1890', *PMLA*, 53:2 (1938), 545-74; Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Henry, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Social Transformation', in Jill L. Matus, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 148-63.

<sup>4</sup> Shirley Foster, 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Shorter Pieces', in Jill L. Matus, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 108-30 (p. 6); Anna Koustinoudi, *The Split Subject of Narration in Elizabeth Gaskell's First-Person Fiction* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Wendy A. Craik, *Elizabeth Gaskell and the English Provincial Novel* (London: Methuen, 1975); Margaret Ganz, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Artist in Conflict* (New York: Twayne, 1969); Enid Lowry Duthie, *The Themes of Elizabeth Gaskell* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980); Patsy Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), pp. 68-95, (p. 69).

<sup>8</sup> Deirdre d'Albertis, *Disassembling Fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 11.

comic, fairytale or realist, fiction or non-fiction and that it is her social/civic message that ultimately drives her, which recurs in different genres.

The Unitarians' role in the emergence of the women's rights movement and their extensive networks which served to promote their social campaigns has been addressed by social historians Kathryn Gleadle and Ruth Watts, while Raymond Holt provides a comprehensive overview of the many types of social activities the Unitarians contributed to.<sup>9</sup> Though Watts claims that Gaskell shrank from writing or taking action against 'the structure of society which produced inequalities', many critics recognise that Gaskell is intent on social reform.<sup>10</sup> Wright and Fryckstedt, for instance, emphasise how Gaskell – most notably in *Mary Barton* and *Ruth* – attempted to effect social transformation through appealing to her readers' Christian beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Gaskell believed a change in 'the souls and hearts of individuals' would result in social reform.<sup>12</sup> In fact, as Rubenius demonstrates quoting from *Mary Barton*, Gaskell was 'so much more preoccupied with bringing about a social reform than with writing fiction that she referred her readers direct to her sources.'<sup>13</sup> Time and again she draws attention to social evils, weaving critical observations into the fabric of her works, even where least expected.

Gaskell's oeuvre interlaces current events and stories of past rebellions with a view to effecting social change. Critics have mainly focused on the novels in this respect. Anna Faktorovich lists Gaskell among 'rebellion novelists' Walter Scott and Charles Dickens. Though leaving the late eighteenth-century Dissenters out of her discussion, she notes that 'rebellion novelists frequently depicted rebellions that had happened over half a century earlier, but their radical inspirations were typically from the current rebellious events of their day.'<sup>14</sup> Stefanie Markovits (2005) and Julia Sun-

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<sup>9</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Rational Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-51* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1995); Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (London: Longman, 1998); Raymond V. Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* (London: Lindsey Press, 1952).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> Edgar Wright, *Mrs Gaskell: The Basis for Reassessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); Monica Correa Fryckstedt, *Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth: A Challenge to Christian England* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> Edgar Wright, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> Aina Rubenius, *The Woman Question in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1950), p.183.

<sup>14</sup> Anna Faktorovich, *Rebellion as Genre in the Novels of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson* (London: McFarland, 2013), p. 12.

Joo Lee (2007) also consider Gaskell to be quite politically radical. Using *North and South* they demonstrate how she promotes readers' contemplation of national and international politics. Markovits points out that the time of publication coincided with the start of the Crimean Conflict, which meant that Corfu, the exotic new home Edith is bound for with her officer-husband, would be transformed into a hub for goods and soldiers bound for the Crimea.<sup>15</sup> Though Gaskell mentions this, it is understated and easily overlooked in Edith's description of life on the island as being one of 'war, and soldiers and bands of music.'<sup>16</sup> Another international aspect of the novel is provided by Lee who argues that with mariner Frederick, who initiated a mutiny, Gaskell 'imports cultural and political debates about industrialization, slavery and international commerce.'<sup>17</sup> Lee, Markovits and Nancy Henry note that Gaskell raises the question when violent resistance to tyranny becomes justified, but neither they nor Faktorovich make reference to Gaskell's Dissenting heritage to explain these themes, which I view as her *raison d'être* of having entered the literary marketplace in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

This thesis allows a reconsideration of some aspects of Gaskell's work which have traditionally been less well regarded by critics. In the past, critics like Haldane considered Gaskell's journalism mainly as a money maker and, on the basis of Gaskell's seemingly hurried conclusions, she postulated that 'they are never likely to be popular again'.<sup>19</sup> Even Wright, whose *Elizabeth Gaskell: Basis for Reassessment* (1965) focused on Gaskell's 'technical artistry' as a way to provide 'insight into her aims and themes', seemed unimpressed with her shorter works, suggesting the French stories and essays were 'occasional articles, pocket-money work'.<sup>20</sup> He dismissed the non-fiction works as depicting Gaskell's 'antiquarian and sociological interests in old customs, unusual events, and strange societies.'<sup>21</sup> Still, a change is taking place as the short works have recently begun to receive critical recognition with Laura Kranzler's edition of the

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<sup>15</sup> Stefanie Markovits, 'North and South, East and West', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 59:4 (2005), 463-93 (p. 478).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Julia Sun-Joo Lee, 'The Return of the "Unnative": The Transnational Politics of Elizabeth Gaskell in *North and South*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 61:4 (2007), 449-78 (p. 457).

<sup>18</sup> Sun-Joo Lee, 'The Return of the "Unnative"', pp. 469-70; Stefanie Markovits, 'North and South, East and West', p. 481; Jill Matus, *The Cambridge Companion*, p.149.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Sanderson Haldane, *Elizabeth Gaskell and her Friends*, pp. 208-09. Also mentioned in Sandro Jung, ed., *Elizabeth Gaskell, Victorian Culture and the Art of Fiction: Essays for the Bicentenary* (Gent: Academia Press, 2010), p. 31.

<sup>20</sup> Edgar Wright, *The Basis for Reassessment*, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

Gothic tales, the Pickering and Chatto *Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* series which includes reprinted works that were previously not readily available, and a special issue of the *Gaskell Journal* (2015) entirely focused on her shorter fictional work.<sup>22</sup>

The short story provides insight into Gaskell's personal as well as political connections and may be read in both ways. While Marilena Saracino focuses on personal aspects, observing that '[t]o read the wealth of Gaskell's short fiction is to get a glimpse into all aspects of her life, both domestic and spiritual', Koustinoudi notes the influence of political and social events, as Gaskell resorted to 'speculat[ing] on the contradictory forces, both internal and external, that beset her throughout her life.'<sup>23</sup> Jenny Uglow and Pauline Nestor discuss the influence of these extensive networks, with Nestor describing the importance of Gaskell's female friendships, and Uglow painting 'overlapping circles' of family relationships and the Unitarian circle, which in turn intersects with philanthropic, political, literary and scientific circles in England, Europe and across the Atlantic.<sup>24</sup> As this thesis will demonstrate, this web of connections influences her choice of media and informs the content and style of Gaskell's work, making her a versatile writer who does, however, stay true to her basic principles, which are deeply rooted in her Dissenting belief.

This thesis answers Alan Shelston's article 'Where Next in Gaskell Studies?' in which he identifies 'publishing history' as an uncharted territory in Gaskell criticism that may 'reveal Gaskell's variety' besides providing 'an interesting index to her wider social development'.<sup>25</sup> He notes that *North and South* has been mainly looked at as an industrial novel, whereas it contains other important themes like Mr Hale's crisis of conscience and Margaret's interest in education. The novel may therefore be considered 'a full-scale condition-of-England novel'.<sup>26</sup> I would agree, and in this thesis extend this observation to her whole oeuvre, showing how it reflects Gaskell's concerns about the condition of England and of the world.

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<sup>22</sup> Laura Kranzler, ed., *Gothic Tales* (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Marilena Saracino, 'Interpreting Otherness: Elizabeth Gaskell and 'The Crooked Branch' in *Elizabeth Gaskell and the Art of the Short Story*, ed. by Francesco Marroni, Renzo D'Agnillo, and Massimo Verzella (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 120; Anna Koustinoudi, *The Split Subject of Narration*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Pauline Nestor, *Female Friendships and Communities; Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 309.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Shelston in Sandro Jung, *Essays for the Bicentenary*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

### Key Terms Explained: Citizen of the World and Civic Sermons

In his 'Discourse on the Love of Our Country' (1789), a sermon preached to the Society for Commemorating the Glorious Revolution in Great Britain, rational Dissenter Richard Price argued that people should consider themselves 'more as citizens of the world than as members of any particular community.'<sup>27</sup> 'Citizen' was the common appellation for any member of French society immediately after the French Revolution, a term denoting the equality of all members of the French social, political, and national community. Price attacked the common view that to love one's country equated to 'a desire of conquest' or 'contempt of other countries' as to him 'country' was not geographically defined, but encompassed the brotherhood of man, in imitation of Christ, who taught universal benevolence.<sup>28</sup>

Three keywords characterised the rational Dissenters' actions: truth (often equated with knowledge), virtue and liberty. Price described their importance for the nation:

By the diffusion of KNOWLEDGE it must be distinguished from a country of *Barbarians*; by the practice of religious VIRTUE, it must be distinguished from a country of *gamblers, Atheists, and libertines*; and by the possession of LIBERTY, it must be distinguished from a country of *slaves*.<sup>29</sup>

He considered the first duty of a 'lover of country' to be 'enlighten[ing] the people', enabling them to 'assert and support its liberties'.<sup>30</sup> Eighteenth-century Dissenters applied this self-imposed duty mainly through education and radical writings. They established, for example, Warrington Academy (1756-86), as Oxford and Cambridge were closed to Nonconformists. Here students were equipped to become useful members of society through a business skills based curriculum, while a focus on civic education empowered them to become active and outspoken citizens.<sup>31</sup> The rational Dissenters stressed a need for vigilance in upholding justice, considering it necessary for lovers of their country to not just defend it against foreign enemies, but also domestic ones. Indeed, Price argued that as the 'tendency of every government is to despotism', a citizen should be 'ready to take alarms, and determined to resist abuses as

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<sup>27</sup> Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, at the Meeting-house in the Old Jewry to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain, with an Appendix* (London: Stafford, 1790), p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 5, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 11. All capital letters and italics conform to the original text.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 12, 20.

<sup>31</sup> For a good general introduction see P.O. Brien, *Warrington Academy 1757-86: Its Predecessors & Successors* (Wigan: Owl, 1989).

soon as they begin.<sup>32</sup> Such ideas prompted the Dissenters' positive view of revolution as a conductor for a more just and egalitarian society.

Rational Dissenters in general were sympathetic to revolution and had been ardent supporters of both the American war and French Revolution. Price's reaction speaks volumes, as he exults to have 'lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS [sic] of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice.'<sup>33</sup> The French Revolution's slogan about pursuing liberty, equality and brotherhood had originated in the eighteenth century with the Enlightenment. The emphasis on the importance of the mind and science to counter ignorance and tradition led its adherents to promote critical thinking in order to erase superstition, prejudice and injustice. They believed that enlightened citizens would be active citizens, who were not afraid to question government or authority and who would make a conscious choice to take up their civic duties and responsibilities to replace the dominion of laws and priestcraft and help herald in 'the dominion of reason and conscience'.<sup>34</sup> The Dissenters' revolutionary fervour did not make them popular as their ideas contrasted sharply with mainstream public opinion.

Dissenters had long been marginalized and unable to take up civic roles due to the Test and Corporations Acts of 1662 which had been imposed following the Restoration as retribution for their role in the Civil War and execution of Charles I. Around the end of the eighteenth century the Dissenters made a concerted effort to lobby for more rights, resulting in three Parliamentary debates about rescinding these Acts between 1787 and 1790. Although they were a remnant of a deposed catholic regime, and the Dissenters used historical evidence to demonstrate their unfailing loyalty to the Hanoverian regime ever since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Acts remained in place.<sup>35</sup> In order to change public opinion, the Dissenters actively engaged in what John Seed calls 'the politics of memory': they sought to reinterpret the official accounts of history which served to keep them second-class citizens.<sup>36</sup> Their depiction of history incorporated the similarities and differences between English and French history, the

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, p. 28.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> A comprehensive view of the Dissenters' situation is given in John Seed, *Dissenting Histories: Religious Division and the Politics of Memory in Eighteenth-Century England* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

relations between past and present, and the pertinence of historical identities, ancestors and genealogies.<sup>37</sup> Highlighting the ‘incompleteness of 1688’, as following the Glorious Revolution the Test and Corporation Acts were not rescinded, this ‘Revolution debate’ was crucial to effectuate reform.<sup>38</sup> One man who played a crucial role in this was Dr Joseph Priestley.

While teaching at Warrington, Joseph Priestley, the renowned scientist, educator and political theorist stressed the importance of history to free the mind from manifold prejudices and develop skills in critical thinking and making fair judgment. This ability he considered the backbone of a sound liberal education. In his *Lectures on History and General Policy* Priestley distinguishes between fiction, which holds people's attention through ‘art’, and history of fact, which retains people’s interest because it is ‘the voice of truth’.<sup>39</sup> He believed that students could improve their powers of judgment through dealing with actual facts of cause and effects, while the general principles of life learned by studying history would help develop ‘rules of life and conduct’, and ‘a general system of ethics and government’.<sup>40</sup> Priestley advocated that

to give mankind clear and comprehensive views of their interest [...] the experience of some ages should be collected and compared, that distant events should be brought together; and so the first rise, entire progress, and final conclusion of schemes, transactions, and characters, should be seen, as it were, in one unbroken view, with all their connections and relations.<sup>41</sup>

The Dissenters’ attempts to obtain full civil rights coupled with their enthusiasm for the French Revolution caused outrage among their fellow patriots, who labelled them traitors. In 1791 the Birmingham riots broke out in which a mob chanting their allegiance to ‘church and king’ attacked Priestley and his friends in their homes, destroyed their property and burned down chapels. Ironically, though Priestley could boast honorary French citizenship, at home in England he was merely a second-class citizen. In response to the outbreak of religious persecution in Birmingham, fellow-Dissenter Anna Laetitia Barbauld wrote *Civic Sermons to the People* (1792), a discourse teaching basic rules of good citizenship.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History and General Policy* (Philadelphia: Byrne, 1803), p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>42</sup> *Civic Sermons to the People: Number I* (London: Johnson, 1792).

The two issues of *Civic Sermons*, anonymously published, reveal much of the underlying civic notions of the rational Dissenters. Number I opens with egalitarian principles as Barbauld addresses the readers as ‘My brethren’, and clarifies that equality is integral to the Christian belief as all men are descendants from Adam, created by the same God.<sup>43</sup> In easily understandable language she argues that personal attacks like those in Birmingham do not promote order and justice. Instead, people should inquire into their ‘rights and liberties, both *civil and religious*’, and study the principles of government which is ‘an invention to secure peace and order and plenty in a kingdom’.<sup>44</sup> They were to be peace lovers but not insofar as to allow injustice to fester in society, an idea Barbauld underscored in ‘Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation’ (1793), an essay urging citizens to actively participate in supporting a just government and opposing unjust measures. Number II, which likewise uses simple straightforward language, opens with instructions to parents how to explain the importance of society to their children, emphasizing the significance of the family as ‘the root of every [...] society’.<sup>45</sup> Barbauld then calls for ‘Citizens [to] expand [their] minds’ about matters concerning Government and Law.<sup>46</sup> She encourages pride in themselves and in their country, as ‘every active citizen has a right to say, “We did this,” when any honourable action is recorded of his Country’.<sup>47</sup> In order to prevent ‘oppression and degradation’ of citizens, she imparts that ‘Government is an invention of man, and for the service of men’, implying it may be overturned.<sup>48</sup> *Civic Sermons* Number II underscores the Dissenters’ belief that all have an equal right to be happy.

Barbauld, a key figure in the transmission of civic principles because of her outspokenness, ‘came to be identified with the most radical wing of British political thought’.<sup>49</sup> Though her early works encompassed poems about life in and around

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> *Civic Sermons to the People: Number II* (London: Johnson, 1792), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> Karen Green, ‘Catharine Macaulay and Laetitia Barbauld: Two Eighteenth-Century “Republicans”’, in Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt, Paul Gibbard and Karen Green, *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women: Virtue and Citizenship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 157-72 (p. 159). See also William McCarthy, *Anna Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Hopkins University Press, 2008). McCarthy focused on Barbauld’s rational, civic, enlightened potential, while earlier critics, basing themselves mostly on Lucy Aikin’s representation of her late aunt’s life and works, considered her more domestic qualities. *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld with a Memoir*, 2 vols, ed. by Lucy Aikin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1825).



Warrington, in 1787 when national and personal circumstances changed she started writing polemic works. As Anne Janowitz has noted, these years coincided with the French Revolution, the Debate on the Test and Corporation Acts, and the Barbauld's move to London, where she was in regular contact with publisher Joseph Johnson and his circle of radical reformers, which included Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft and Joseph Priestley.<sup>50</sup> Barbauld used a great variety of styles, engaged in different topics and geared them towards specific audiences. 1792 is a case in point as she not only published *Civic Sermons*, but also engaged with questions of religious doctrine and public worship in 'Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship', criticised Parliament in the abolitionist 'Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade', and – with her brother- composed *Evenings at Home*, a collection of children's stories which promoted good morals and helped children navigate the structure of society. Barbauld's civic consciousness takes on a deeper significance when put against the backdrop of a hostile political climate in which the government earlier that year had sought to repress the critical voice of Dissent with a Royal Proclamation against Seditious Writings and Publications.

Both Barbauld and Gaskell set themselves up as female voices of rational Dissent. Both writers employ a great variety of genres and styles, repeatedly refer to France and America, and promote their readers' critical reflection on abolitionism, Church-related problems, and social inequality. While Barbauld's *Civic Sermons* serve 'to communicate ideas [...], to compare – to reason upon them', Gaskell, as she revealed commenting on her social-problem novel *Ruth*, attempted to 'ma[k]e people talk & discuss the subject a little more than they did.'<sup>51</sup> As Barbauld had found it necessary in her *Address to the Opposers of the Test and Corporation Acts* to stand up for Dissenters' 'long forgotten rights', Gaskell, who as a young woman experienced the repeal of these Acts (1828), continued the fight for justice by championing people groups who still faced discrimination, such as fallen women, their illegitimate offspring

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<sup>50</sup> Anne Janowitz, *Women Romantic Poets: Anna Barbauld and Mary Robinson* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> *Civic Sermons*, I, p. 4; *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Mandolin, 1997), p. 226.

and negro slaves.<sup>52</sup> A difference between these two voices of rational Dissent is Gaskell's repeated use of earlier social critics and thinkers to strengthen her message. Gaskell fuses Dissenting materials, the Romantics, contemporary novels, and current public debates she sourced from periodicals and newspapers. Her works overflow with allusions to a wealth of sources from both the past and present, which reflect on her wider reading and creative identity as a Victorian writer. In this Gaskell differs from Barbauld, making her an important figure in the transition between late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Dissenting ideas.

Gaskell uses allusions and quotes from the past to comment on the future. At times, as will be seen later, these are quite straightforward and appear in the form of epigraphs or a reference to a book. There is more than meets the eye in Gaskell's works, though. Take *North and South*, for example, where the term 'citizen' is seemingly casually used, but Gaskell may be making a point about working men's civic rights. The representative of the working class in the novel, Higgins, who is one of the leaders of the strike for better wages, uses language that is reminiscent of Barbauld's work. It would seem he is willing to give up Boucher to the police as he, in opposition to the orders of the Union Committee, participated in a riot which caused the strikers to lose public sympathy and with that, their cause. Higgins' insistence that

'the leaders o[f] the strike were not such as Boucher, but steady thoughtful men; good hands, and good citizens, who were friendly to law and judgment, and would uphold order; who only wanted their right wage and wouldn't work, even though they starved, till they got 'em; but who would ne'er injure property or life' (7, pp.185-86)

echoes *Civic Sermons Number I* where Anna Letitia Barbauld addresses those

in whatever rank of life [...], who are sober, industrious, and thoughtful; [...] who respect the property and rights of your neighbour, and therefore demand and deserve that your own rights and property would be respected [...] who have a love of order.<sup>53</sup>

In Barbauld's view such people 'are worthy to consider the affairs of a community', an idea which Gaskell developed throughout *North and South*, but which she here

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<sup>52</sup> 'Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts' in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ormskirk: Broadview, 2002), pp. 261-81 (p. 269).

<sup>53</sup> *Civic Sermons*, I, pp. 19-20.

underscores by evoking rational Dissenters of the previous century who had begun promoting the rights of the working people.<sup>54</sup> As such she sets herself up as following in their footsteps.

### **Family Influences**

Elizabeth Gaskell's father William Stevenson, who was born in Berwick, had been a Dissenting minister in Failsworth, Scotland, a classics teacher at Manchester College, and a writer for the Whig *Edinburgh Review* where he became acquainted with Liberal thinkers like Henry Brougham and Samuel Rogers. His obituary states that

Mr Stevenson, contrary to the practice too prevalent in these days, dived into original sources of information; and with the true spirit of a faithful historian, consulted the interests of truth rather than the amusement of his readers.<sup>55</sup>

Stevenson's death cut short the writing of treatises which were intended for the edification of the agricultural classes. He had undertaken these on behalf of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, a 'non-profit publishing programme' devoted to providing scientific materials for self-education of the masses, based on the Utilitarian idea that 'Knowledge is Power'.<sup>56</sup> On noting the commonalities of writing 'truth' and 'history' that both father and daughter displayed in their work, one wonders whether the fact that Elizabeth had earlier contemplated using the pseudonym Stephen Berwick – after her father - for her stirring condition-of-England novel *Mary Barton* may have been an unspoken acknowledgement of his early influence on her civic ideas.<sup>57</sup>

On her mother's side Elizabeth Stevenson was related to the Holland family from Cheshire who had married into the radical Wedgwood, Turner and Darwin families. The Lunar Society, for example, included her distant relatives the industrial potter Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) and physician Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), both ardent advocates of the abolition of slavery, Wedgwood having produced the famous medallion with the question 'Am I not a man and a brother?' written around a relief of a kneeling slave holding up his chained hands in petition. Moreover, Gaskell's uncle Peter Holland had been a close friend of Rev. Aikin of Warrington Academy,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 1 June 1829, pp. 272-73 (p. 273).

<sup>56</sup> Mead T. Cain, 'The Maps of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: A Publishing History', *Imago Mundi*, 46 (1994), 151-67 (p. 151).

<sup>57</sup> To Edward Chapman, 19 October [1848], *Letters*, p. 59.

while her cousin Sir Henry Holland, the royal physician, was on friendly terms with ground-breakers like Carlyle, the Whig historian James Mackintosh, Macaulay, Sydney Smith, the historian Henry Hallam, and Samuel Rogers.<sup>58</sup> Rev. Aikin's daughter, Anna Barbauld would often frequent the home of another relation of Gaskell's, the Rev. William Turner from Newcastle upon Tyne. As William Turner's father, minister of a Dissenting congregation in Wakefield, had been instrumental in getting Dr Priestley's research published, when he was a seven-year-old boy Barbauld gifted him an ivory memorandum-book in which she had written a tribute to the virtues and character of his father as well as some poems concerning their mutual friend.<sup>59</sup> This included the well-known 'The Inventory of the Furniture of Dr Priestley's Study'. Gaskell's personal link with Dr Priestley was through his granddaughter who was a schoolfellow at the Miss Byerlys' school.<sup>60</sup> She also knew the feminist writer and campaigner Bessie Parkes, Priestley's great-granddaughter.

Her husband William Gaskell's Dissenting background resembled her own. Having grown up in a rational Dissenting household in Warrington, he first studied in Glasgow and then attended Manchester New College, an offshoot of Warrington Academy, to train for the ministry. Once he moved to Manchester to minister at Cross Street Chapel, William's social activities were multiple and diverse. He was a member of the sanitation commission, and served on the board of numerous educational institutions such as The Portico Library, Manchester New College and Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. He also taught courses on subjects like 'The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life' to working men at the Mechanics' Institute and Owen's College, which was founded on Christian Socialist Principles.<sup>61</sup> Both William and Elizabeth seem to have been ardent supporters of the Christian Socialist cause, William serving on the board and in the lecture halls of the College, while Elizabeth tried to drum up support for the ideas of F.D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley and J.M.F. Ludlow, as voiced in their 'Politics for the People' tracts, while two of her short stories appeared in *The Christian Socialist* of March 1850.

Gaskell was informed by her own family and rooted in Dissenting history and ideology. Religion and religious practice defined her identity and

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<sup>58</sup> Sir Henry Holland, *Recollections of Past Life* (New York: Appleton, 1872), p. 230.

<sup>59</sup> Grace A. Ellis, *A Memoir of Anna Letitia Barbauld with Many of Her Letters*, (Boston: Osgood, 1874), p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 35.

<sup>61</sup> To Mary Howitt, [18 august 1838], *Letters*, p. 33.

were at the root of her civic ideals for, as Barbauld expressed it, ‘Public worship is a civic meeting’.<sup>62</sup> To the rational Dissenters, as to the Gaskells, the chapel was a place of equality where all ‘human beings of every rank and sex and age, meet together for one common purpose’, where they are considered equals and brothers, and ‘by contemplating [their] duties, [...] may become sensible of [their] rights.’<sup>63</sup> Such political duties, which included vigilance to injustice and a willingness to combat it, were the topic of Christian sermons, both on paper, as Barbauld’s *Civic Sermons*, and delivered from the pulpit, where William Gaskell challenged his congregation,

Why has our Creator framed us to kindle with indignation at beholding outrage and wrong, if not to repel them? Wherefore has He caused us to sympathize with the oppressed, and to burn against oppression, if not to make us resist it? Our inaction, it seems to me, makes us, in some degree, accomplices.<sup>64</sup>

For Barbauld and the Gaskells attending chapel brought awareness of the commonalities of man, who is ‘ignorant and to be instructed’ as well as ‘sinful and needing forgiveness’.<sup>65</sup> It further underlined civic principles, as in the worship of God all are ‘bound by the same obligations’, explaining Gaskell’s preoccupation with promoting education, equality and tolerance.<sup>66</sup>

### **Gaskell’s Civic Ideas in Embryo: A Case Study of *The Moorland Cottage***

This section exemplifies the methodology used in the thesis, illustrating how through allusions and epigraphs Gaskell reinvents the work of eighteenth-century Dissenters and relates them to her own time. As with Barbauld, segments of Gaskell’s work may be traced back to events unfolding in England, Europe or America.

Set against idyllic scenery, *The Moorland Cottage* describes the romantic relationship of Frank Buxton and Maggie Browne, which is, however, fraught with difficulties especially after it transpires that trusted tenants and Maggie’s brother have swindled Frank’s father. Disillusioned, he demands retribution. Gaskell’s pastoral love story, which on closer reading incorporates home truths on the condition of England, was published as a Christmas Book in 1850 by Chapman, who had invited Gaskell to

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<sup>62</sup> Lucy Aikin, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 446.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> William Gaskell, 1856. *A Time of War, and a Time of Peace*, p. 8. Accessed at [www.jstor.org/stable/60200411](http://www.jstor.org/stable/60200411)

<sup>65</sup> Lucy Aikin, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 447.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

write a Christmas Story ‘recommending benevolence, charity, etc’, keeping true to the type of Christmas books that had been popularized by Dickens in the 1840s.<sup>67</sup> Such seasonal books brought the needs of the underprivileged to the readers’ attention and promoted a ‘Christmas spirit’. Unfortunately, Gaskell soon realized her inability to ‘write about virtues to order’, and instead decided to write a ‘little country love-story’.<sup>68</sup> There is more to *The Moorland Cottage* than meets the eye, though, as one chapter in the middle of the novella calls attention to serious social and political challenges the nation faces.

Chapter seven of *The Moorland Cottage* raises the question how to confront social evils. Made aware of ‘[t]he mysterious corruptions and evils of an old state of society such as we have in England’ (2, p. 54) Frank Buxton advocates emigrating to Australia, but his girlfriend Maggie disagrees since she considers it a citizen’s civic duty to help build the country. For, indeed, ‘if all the good and thoughtful men run away from us to some new country what are we to do with our poor, dear Old England?’ (2, p. 55). So, while Frank considers the big picture and despairs of his ‘influence [...] to re-model a nation’ (Ibid.), Maggie perceives their civic duty to start at grassroots level by ‘bravely fac[ing] [...] evils, and learn[ing] their nature and causes’ (Ibid.). On discovering the causes of certain problems, individuals can then apply their God-given faculties to find a remedy.

Gaskell’s own *modus operandi* seems encapsulated in Maggie’s notion that it is ‘braver to stay, and endure much depression and anxiety of mind, for the sake of the good those always can do who see evils clearly’ (2, p. 54). In essence, Gaskell’s narratives reveal ‘evils’ and their causes so her readers can confront them, but as this frequently proves too complicated to encapsulate in a single story, she repeatedly addresses similar problems in subsequent works, highlighting different angles. To arrive at the root of evil, it was necessary to delve into history which, as John Seed contends, for eighteenth-century Dissenters encompassed ‘a set of sometimes contending forces’.<sup>69</sup> *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, which show industrial life from respectively the operatives’ and manufacturers’ position, are a case in point, but multiple other examples may be found in her short works. As part of a sustained interrogation of citizenship, Gaskell cleverly uses different genres, as while exploring

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<sup>67</sup> To Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 25 September [1850], *Letters*, p. 132.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> John Seed, *Dissenting Histories*, p. 8.

the Woman Question she employs Christian morality tales, humorous narratives, a historical timeline, and a gothic story (discussed in chapter two). Deirdre d'Albertis has noted that at times Gaskell 'dissembles' and seemingly contradicts herself, or leaves the readers with questions.<sup>70</sup> Possibly, she herself was uncertain as to the root of the problem. In any case, as the majority of her works appeared in weekly instalments the lack of closure and an easy solution allowed readers time to discuss and critically reflect on social questions.

To thoroughly grasp Gaskell's civic messages, the reader needs to understand the full context of the works she used as allusion or epigraph. With *The Moorland Cottage* Gaskell calls upon her Dissenting heritage. For once she clearly refers to her source, mentioning both *Evenings at Home* and 'the Transmigrations of Indra', one of the stories in this collection. It is as though she is willing her readers to pick up a copy from the bookshelf. *Evenings*, with its strong educational emphasis and focus on topics of morality, science and history, was originally published in six volumes between 1792 and 1796 and still widely read in the Victorian period, as substantiated by the release of its sixteenth edition in 1846. Daniel White and Michelle Levy's articles on *Evenings* help place the Aikins' handiwork in its Dissenting and more radical context, White arguing that *Evenings* teaches a Dissenting way of life, which Levy explains as: 'social and political reform must begin in the family'.<sup>71</sup> She demonstrates that *Evenings* 'provides both adults and children with models for enacting th[e] duty [...] how to resist policies they believe to be wrong'.<sup>72</sup> 'Eyes and No Eyes', for instance, teaches children to carefully note the world around them and describe it objectively, which results in radical conclusions as to the actions of citizens and government.<sup>73</sup> Other well-known stories similarly arrive at unexpected questions and answers as in 'Things by their Right Name' 'a battle' is called 'murder', and 'Great Men' teaches children to distinguish between greatness of station and greatness of character, resulting in Caesar and Cromwell being entitled 'great bad men' because, despite great achievements, their time

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<sup>70</sup> Deirdre d'Albertis, *Dissembling Fictions*.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel White, 'The "Joinerina": Anna Barbauld, the Aikin Family Circle, and the Dissenting Public Sphere', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32:4 (1999), 511-33; Michelle Levy, 'The Rational Education of *Evenings at Home*', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 19:1-2 (2006), 123-50 (p. 127). See also Daniel White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Michelle Levy, p. 129.

<sup>73</sup> *Evenings at Home, or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, Vol. 4 (London: Johnson, 1794), pp. 93-109.

and energy were not directed ‘to the public good, but to the purposes of their own ambition, in pursuit of which they violated all the duties of morality.’<sup>74</sup> It is this deceptively innocent, but rather radical compilation of stories that Gaskell cites.

Gaskell reinvents the original notion of ‘transmigrations’ in *Evenings* to address current social problems. In Aikin-Barbauld’s narrative Indian boy Indra’s intended rescue of a fairy causes a snake attack which mortally wounds him. Subsequently the fairy grants Indra the gift of transmigration which allows him to live on in the shape of an animal. His experience is one of constant flight. While Barbauld describes the animal kingdom, Gaskell applies the idea of transmigration to citizens’ rights and duties. Maggie’s explanation is key:

‘[...] when I was a child, I used to wish I might be transmigrated [...] into an American slave-owner for a little while, just that I might understand how he must suffer, and be sorely puzzled, and pray and long to be freed from his odious wealth, till at last he grew hardened to its nature - and since then, I have wished to be the Emperor of Russia, for the same reason’ (2, p. 55).

The quotation encourages reflection on the civic responsibilities of prosperous citizens, and illustrates Gaskell’s global mind-set as Maggie ponders the social structures of America and Russia. In this Gaskell emulates the rational Dissenters’ global citizenship approach while Wordsworth’s notion of the ‘one human heart’ which binds all men together, adds a poetic interpretation of the Dissenters’ ideas of brotherhood.<sup>75</sup> She further strengthens this idea with a quotation from Robert Burns’ ‘Address to the Unco Guid’ (the rigidly righteous), which satirizes those passing judgment on ‘brother Man’, advocating instead human understanding and compassion to help society progress. Hence Maggie ‘want[s] sorely to see “What’s resisted”, so that she may have ‘more charity for those who seem [...] to have been the cause of such infinite woe and misery’

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<sup>74</sup> *Evenings at Home, or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, Vol. 1 (London: Johnson, 1792), pp. 150-52 (p. 152); *Evenings at Home, or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, Vol. 6 (London: Johnson, 1796), pp. 10-19 (p.17). The fact that Barbauld denounces fellow-Dissenter Cromwell as not having governed judiciously demonstrates her objectivity and conscientiousness towards civic issues. Moreover, it shows the irony that rational Dissenters were denied equal civic rights because of their assumed support for Cromwell and his regime. Like Barbauld, Gaskell would critically comment on a political and religious Dissenting leader, Cotton Mather, in *Lois the Witch*.

<sup>75</sup> In a letter to the Howitts Gaskell quotes a stanza from ‘The Cumberland Beggar’, including the last sentence ‘we have all of us a human heart’. [18 August 1838], *Letters*, p. 33. This is repeated in a letter about workers’ concern about Florence Nightingale’s illness (*Letters*, p. 359). She also uses the quotation in the preface to the English edition of *Mabel Vaughan* (1859). John Beer and Angus Easson have commented on Gaskell’s interest in Wordsworth.



(Ibid.) whereas Frank's quotation, 'What's done we partly may compute; But know not what's resisted' (Ibid.) demonstrates the necessity of ascertaining causes of evil and developing empathy for the downtrodden.

Transmigration is the key to understanding Gaskell's early works as by depicting the daily temptations, problems and injustices people of a certain station encounter, Gaskell endeavours to improve understanding of their situation. Hitherto misunderstood fellow-citizens' duties, rights, predilections and feelings are exposed. All are human, and should be treated accordingly. However, as Anderson and Satalino have noted, from *North and South* onwards Gaskell acknowledged that awareness of other people's sufferings was insufficient incentive to bring about a change of heart - a clash of opinions, meaningful discussion, was also needed.<sup>76</sup>

As with Barbauld, elements of Gaskell's work which denote civic problems can often be traced to current events. The reference to the American slave owner in *The Moorland Cottage* is a case in point, for while Gaskell was composing her Christmas story, The Fugitive Slave Act was passed in America. This law, which went into effect on 18 September 1850, stipulated that regardless of the duration of their residence in the free northern states all runaway slaves be returned to their masters. Considered in this light, Indra's constant flight from hunters and the ironic mention of a master being 'freed from its odious wealth' take on new meaning, as does Frank's desire to depart for Australia or Canada, 'newer and purer state[s] of society' (Ibid.), which became the safe havens of choice for runaway slaves after the northern states of America no longer offered protection. Maggie's remark that slave owners might at first be 'sorely puzzled, and pray and long to be freed from [their] odious wealth' (Ibid.) hints at the importance of following one's conscience to effect change.

Special attention should be paid to allusions as Gaskell encourages readers to go further and restore their context. In *North and South*, as in *The Moorland Cottage*, Gaskell adapts one of Barbauld's ideas and reinterprets it for her own time. The chapter entitled 'Dressing for Tea', in which a gentleman's family, the Hales, prepare for the visit of 'tradesman' Thornton, opens with a four-line epigraph taken from Barbauld's 'The Groans of the Tankard'.<sup>77</sup> Reference to this poem reveals the importance of the

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<sup>76</sup> Kathleen Anderson and Kelsey Satalino, "'An Honest up and down Fight': Confrontation and Social Change in *North and South*", *The Gaskell Journal*, 27 (2013), 108-25.

<sup>77</sup> Book I, chapter IX. Like chapter 7 from *The Moorland Cottage*, this chapter is comparatively short and could be deleted without affecting the plot. Consisting mainly of conversations between the main characters, both chapters reveal important civic notions

Hales having entered Dissenting territory. In Barbauld's poem a silver tankard, used to taking pride of place in lavish surroundings, detests having ended up among Dissenting teetotallers at Warrington Academy.<sup>78</sup> 'The Groans' incorporates criticism of the ineptitude of Church leaders as Barbauld juxtaposes Warrington Academy's 'lean', 'hungry', and 'sober' inhabitants with a 'rosy Prebend, with cherubic face, [...] double chin, and paunch of portly grace, who lull'd in downy slumbers.'<sup>79</sup> The epigraph denotes Gaskell's veiled critique of the church which may be observed throughout *North and South*, notably when Mr Hale explains why he decides to relinquish his living, and the interpolated story of Margaret's return to Helstone which exposes the prevalence of superstitious beliefs, and hence the inadequacy of the Anglican church's moral and spiritual guidance in the parish. Immersion in a Dissenting environment had opened her eyes.

The epigraph reinforces Gaskell's message of egalitarianism and the need to adapt to a changing society. Though the tankard previously held a place of honour, at Warrington it is reduced to pouring water, a task it considers far too menial for a utensil of its calibre. Similarly, gently bred Margaret, like the silver vessel, ends up in a Dissenting household where she performs menial tasks like ironing caps; unlike the tankard, however, she does not complain and sees her own value as undiminished. This illustrates how Gaskell uses and reinterprets her rational Dissenting predecessors, and how her quotations may be read and reconsidered for hidden meanings. It sets the tone for my thesis and methodology.

## Chapter Outline

Chapter one contends that Gaskell's early interaction with seasoned writers William and Mary Howitt resembles an apprenticeship. Though she and her husband had published a joint poem, Gaskell's writing career began in earnest when she became acquainted with this couple. Self-confessed 'desperate Radicals' and 'universal suffrage people' who championed the abolition of slavery, sanitation, temperance, women's rights, education for the People, and the overturning of unjust laws, the Howitts helped Gaskell find an

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underlying Gaskell's oeuvre which had earlier been guiding rules for the rational Dissenters, such as global citizenship, and racial and gender equality.

<sup>78</sup> *DNB* (vol. 1, p. 185) defines it as 'the cradle of Unitarianism'. See also <http://uudb.org/articles/williamgaskell.html>

<sup>79</sup> William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, *Selected Poetry & Prose*, pp. 83-86.

authorial voice and a publisher for her first novel.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, they introduced her to numerous women's rights activists, and aided her first foray into the international marketplace. When over the years they moved from writing about rural customs and historical houses to reform-minded works in their periodical for people's progress, *Howitts' Journal*, Gaskell followed suit. In the Hungry Forties, therefore, she exchanged 'Cheshire Customs' and 'Clopton Hall' for 'The Sexton's Hero', 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' and most notably *Mary Barton*.

Gaskell's choice of pseudonym for contributions in *Howitts' Journal* reveals the Howitts' influence and her unusual ways of addressing civic ideas. 'Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.' reflects Gaskell's Dissenting heritage, her interest in truthful accounts of the past and England's industrial present, her focus on addressing current evils, and her global perspective - ideas familiar from her Dissenting heritage that were modelled by the Howitts and recur over her writing career. 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine', the story of a feud between two newspapers that divides an entire community, may be seen to address current events as at the time the Howitts were embroiled with John Saunders of the *People's Journal*. Both sides misused their periodicals - which had been established to promote co-operation - to garner support and attack their opponent. Contrary to fiction, in which peace was restored through mutual understanding and co-operation, the row did not die down, causing the Howitts to lose friends, readers and ultimately their journal.

In chapter two, which covers 1850 to 1856, I discuss how through form, experiment and narration Gaskell created new, rather progressive, perspectives on the Woman Question, as for example in her promotion of nursing as a respectable profession for women. These years Gaskell became involved with Dickens, whose influence both as social reformer and editor of *Household Words* is recognised. From the early realist 'Lizzie Leigh' and 'Well of Penmorfa', via the humorous-with-a-social-twist Cranford instalments through to the gothic 'The Poor Clare', the difficulties of the fallen woman and illegitimate child keep recurring. Gaskell's inventiveness to address evils is showcased in 'Our Society in Cranford' which turns the world topsy turvy as instead of a fallen woman in patriarchal society Captain Brown is seen to fall short of the rules of matriarchal society. The chapter further explores Charlotte Brontë's influence on

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<sup>80</sup> Margaret Howitt, ed., *Mary Howitt: an Autobiography*, 2 Vols (London: Isbister, 1889), II, p. 172.

‘Morton Hall’, a Cranford-in-Haworth-territory story, and the ‘The Poor Clare’, which Gaskell wrote while researching Brontë’s life. Around 1856 Gaskell’s earlier suggestion for allowing women entry to the caring professions reaches its climax in the person of Florence Nightingale, who through her work during the Crimean War unlocked the door to combating woman’s marginalized position. By linking the short works with sections from *Ruth* and *North and South* the chapter demonstrates how Gaskell modifies and reuses ideas to deliver comparable messages in different formats.

Chapter three, which covers 1853 to 1856, shows how Gaskell began illustrating citizenship from a European perspective. It demonstrates how Scottish born Parisian *salonnière* Mme Mohl indirectly influenced Gaskell’s work when she introduced her to liberal thinkers and politicians like François Guizot, Victor Cousin and Alexis De Tocqueville. They provided Gaskell with first-hand information on the state of affairs in France, and insight in continental matters of social and political import. Meanwhile Christian Socialist Frederick Denison Maurice, a man Gaskell revered, was dismissed on religious grounds from his position at King’s College. Following what she perceived as religious discrimination in England Gaskell became alive to instances of religious persecution on the continent, instigating reviews of earlier research on religious and racial discrimination by Frenchmen Claude Charles Fauriel and François Michel. Apart from these essays, which she entitled ‘Modern Greek Songs’ and ‘An Accursed Race’, Gaskell composed ‘Traits and Stories of the Huguenots’, another nonfiction work which explores religious persecution. I suggest that chapter four of *North and South*, entitled ‘Doubts and Difficulties’, similarly relates to Maurice’s problems, and that Gaskell’s use of authentic history in both the novel and non-fiction works serves to depict truth about the ‘universal church’. Though not overtly, her works further demonstrate the dangers of a State Church, as she and Maurice advocated the kind of Christian brotherhood that transcends a person’s national identity. I conclude by examining *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine’s* editing of ‘Stories of the Huguenots’ for an American readership, which reveals those who follow their conscience to be innovative, hardworking, and trustworthy citizens. Gaskell’s point exactly.

Chapter four, which examines works published between 1858 and 1860, reveals Gaskell’s development of an American civic consciousness. She repeatedly warns against believing myths of the past and becoming self-righteous; instead, she admonishes her readers to remain objective and self-critical. As America was edging towards Civil War, several authoritative works on the French revolution were

republished in Boston, alongside *My Lady Ludlow* (1858) and Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). Arguably, this sudden surge in interest in the French revolution, with its liberation of downtrodden citizens, was intended to strengthen the abolitionist debate, and reprints of Gaskell's earlier work, some of which referred to 'sins of the father' that needed eradicating, played a significant role. *Lois the Witch*, set in New England, is another example of Gaskell's theme of being self-critical and distancing oneself from patriarchal evils, as she explores her own Dissenting past, depicting the Puritans as culpable aggressors. A different type of engagement with America took place when Gaskell edited Boston Unitarian Maria Cummins's *Mabel Vaughan* for English readers. Interestingly, Cummins' novel follows the basic structure of *North and South*, whereas Gaskell is shown to explore Cummins' themes of Christian leadership and moral guidance in subsequent works. Though the fairy-tale-like 'Curious if True', which appeared in the *Cornhill*, has no American context, there is a thematic overlap with the novellas in ideas concerning misunderstanding the past, the unreliability of reputations, and leaders who are asleep to moral and social changes.

Chapter five describes the development of Gaskell's civic consciousness throughout 1863. The year Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gaskells were fighting the Cotton Famine in Manchester, an immediate effect of the American Civil War. Gaskell's frustration about her compatriots' seeming lack of interest in freeing an enslaved people is tangible. Works published in this year depict three stages of civic consciousness. At the beginning of the year Gaskell addresses institutionalized injustice in 'An Italian Institution' and *Sylvia's Lovers*. I suggest that the novel, inspired around the time of the Harper's Ferry Revolt in 1859, was intended to promote abolitionism. In the next stage, with 'Shams' and 'The Cage at Cranford', Gaskell reinvents Addison and Steele's stratagems of providing middle-class readers with moral guidance. Simultaneously alluding to the Civil War and Cotton Famine, in the trick-essay 'Shams' Gaskell uses Aikin and Barbauld's 'Eyes and no Eyes' to satirically denounce the narrow-mindedness and egotistical mind-set of fashionable society. Addison's 'The Hoopskirt on Trial' is seen to underlie 'The Cage at Cranford', in which Gaskell once again denounces the excesses of fashion while raising questions regarding Emancipation. These works seemingly refer back to her Christian Socialist antecedents in opposition to the Smilesean Self-help ideology with its self-centered, materialistic slant. At the end of the year, Gaskell provides her most outspoken civic message yet with the obituary 'Robert Gould Shaw', in which she lauds the Northern American

colonel who led the first negro regiment in the fight to free their southern brothers. 'Robert Gould Shaw' aims to stir the consciences of the readers of *Macmillan's Magazine*, showing it to be their human and Christian responsibility to help liberate the enslaved American Negroes.

This thesis will demonstrate how Gaskell interacted with the events of her time, how she continued to develop and expand her ideas of citizenship to encompass 'evils' in different parts of the world, and how interaction with contemporary social critics influenced her. As her shorter works appeared in periodicals, the thesis will also consider the influence of editors, and how context might have influenced the way the stories were read. Gaskell's letters play a crucial part in showing what was preoccupying her during these years, and they have been interwoven with historical evidence and examples from her stories.

## Chapter 1: 1838–1849 Apprenticeship with the Howitts

In 1847 and 1848, the year of revolutions, William and Mary Howitt, prolific writers and radical reformers, ran the short-lived *Howitts' Journal*, which described itself as a periodical aimed at 'the entertainment, the good, and the advancement of the public', while being 'bound to no class'.<sup>1</sup> Its didactic stories, historical accounts, and poems might be seen as a form of civic lessons. The periodical included readers' letters, literary notices, reviews of political and social meetings, and an agenda for radical activity. While mainly reflecting on the condition of England, it helped broaden the readers' horizons by including information on the state of Europe (in particular France) and America. The journal's content reflected its editors' belief that 'it is in the spirit of Christianity to raise man in the scale of being, to enlighten and enlarge his understanding, to ennoble and purify his heart.'<sup>2</sup> Originally Quakers, the Howitts, who began attending Unitarian Chapel in 1844 and soon afterwards 'beg[a]n to assume centre-stage of the radical Unitarian milieu', should be placed in the rational Dissent tradition, as their radicalism draws on the practice of Dissenting activism.<sup>3</sup>

Gaskell contributed three stories to *Howitts' Journal*: 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' (5, 12, 19 June 1847), in which lonely factory hand Libbie finds a new purpose in life by nurturing and supporting a sick neighbour boy and his mother; 'The Sexton's Hero' (4 September 1847), a tale about the Christian tenet of turning the other cheek, sacrificial love and forgiveness; and 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' (January 1848), the story of two feuding newspaper editors and how co-operation and mutual understanding create a spirit of conciliation. 'Christmas Storms' and 'The Sexton's Hero' were republished in *The Christian Socialist* in March 1850, proving that Gaskell, the Howitts and Christian Socialists such as Charles Kingsley, F.D. Maurice and J.M.F. Ludlow recognized their social value. Gaskell's stories address the purpose of both periodicals, which promoted Christian values, had a similar layout and addressed the same broad scope of social issues.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 1 (1847), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Mary Howitt: An Autobiography*, ed. by Margaret Howitt, 2 vols (London: Isbister, 1889), II, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> In a letter to J.M.F. Ludlow in October 1850 Kingsley described his intent 'to make it [...] an organ of Christian teaching to *all* classes, on the things now agitating their mind.' *Charles*

This chapter will explore connections between the Howitts and Gaskell. It will examine how their relationship began in 1838, and how through letters and personal contact Gaskell's ideas were filtered through their social views. Importantly, the seemingly innocuous pastoral and rural stories William Howitt printed in the 1830s were infused with civic messages aimed at generating reform, making the shift to contributing in a 'journal of popular reform' a natural step. An exploration of the recurring reformist themes in *Howitt's Journal* helps appreciate how Gaskell's contributions fit in, and the Howitts' influence on her writing career. The final part provides close readings of 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' and 'The Last Generation in England', Gaskell's first contribution to an American periodical, which appeared in *Sartain's Union Magazine* through Mary Howitt's mediation. These short early works illustrate in embryo multiple ideas Gaskell would continue to develop throughout her writing career. Her predilection for civic messages and wordplay is apparent in the thought-provoking pseudonym Cotton Mather Mills, Esq., used for contributions to *Howitt's Journal*, which will be examined in more detail to draw out civic ideas it encompasses. This chapter explores the manifold ways the Howitts broadened Gaskell's social outlook and influenced her literary output.

### **Literary Building Blocks: Letters, 'Cheshire Customs' and 'Clopton Hall'**

When in May 1838 Gaskell first initiated contact with famous poets and writers William and Mary Howitt, she and her husband's joint effort 'Sketches among the Poor' No.1 had just appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The Howitts's topics for publication ranged from rural life and its changes, like William's *The Book of the Seasons* (1833) and Mary's *Sketches of Natural History* (1834), to social critiques such as William's *The History of Priestcraft in all Ages and Nations* (1833). Howitt's history criticizes the Church of England for various evils, including 'empt[ying] the pockets of the poor, [...] stop[ping] the mouth of the conscientious dissenter', and simony, which allows 'some fellow [...] who if he were a poor man, would have long been hanged, [to be] put in over the heads of a respectable, pious and well-informed community, a

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*Kingsley: His letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. by Frances Eliza Grenfell Kingsley, 2 vols (London: King, 1877), I, p. 243; Charles Earle Raven, *Christian Socialism 1848-1854* (London: Macmillan, 1920), p. 159.



spiritual guide and teacher.’<sup>5</sup> In Howitt’s view, the structure of English society with its ‘Kingcraft’ and ‘Priestcraft’, the preferred position of aristocracy and Church, needed to be eradicated and replaced by a new societal structure ‘established on the most ancient of foundations – justice to the people.’<sup>6</sup> Instead of a state religion, he advocated to ‘place Christianity on its own base – the universal heart of the people’ where preachers, like schoolmasters, would be ‘simply teachers’, foregoing all preferment.<sup>7</sup> A ‘Sonnet Written after Reading “Howitt’s History of Priestcraft”’, anonymously published in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, praises Howitt for having ‘striven to break the entangled links of Superstition’s chain’ and envisions that, since ‘Truth [is his] watchlight’, Howitt would be hailed for generations to come as ‘the champion of true Liberty.’<sup>8</sup>

The Howitts’ social messages are informed by their religious beliefs. In ‘The Seven Temptations’, Mary’s didactic drama in verse about ‘the human soul, and [...] all the varied modes of its trials’, the reader is encouraged to remember ‘What’s done we partly may compute, But know not what’s resisted.’<sup>9</sup> It illustrates Mary Howitt’s belief that charity, ‘the soul of Christianity’, would be developed by ‘put[ting] ourselves into many imaginary and untried situations’ which enables us ‘to form some tolerable notion of how we might be affected by them.’<sup>10</sup> This in turn would then grow brotherly love. Clearly, the Howitts already supported many of the rational Dissenters’ ideas. Not surprisingly, therefore, by March 1844 Mary Howitt had begun attending Unitarian chapel, where she experienced a ‘unity of feeling and opinion’ with the people, and felt inspired by sermons on ‘religion being a thing of every-day use and application’.<sup>11</sup> By the end of 1845 the Howitts had become regular attenders at the Unitarian Gravel Pit chapel in Hackney, where Joseph Priestley had preached from 1791 to 1794.<sup>12</sup> Mary

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<sup>5</sup> William Howitt, *A Popular History of Priestcraft in All Ages and Nations* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1833), pp. 244, 246.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>8</sup> *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 2, August 1835, p. 506.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Howitt, *The Seven Temptations* (London: Bentley, 1834), pp. vii-viii. Howitt quotes Robert Burns, as Frank Buxton would do in *The Moorland Cottage*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* This is the transmigration idea, which Gaskell used in *The Moorland Cottage* (see introduction).

<sup>11</sup> *Mary Howitt: an Autobiography*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. In fact, the Gravel Pit congregation had moved to a new building, designed by Anna Barbauld’s nephew Edmund Aikin, by November 1810. See R. Brook Aspland, *Memoir of the Life, Works and Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Aspland of Hackney* (London: Whitfield, 1850), pp. 229, 255-56. Chapter Three on religious discrimination mentions F.D. Maurice’s father Michael Maurice, whose time as a preacher at this chapel partly overlaps with that of Priestley (1793-1794).

also describes attending a service at the ‘Unitarian chapel at Stoke-Newington’, noting that this is ‘where formerly the husband of Mrs. Barbauld had preached.’<sup>13</sup> They were now fully enveloped in rational Dissenting culture.

Gaskell, aware that the Howitts contemplated publishing descriptions of ‘solemnly poetical places’, shares personal memories of the area in Cheshire she grew up in in a letter sprinkled with literary quotes and descriptions of nature and old halls.<sup>14</sup> Her reference to being a Unitarian minister’s wife in effect informs the Howitts of her progressive credentials and establishes a common bond as a fellow Dissenter.<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, Gaskell’s letter resulted in a request for material on Cheshire customs for William Howitt’s forthcoming book *Rural Life in England* which, though seemingly rural and pastoral, has a reformist character. Its philosophical observations highlight social and civic problems as is the case with, for example, a sea chest Howitt notices at Annesley Hall. On inquiring he learns that it had belonged to a ‘pious lad’ whose aspiration to become a clergyman had been thwarted when ‘the living went to his elder brother’.<sup>16</sup> He eventually drowned at sea. Further comments are unnecessary, as the discerning reader is left to contemplate the waste of human potential and loss to society when professions are restricted to those with the right family connections. *The London and Westminster Review* acknowledged the social undercurrent of Howitt’s *The Rural Life of England* as it describes ‘all the easements of an English farmer’s life’, but also decries ‘how far the agricultural labourer is behind his time, how crying is the need for him of intelligent and civilizing instruction’.<sup>17</sup> Though the Howitts seemingly went from writers of pastoral works in the 1830s to radical reformers in the late 1840s, there is continuity as the radical ideas expressed explicitly in *Howitt’s Journal* were already woven into their earlier works.

Despite appearances, Gaskell’s ‘Cheshire Customs’ blends in with the Howitts’ radical agenda. Gaskell lists innocent rural customs, like the practice of sanding before a wedding, the eating of simnel cake on Mid-Lent Sunday, and the ‘lifting’ the master of the house in his chair, besides customs that show the abundance of superstition. More

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> [May 1835], *Letters*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 15. The Howitts were Quakers, but from 1844 they regularly attended Unitarian chapel.

<sup>16</sup> William Howitt, *The Rural Life of England* (1841, London: Forgotten Books, 2013), p. 251.

<sup>17</sup> *The London and Westminster Review*, 31:2 (1938), p. 360.

harmful customs concerning a woman's character are 'riding stang', where any woman who has been publicly 'scolding, beating or otherwise abusing one of the other sex', is paraded through the nearest village sitting 'astride with her face to the tail' of 'an old, shabby, broken down horse'.<sup>18</sup> The custom of hanging up a branch of a tree at everyone's door on May Day as 'reference to the character of the principal female of the house' likewise threatens women's dignity as some branches, like nettles and gorse, 'cast the worst imputation on a woman's character', and resulted in 'many a poor girl ha[ving] had her character blasted by one of these bushes being hung up by some one [sic] who owed her a grudge.'<sup>19</sup> As the accusation was not tangible she could not refute it. Depictions of genuine problems relating to the social position of women and how easily they lose their reputation would continue to be a theme in Gaskell's works.

'Clopton Hall' illustrates Gaskell's interest in domestic history and how her stories, as those of the Howitts, contain subtly veiled civic lessons. The story appeared anonymously (by 'a fair lady') in the popular *Visits to Remarkable Places* (1840).<sup>20</sup> Gaskell's narratives work on different levels, and her reminiscences of a school-visit intertwine with a message about England's problem of religious intolerance, alluded to in the description of an old military map hanging in the hallway, which depicts 'the stations of the respective armies' of Cavaliers and Roundheads during the Civil War (1, p. 39), and an old Catholic chapel in which the chaplain's room had 'been walled up and forgotten till within the last few years' (1, p. 40). Gaskell's description of how she, at the time only a teenage girl, had been obliged to crawl in 'on [her] hands and knees' (Ibid.) is a tacit reminder of the recently passed Roman Catholic Relief Act (1829) which finally granted Catholics the right to worship the way they considered right. Howitt, who after a visit to Clopton Hall added several pages to Gaskell's story, records that following a period of decay a new landlord had modernized the Hall, replacing

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<sup>18</sup> [18 August 1838], *Letters*, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>20</sup> 'Clopton Hall' received some excellent reviews. *The Athenaeum* commented that from the chapter on Stratford 'the passage which has pleased us best [...] is the visit to Clopton Hall' (11 January 1840, p. 33). *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* Vol 9 (1841), p. 28 singled out Gaskell's description of Clopton Hall as 'pithy and so generally interesting a shape' that they extracted the complete story, while *The New York Review* for April 1840 (pp. 471-72) extracted the 'legendary passage' of Charlotte Clopton. Had she been named Gaskell's writing career might have started earlier.

‘things of the past’ with ‘modern furniture’ and ‘fresh paintings’.<sup>21</sup> By adding his up-to-date impressions Howitt extends the history of Clopton Hall which had started around the 1640s into the late 1840s. Together he and Gaskell depict the fall of a mighty family and the dawn of a new era.

The same letter in which Gaskell discusses William Howitt’s intended visit to Clopton praises Mary’s description of Haughton Tower, a scene of carnage during the Civil War, as ‘an unwritten tragedy’.<sup>22</sup> After the Cavaliers had surrendered Parliamentary forces took Haughton Tower which stocked ‘a good supply of arms and ammunition’, but, tragically, it exploded causing ‘the captain with sixty of his men’ to perish or be dreadfully maimed.<sup>23</sup> Mary Howitt had referred to a symbol of the tragedy of war, and a reminder of the atrocities committed in the name of politics and religion. The portrayal of Haughton Tower may have inspired a train of thought, as following her description of family traditions and deserted old mansions Gaskell evokes Tennyson’s ‘Deserted House’ - ‘Life and thought are gone away’.<sup>24</sup> Conceivably, while composing her epistle to Mary Howitt with its blend of reminiscences on Clopton, derelict old halls, slighted women, fearsome deaths and the Civil War, the idea for ‘Clopton Hall’ began taking shape.

Literary allusions in the works of the Howitts and Gaskell emphasise their social conscience. In her letter to Howitt Gaskell refers to her husband’s well-received lectures to poor weavers on ‘The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life’, which in turn inspires images of a poverty-stricken district in Manchester that remind her of a passage in William Wordsworth’s ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’. She quotes,

‘Man is dear to man’ the poorest poor  
Long for some moments in a weary life  
When they can know and feel that they have been,  
Themselves, the fathers and the dealers out  
Of some small blessings; have been kind to such  
As needed kindness, for this simple cause,  
That we have all of us a human heart.’<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> William Howitt, *Visits to Remarkable Places: Old Halls, Battle Fields, and Scenes Illustrative of Striking Passages in English History and Poetry* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1840), p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters*, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Baines, *History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster*, 2 vols (London: Fisher, 1836), II, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Such thoughts on Wordsworth's poem inform works like 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' where lonely Libbie makes herself indispensable to her neighbours through small tokens and labours of love, and *Mary Barton* where John Barton and Wilson, himself unemployed, bring relief to fever-stricken Ben Davenport and his family by offering food and loving care, and by cleaning the filth ridden basement in which the family lives.<sup>26</sup> Gaskell's accounts of lower-class Mancunians' everyday lives originated from her belief that 'the beauty [...] of the common things and daily events of life in its humblest aspect [is not] sufficiently appreciated'.<sup>27</sup>

Correspondence with the Howitts inspired Gaskell to reminisce about her childhood and many peculiar customs that were quickly disappearing owing to the Industrial Revolution. 'The Last Generation in England', a string of anecdotes about a community of elderly spinsters who adhered strictly to past customs and manners, which was to evolve a few years later into *Cranford*, may therefore be considered a direct result of her apprenticeship with them. When in the hungry forties the Howitts began to unequivocally criticise evils in society Gaskell followed suit. *Mary Barton* is a case in point, as according to Mary Howitt 'the first volume [...] was sent in MS, to my husband, stating this to be the result of his advice'.<sup>28</sup> Gaskell further owed Howitt a debt of gratitude for his perseverance in finding a publisher for her relatively short work, which – in an age when three volume novels were the norm – was eventually published in two volumes by Edward Chapman, a fellow radical with feminist sympathies.<sup>29</sup> William Howitt reached an agreement with the publisher on her behalf.<sup>30</sup> Clearly, therefore, it is no exaggeration to conclude that without the Howitts' incentive and

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<sup>26</sup> Irene Wiltshire's article 'The Presence of Wordsworth in Elizabeth Gaskell's Early Writing' (in Sandro Jung, *Essays for the Bicentenary*, pp. 16-28) illustrates the influence of Wordsworth in 'Libbie Marsh', 'The Sexton's Hero' and *Mary Barton*, in which 'the one human heart is signified by the experience of loss and sorrow shared by rich and poor alike'. She notes that with the Howitts - who were personally acquainted with Wordsworth and his wife - Gaskell had found editors who were sympathetic to her aims. See also John Beer, 'Elizabeth Gaskell's Legacy from Romanticism', *GJ*, 22 (2008), 42-55.

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*, p. 33. This may account for the fact that the subtitle she chose for *Wives and Daughters* was 'An Everyday Story'.

<sup>28</sup> *Mary Howitt: an Autobiography*, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Shattock notes that around this time, as a temporary measure, Chapman retained the two-volume format for their "Series of Original Works of Fiction". She concludes that without this policy, 'Gaskell would have had difficulty in placing *Mary Barton* with a mainstream publisher.' Joanne Shattock, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and Her Readers: From *Howitt's Journal* to the *Cornhill*', *GJ*, 25 (2011), 77-87 (p. 80). Chapman's radical credentials are touched on by Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 179.

<sup>30</sup> To Edward Chapman, 13 April 1848, *Letters*, p. 55.

support Gaskell may never have been known to the world, at least not as the person we now know her to be: the humorous social historian and the conscientious chronicler of the condition-of-the-people.

In this chapter I will describe the continuity between the Howitts' work of the 1830s and 1840s, and how they informed Gaskell's writing identity.

### **Entering the Howitt's Circle of Radical Activists**

The radical Unitarian circle into which Gaskell was introduced and of which the Howitts were the pivot, actively voiced concerns about the moral and social position of women, and promoted ideas to improve their condition. The Howitts' circle of women's rights campaigners included future Langham Place Circle originators the young Bessie R. Parkes and Barbara Leigh Smith (later Mme Bodichon), whose admiration for Mary Howitt amounted to adulation, besides Eliza 'Tottie' Fox, Mary's daughter Anna Mary, and Anna Jameson.<sup>31</sup> These women had a strong focus on intellectual debate, and promoted 'women's true potential as the redeemers of society', while bonding into a kind of sisterhood, which support network helped them explore the boundaries of Victorian propriety.<sup>32</sup> In this respect Linda Peterson's article on the practice of collaborative literary work through which Mary Howitt helped Anna Mary find her feet as artist is noteworthy, as well as Alexandra Wettlaufer's argument that Anna Mary 'conceived of her vocation in her mother's terms of financial and feminist independence.'<sup>33</sup> The Howitts' support extended to many, including Eliza Meteyard, a regular contributor to *Howitts' Journal*, described by Mary as 'a fragile and delicate woman, who in ordinary circumstances would require brothers and friends to help her', but who from an early age had been providing for her siblings.<sup>34</sup> Meteyard impressed her with her 'marvellous energy and high principle and self-sacrifice'. With this kind of attribute and 'in this way', Mary believed, 'women will emancipate themselves.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p.179.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 154; Alexandra Wettlaufer, 'The Politics and Poetics of Sisterhood Anna Mary Howitt's "The Sisters in Art"', *Victorian Review*, 36 (2010), 129-46.

<sup>33</sup> Linda H. Peterson, 'Working Collaboratively; Mary Howitt and Anna Mary Howitt as Women of Letters' in *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 96-130; Alexandra Wettlaufer, p. 131.

<sup>34</sup> *Mary Howitt: an Autobiography*, p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

The social ideas of these women's rights activists inform and build on each other. Anna Jameson's *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals* (1846) which includes the critical essays "'Woman's Mission", and Woman's Position' as well as 'The Relative Position of Mothers and Governesses', challenges 'man's legislation for woman' as being

without sympathy; without the recognition of equality, without a comprehension of certain innate differences, physical and moral, and therefore inadequate, useless, often unjust, and not seldom cruel.<sup>36</sup>

She pinpoints the urgent need for education and the moral guidance of lower class girls, a great number of whom lack 'an idea of duty to God or man' and a 'sense of fear or shame', while voicing her concern that the only recourse for middle class women who need to earn a living is to be a governess, a position 'of great difficulty and discomfort'.<sup>37</sup> Jameson criticizes unwritten social laws, positing that whereas in France impoverished young women find employment as clerk or cashier, because of 'all our English ideas of feminine propriety[...]' no one would hire her.<sup>38</sup> Like the Howitts, Jameson expected education to eliminate social evils, and she believed in 'the influence of enlightened Christianity' to advance society.<sup>39</sup> Similar ideas reverberate in Gaskell's work.

The radical Unitarians' consideration of education as the key solution to an array of evils explains the Howitts' involvement in the Whittington Clubs, which offered lower middle class and higher ranking working class people an opportunity to educate themselves in the Club's reading rooms and through participation in discussion forums. Contrary to contemporary custom, women were allowed as members.<sup>40</sup> William's 'Letters on Labour' (1846) also proved effective, leading to the foundation of the Co-operative League, whose 'object was to supply the industrious classes, both male and female, with gratuitous information on the great social questions of the day'.<sup>41</sup> Co-operative societies advocated democratic principles and 'invite[d] all men of every

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<sup>36</sup> Anna Jameson, *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), pp. 129-83 (p. 132).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 136, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>40</sup> For more information on the feminist antecedents of the Whittington Clubs, see Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, pp. 140-70.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

shade of religious and political opinion' to help 'elevat[e] the social, moral, and intellectual condition of the people.'<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, though William spent much time promoting the League by presiding at co-operative meetings and lecturing on the benefits of co-operation, he realized that 'it would require years of active, steady effort before any practical success could be attained; the millions being quite unprepared calmly and wisely to consider great principles.'<sup>43</sup>

### **The Howitts' European and Transatlantic Consciousness**

The Howitts participated in shaping publishing in Europe, as when during a prolonged stay in Germany they chanced upon stories written by Swedish writer Fredrika Bremer which 'delighted [them] by their originality, freshness and delicate humour, and [they] determined to introduce them to the English reading public.'<sup>44</sup> Unperturbed when initially no publisher proved willing to publish Bremer's novels, they committed to publishing at their own risk until they 'became the rage' and were even pirated in the United States.<sup>45</sup> Like the Howitts' stories, Bremer's works depict 'commonplace delineations of every-day life' which encourage readers to compare and contrast their own conditions in life.<sup>46</sup>

In 1848 the Howitts extended their influence towards America after Mary met Caroline Matilda Kirkland, the editress of *Sartain's Union Magazine for Literature and Art* and its predecessor the *Union Magazine*, who was just then visiting London. Kirkland's keenness to raise women's profile is evident from her foreword to Mrs Hugo Reid's 'A Plea for Woman; Being a Vindication of the Importance of Her Natural Sphere of Action' (1843) on the import of properly educating women. Seemingly the Howitts began contributing to *Sartain's Union Magazine* as a consequence of this encounter. Thereafter Mary Howitt remained on the lookout for other potential contributors, likely introducing Bremer to *Sartain's*, for of the three works by Bremer it published in 1849 the first two were 'original articles communicated expressly for' *Sartain's* and translated by Howitt. When later that year Bremer visited America she was lauded as the 'Lady of the Norseland' who 'sanctif[ies] the Home' and pours out

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<sup>42</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 2, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>44</sup> *Mary Howitt: an Autobiography*, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.



‘every element of the better life’: ‘Love and Concord, [...] Peace and Hope.’<sup>47</sup> In her editorial Kirkland called her ‘the most distinguished female writer living’.<sup>48</sup> Mary Howitt had brought their worlds together.<sup>49</sup>

Mary Howitt, with her gift for languages, translated numerous European works, many of which appeared in the radical journals the Howitts contributed to. Brian E. Maidment argues that ‘Mary’s translations, together with William’s quest to make emerging new French ideas about social justice and communitarianism known in England, makes’ a new cultural force available.<sup>50</sup> The stories Mary chose to translate support her ideas of justice and good citizenship; Fredrika Bremer’s ‘A Swedish Maidservant’, for example, lauds the tireless efforts, patience and ‘Christian virtues’ exhibited by good servants.<sup>51</sup> While Bremer’s engaging tone and storyline reinforce the Howitts’ ideas of good social relations between classes, another translation, R. K. Terzky’s ‘Scenes from the Peasant Life of Hungary’, is a grim description of injustice perpetrated against poor villager Janko.<sup>52</sup> His forced conscription into the army for a duration of ten years exposes the urgent need for radical reform to improve the lot of Hungarian workers. The story ends on a sombre note, reporting how ‘every year despair, madness and suicide’ would ‘take their per centage [sic] from the ranks’, and that ‘scarcely one-third part have ever again seen their homes.’<sup>53</sup> Chapter three, which explores Gaskell’s treatment of the oppressed Cagots and French Huguenots, illustrates how she, like the Howitts, has a European consciousness and is in dialogue with other nations.

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<sup>47</sup> *Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, Vols 4-5, ‘Letter to Fredrika Bremer’, December 1849, p. 325.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>49</sup> Johnston argues that Bremer wanted to make a political impact and that Howitt’s translations into the lingua franca English helped British women readers realise that the ‘Woman Question’ was a public concern not restricted to their own country, while in America Bremer’s ‘quest for individual personal freedom from Old Europe’s gender ideology comes into diametric collision with the key political debate of the day in the United States, slavery’. ‘Emancipatory Politics: Mary Howitt translates Fredrika Bremer’ in Judith Johnston, *Victorian Women and the Economies of Travel, Translation and Culture, 1830-1870* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 151-70 (p.157).

<sup>50</sup> Brian E. Maidment, “‘Works in Unbroken Literary Succession’: The Literary Career of Mary Howitt’ in *Popular Victorian Women Writers*, ed. by Kay Boardman and Shirley Jones (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 22-45 (p. 28).

<sup>51</sup> *Howitt’s Journal*, Vol. 3, pp. 333-34.

<sup>52</sup> *Howitt’s Journal*, Vol. 2, p. 34.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

In 1847 the Howitts' 'two subjects of hope for the future' were 'reform of [...] social and political abuses – and emigration'.<sup>54</sup> As, however, '[t]he abuses to be reformed [were] so enormous and the progress of reform [was] so slow', emigration seemed best.<sup>55</sup> With conditions for the working classes rapidly deteriorating, concern grew about a potential popular uprising. In an attempt to diffuse this situation, Eliza Meteyard's letter to 'the working classes of the great manufacturing towns', which appeared in 'The Weekly Record' of 24 June 1848, avows that emigration to North-America or Australia 'would be far nobler and more significant of ultimate success, than any physical force demonstration whatsoever.'<sup>56</sup> In order to help prospective emigrants with their preparations, the Howitts included practical advice on emigrating in the 'Weekly Record' section of their journal.

The Howitts were ardent anti-slavery campaigners, so when runaway slave and abolitionist campaigner Frederic Douglass toured England in 1847, William published a running account of his activities in the journal. Howitt reports that 'several warm-hearted individuals' from the North of England who 'could not bear [...] that such a man should be in danger of the wicked laws of the slave-holder' had purchased his freedom.<sup>57</sup> Later, when on Douglass's return journey to America he was insulted on board the Cambria steam-packet, *Howitt's Journal* demanded a public apology from the shipping company.<sup>58</sup> In the following 'Weekly Record' Howitt called for subscriptions to enable Douglass 'to devote his whole life and energies to the Anti-Slavery Cause.'<sup>59</sup> The Howitts' words and actions eloquently expressed their commitment to the disenfranchised of the world, considering it their Christian duty to report injustice in order to generate reform. A similar attitude also made Gaskell a force for good in years to come – in her novels, but even more effectively, as this thesis will demonstrate, through a string of short works which denounced ongoing evils and allowed her to immediately address emerging social problems.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 3, pp. 413-14.

<sup>57</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 1, 'The Weekly Record' for 30 January 1847, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 'The Weekly Record' for 17 April 1847, p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 'The Weekly Record' for 24 April 1847, p. 33.

### ***Howitt's Journal's Quest for Equality***

*Howitt's Journal* contributed to the democratic debate as their editors recognised 'rights [to be] the rights of all; duties [to be] the laws and the inviolable obligations of all.' They aimed to 'promote' their readers' 'self-education', and 'to explain their genuine duties', while championing 'schools for every class' and 'free opinion'.<sup>60</sup> The Howitts' vision for a democratic England is noteworthy since in the late 1840s 'democracy' was still relatively uncharted territory. Though during their first meeting Charlotte Brontë had labelled Gaskell 'a democrat', that same year her close friend Catherine Winkworth mentions disliking Kingsley's praises of all things 'democratic' because she fails to fully comprehend his meaning.<sup>61</sup> Still, multiple political pamphlets were published for those interested. The 'Politics for the People' tracts, for instance, described politics in layman's terms, opening it up to the masses instead of keeping politics an occupation for the privileged few. These treatises had been published as early as 1848 by the Christian Socialists Charles Kingsley, whom Gaskell once described as 'my hero', and F.D. Maurice, who defined democracy as 'the unbridled will of the multitude in all affairs of state, without any distinction in favour of wisdom, property, age or experience.'<sup>62</sup>

*Howitt's Journal* denounced aristocracy as outdated and causing multiple social problems, as in an article entitled 'Opinions of Celebrated Men in France of the English Aristocracy, Etc.' which features radical statements from French liberals like Alphonse de Lamartine, François Guizot, and Benjamin Constant.<sup>63</sup> Lamartine's statement, '[t]he epoch in which aristocracies fall is the one in which nations regenerate themselves' is followed by Laménais's observation that '[t]he English aristocracy is the last remnant of the feudal institutions of Europe, and England is the battleground on which the contest for its extinction must be fought out.'<sup>64</sup> One of these feudal remnants, primogeniture, was erased from French society following the Revolution, drawing Charles Dupin's observation that after France abolished primogeniture and 'establish[ed] equality in all families', land and houses improved, and French citizens became 'a new people, full of

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<sup>60</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, Vol.1, 1847, pp. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> To Charlotte Froude, [c. 25 August 1850], *Letters*, p. 129; Margaret Josephine Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters, Susanna and Catherine Winkworth* (London: Longmans, 1908), p. 62. Letter to Emma Shaen, dated 17 November 1850.

<sup>62</sup> To Eliza Fox, 26 November 1849, *Letters*, p. 90; *Politics for the People*, ed. by Frederick Denison Maurice (London: Parker, 1848), p. 147.

<sup>63</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 3, 24 June 1848, pp. 407-09.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

learning, intelligence and morality.’<sup>65</sup> Radical ideas like this may explain Gaskell’s repeated references to the fall of a great aristocratic house, as in ‘Clopton Hall’, ‘Morton Hall’ and ‘Crowley Castle’.

Using a variety of styles, *Howitt’s Journal* regularly referred to the French Revolution, which they considered a precursor of democracy. On 25 March 1848, for instance, the periodical incorporated the lyrics ‘of the two great Revolutionary Songs’, the Marseillaise Hymn and ‘Mourir pour la Patrie’ as well as a missive from Christian Socialist Goodwin Barmby in ‘The Weekly Record’. Written from Paris and addressing ‘all the People of Progress’ Barmby postulates that the recent Revolution was ‘not only critical, but constructive, not only passionate, but moral, not only social, but industrial, not only political, but religious’.<sup>66</sup> Over the ensuing seven weeks *Howitt’s Journal* printed Barmby’s weekly updates, which coincided with a translation of Lamartine’s ‘Histoire des Girondins’ entitled ‘Scenes and Characters from the French Revolution’ that ran from 12 February to 6 May 1848. From 1 April the title was modified to ‘Scenes and Characters from the First French Revolution’, denoting that another French revolt had taken place.<sup>67</sup> A different style altogether, on 10 June 1848 Dr Samuel Smiles’ article on Victor Hugo in the ‘Poets of the People’ series contains several of Hugo’s ‘more striking thoughts’, as he defines revolution as ‘the larva of a civilization’, and expounds his republican notions as follows:

Societies can be only well governed [...] when intelligence and power, are placed in their due relative position. If intelligence be placed as a head on the summit of the social body, then let this head reign: theocracies have their meaning and their beauty. So soon as the many enjoy light, let the many govern; the aristocracy are then legitimate. But [...] when all heads are enveloped in light, then let all reign, the people are ripe for the republic; let it have the republic.<sup>68</sup>

Hugo’s views correlate with the Howitts’ democratic vision that once the masses are prepared to accept ‘great principles’ they are close to assuming governing responsibilities. In 1848 this still seemed far off, but education - as conveyed through the medium of their journal, would work towards achieving this ambition.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 408-09.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 25 March 1848, p. 207.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 369-70. A similar theory about the progression of society and the type of government it accordingly needs is expressed by Mr Thornton in Volume 1, Chapter 15 of *North and South*, entitled ‘Masters and Men’.

### **What's in a Name?: Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.**

Discontinued after the publication of *Mary Barton* made 'Mrs Gaskell' a household name, her pen name 'Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.' reveals the importance Gaskell attached to her Dissenting heritage, the world at large, and history. The pseudonym conjoins two widely divergent themes: the Puritan leader Cotton Mather and the Manchester cotton mills. The choice of 'Cotton Mather' emphasises Gaskell's interest in her Dissenting history and evokes William Howitt's treatise against Priestcraft with its radical denunciation of superstitious beliefs.<sup>69</sup> Throughout her writing career Gaskell would reiterate the devastating effect of superstition in a bid to promote tolerance and universal education.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, she would repeatedly describe unjust historical leaders and situations to promote the idea of taking civic action, while through her reference to an American leader she highlights global citizenship.<sup>71</sup> Notably, though references to Mather's leadership tend to hold negative connotations, his concern about eradicating evil in society resembles the Howitts' and Gaskell's preoccupation. The final part of her pseudonym, 'Cotton Mills' refers to Gaskell's habitat at the time, Manchester, and marks her interest in England's social progress and the condition of the working classes - ongoing concerns in *Howitt's Journal*.

Gaskell's pseudonym was 'Cotton Mather Mills, Esq' for 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' and 'The Sexton's Hero', but for 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' it became simply 'Cotton Mather Mills'. The pseudonym reflects Gaskell's predilection towards combining multiple civic ideas in novel ways as it expresses an interest in realistic accounts of the past and the present, and in bringing the two together in one message.<sup>72</sup> It shows how Gaskell's Dissenting heritage informs her way of looking at the world. Gaskell's choice of a male pseudonym is also noteworthy since she masquerades as a conservative man, while she is in fact a rather radical woman.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, *Howitt's*

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<sup>69</sup> While Marion Shaw (in Jill Matus, *The Cambridge Companion*, p. 77) considers this penname a 'strange' choice because of Cotton Mather's connection with the Salem trials, Jenny Uglow (*A Habit of Stories*, p. 172) links Cotton Mather with the Unitarians in the 1840s who were fighting obscurantism.

<sup>70</sup> The Elementary Education Act was passed in England in 1870.

<sup>71</sup> Gaskell's notions on global citizenship and her revisitation of Cotton Mather in *Lois the Witch* are discussed in chapter four.

<sup>72</sup> Jenny Uglow (*A Habit of Stories*, p. 172) sees the influence of William Gaskell in the choice of pseudonym, for it 'reminds one of William's love of puns and linguistic subtleties'.

<sup>73</sup> Deirdre d'Albertis (*Dissembling Fictions*, pp. 3-4) argues that Gaskell at times dissembles by attributing her views to more authoritative speakers. As a man she might expect to be taken seriously - and even more as a gentleman, so Gaskell attaches 'Esq.' to her name. Alexis Easley suggests Gaskell chose the pseudonym Cotton Mather Mills Esq. because she wanted 'to assume

*Journal* promoted equality, and many women writers, including Mary Howitt, Gillies and Meteyard, contributed under their own name. Perhaps Gaskell adopted it for the same reason the Brontë sisters called themselves the Bell brothers: because stories by women drew sterner critical reviews than those of male writers. In all, her *nom de plume* signals Gaskell's humorous and unique way of approaching her heritage. Whilst not evading difficult subjects, she attempts to inject some witty remarks or at least give problematic matters a positive twist. Additionally, she promotes critical thinking by keeping her readers guessing.

### **Contributing to *Howitt's Journal* : Promoting Co-operation**

In Gaskell's first contribution to *Howitts' Journal*, 'Life in Manchester: Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' (5, 12, 19 June 1847), Elizabeth Marsh, an orphan, relocates to another district in Manchester.<sup>74</sup> She soon becomes acquainted with Frank Hall, the terminally ill son of 'termagant' Margaret Hall, whose sufferings she tries to lighten, while following the boy's death she moves in with his bereaved mother to support her. The idea of women co-habiting to provide mutual support may have been inspired by Mary Gillies, another member of the Howitts' circle, who advocated 'Associated Homes for the Middle Class' or 'combination', the sharing of facilities and the living together in one building so as to improve middle class women's 'domestic economy' and 'social arrangements'.<sup>75</sup> The story's theme of co-operation and association mirrors the content of *Howitts' Journal*, as in the 12 June 1847 edition, which incorporates the second chapter of Gaskell's story, the Notices state that it should not just be a way to procure greater quantities of food, but a way 'towards a higher and purer condition of life [which is] more in accordance with the laws of the Creator'.<sup>76</sup> When in 1850 the story

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the identity of a male urban investigator – a middle-class man whose access to working-class neighborhoods and domestic spaces would not seem morally compromising' in order to promote reform and lessen class conflict.<sup>73</sup> Adding Esq. also prevented people from 'locat[ing] her work within the rhetoric of ultra-radical working-class movements'. Alexis Easley, *First-Person Anonymous: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830-70* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 87, 90.

<sup>74</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 310-13, 334-36, 345-47.

<sup>75</sup> The Weekly Record for 3 July 1847, *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 2, p. 15, lists the names of William and Mary Howitt, Mary and Margaret Gillies, and Silverpen as among the honorary members of the newly established Birmingham Co-operative League. *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 1, 27 March 1847, 171-74; *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 1, 15 May 1847, 271-72. Gillies's importance lies in linking women's domestic living arrangements and their social and intellectual progress. Alexis Easley, *Literary Celebrity, Gender and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914* (Plymouth: University of Delaware Press, 2011), p. 118.

<sup>76</sup> *Howitt's Journal*, vol. 1, p. 336.

was reprinted as ‘Libbie Marsh’s Three Eras; A Lancashire Tale’, *The Christian Reformer or The Unitarian Magazine and Review*, well aware that the writer was one of their own, called it ‘a very sweet little story, illustrating the necessity of having a purpose in life, and the wisdom of having a good purpose.’<sup>77</sup>

‘The Sexton’s Hero’, which appeared on 4 September 1847, is written in the vein of Howitt’s early treatise against Priestcraft. It depicts problems relating to a State Church and the consequent ineffectiveness of disseminating Gospel truth to working class parishioners. The elderly male narrator describes how the vicar of the Anglican church, whose brother serves as Army Colonel during the Napoleonic wars, allows his patriotic zeal to interfere with his Christian duty to teach values like turning the other cheek and loving one’s neighbour. So when Gilbert Dawson, a ‘strapping’ lad, refuses to fight because he believes it ‘wrong to quarrel, and use violence’ people consider him a coward (1, p.75), and though old Jonas affirms Gilbert ‘d[oes] no more than gospel t[ells] him to do’, no one credits what he says (1, p.76). Gilbert ends up being ‘scorned and slighted’ by the people in his community and loses the girl he loves when he follows his conscience (1, p. 77). A strong conciliatory message for the readers emanates from the concluding lines, ‘there’s call enough for bravery in the service of God, and to show love to man, without quarrelling and fighting.’ (1, p. 80) Like the Howitts, Gaskell reminds the readers of their duty to God and man – to transform society, but if possible by peaceful means.

Gaskell’s final contribution to *Howitt’s Journal*, ‘Christmas Storms and Sunshine’, builds on the previous stories in its emphasis on co-operation and reconciliation in times of strife. Gaskell considers her audience who in 1847/48 faced poverty, debts, hunger, jealousy, sickness, death and the political struggles that prevailed in daily life. It is these problems and experiences she places at the heart of ‘Christmas Storms and Sunshine’. The tale delicately describes a volatile situation readers would understand and empathize with, and offers a simple solution to harmonize relationships. ‘Christmas Storms’ calls for ‘goodwill’ between human beings, and denounces people’s tendency to compartmentalise according to political or religious views and social rank.

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Critical Notices’, *The Christian Reformer’ or, Unitarian Magazine and Review*, ed. by Robert Aspland, 65:6 (1850), 257-321 (p. 308).

In the first issue of the revolutionary year 1848 William Howitt observes that ‘never was there so much occasion for all true men to pull together.’<sup>78</sup> Gaskell’s story with its description of a problematic relationship between the feuding chief compositors of two rival newspapers who inhabit the same house (a picture of England) where they and their wives take the hostilities from the public into the domestic sphere fits in well. ‘Christmas Storms and Sunshine’ opens with a depiction of a newspaper war between the ‘spirited and intelligent, alias newfangled and Democratic’ *Examiner* which is the mouthpiece of ‘Radical shopkeepers’, and *The Flying Post*, which is ‘long established and respectable; alias bigoted, and Tory’ (1, p. 89). Though the exact date and place of these struggles remain undisclosed, Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) is mentioned as a possible contributor, showing the political skirmishes in nineteenth-century England to have been ongoing for decades. The story itself is set ‘some dozen years ago’ (1, p. 90), after the Reform Bill and before the Hungry Forties. It criticizes newspapers which rack up strife instead of objectively informing the public.

Ironically, at that time the Howitts were embroiled with John Saunders, the publisher of *The People’s Journal*, of which periodical Howitt was part-proprietor and on which he had served as editor before he launched *Howitt’s Journal*. The Howitts claimed they had been ‘swindled out of [their] hard-earned little capital’ by John Saunders, an accusation he denied.<sup>79</sup> In 1847 Saunders had published *William Howitt and the People’s Journal; An Appeal to the Press and the Public* as a response to Howitt’s accusation of 18 December 1846, which had in turn been followed by ‘William Howitt’s Reply to Mr. Saunders’ Appeal to the Press and the Public’.<sup>80</sup> The battle continued as on 3 June 1848 the Howitts again used the power of the press to attempt influencing their readers against Saunders, printing a page long ‘Address to the Readers of Howitt’s Journal’.<sup>81</sup> As in ‘Christmas Storms and Sunshine’, the press was misused to drum up support for a cause which caused discord. This raises the question: is Gaskell implying in ‘Christmas Storms’ that the Howitts are misusing the press? There is ambiguity whether Gaskell is commenting on the quarrel - but a case can be made to suggest that she is.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p 16.

<sup>79</sup> *Howitt’s Journal*, Vol. 3, 3 June 1848, p. 365.

<sup>80</sup> John Saunders, *William Howitt and the People’s Journal; An Appeal to the Press and the Public* (London: People’s Journal Office, 1847); William Howitt, *William Howitt’s Reply to Mr Saunders’ Appeal to the Press and the Public* (Boston: Belyea, 1847).

<sup>81</sup> *Howitt’s Journal*, Vol. 3, p. 365.



The confrontation between the Howitts and Saunders was very public, and drew the attention of the conservative *Lowe's Edinburgh Magazine and Protestant and Educational Journal*. In April 1847 this 'Monthly Journal, devoted to the cause of Protestantism – Christian Union – Education – Science – Literature – Foreign Intelligence – Political and Religious Movements, &c.' published a nine-page long article entitled 'Modern Popular Literature and Universal Philanthropy' on the troubles between these social reformers.<sup>82</sup> The article is rife with irony, commenting on the extraordinary nature of the 'explosion [...] in the proprietary department of the [...] *People's Journal*', which provides 'so powerful an illustration upon the interior and real condition of that disorganizing confederacy which presents so fair an outside show of union and strength.'<sup>83</sup> Using extracts of the Howitts' and Saunders' publications it demonstrates the ambiguity surrounding the Howitts' position. Their main claims were that though they helped to plan and set up the *People's Journal* alongside engaging contributors and writing numerous contributions, when they decided to leave owing to not feeling sufficiently appreciated, the reimbursement they demanded was denied. Hence their accusation of having been ignored and financially duped by Saunders. He, on the other hand, maintained the Howitts became involved after he had launched the journal, that they had wanted all their contributions inserted without considering the need for variety, and demanded a sum which far exceeded what was legally due. This acrimonious dispute not only undermined the reputation of social reformers and 'periodicals for the people', but it also resulted in strained 'loyalties throughout London's radical publishing world.'<sup>84</sup> Though no letters survive in which she comments on this situation, clearly, Gaskell would have been dismayed.

Women play a crucial role in 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine', as they would later in *Cranford*. Though 'Christmas Storms' lacks the witty detail that pervades 'The Last Generation in England' and the *Cranford* stories, the germ for the later works is certainly present. On a very basic level the stories seem connected: there is Dr Johnson, the conservative mouthpiece, there is a redoubtable Mrs Jenkins (with husband this time), a cat that is always stealing, as well as Amazonian women involved in a Greek tug of war.

At the start of 'Christmas Storms' the wives have their own rivalry, caused by

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<sup>82</sup> *Quarterly Review*, December 1845, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> *Lowe's Edinburgh Magazine*, April 1847, p. 492.

<sup>84</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 171.

jealousy and class prejudice, but eventually they act as peacemakers.<sup>85</sup> The omniscient narrator provides little information on their personalities: Mary Hodgson, pregnant and mother of eighteen-month-old Tom, suffers from feelings of inadequacy and self-reproach, while childless Mrs Jenkins' jealousy and disappointment at not having a child has embittered her. The elderly woman's administrations when little Tom Hodgson contracts croup save the boy's life and illustrates how old and young, regardless of class or religious background, need each other. Following ideas advocated by feminists of the Howitts' circle, Gaskell's story implies that women, through advocating peace and tolerance, may instigate change and benefit the nation.<sup>86</sup> She also depicts the usefulness of *combination* through Mrs Jenkins' offer to babysit Tom. Though the Jenkins are childless and lack prospects, through involvement in the boy's upbringing they help sustain the future.<sup>87</sup> 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' may be read as Gaskell's lesson in the fundamentals of democracy as it provides a vision of citizens who, despite differences of opinion, live together harmoniously.

Theory and practice regarding the war-like state of the editors conjoin in interesting ways. Whereas Gaskell dreamed up a hopeful ending in 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' where the fictional compositors draw closer on recognizing common ground, the altercation between Saunders and the Howitts became increasingly fierce despite their shared concerns about empowering the disenfranchised.<sup>88</sup> In June 1848 Howitt admitted that owing to his public clash with Saunders a 'reaction of feeling has taken place towards ourselves and the Journal', resulting in dwindling readership, fewer contributors, and a breakdown in 'cordial friendship[s]' when people took sides, as Harriet Martineau did.<sup>89</sup> When an initial 'weekly circulation of twenty-five thousand [.. was] reduced to about one-half that circulation' and the creditors of *The People's*

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<sup>85</sup> The double-plot of a political story incorporated within the frame of a domestic tale also exists in *Mary Barton*. Schor notes how throughout the novel scenes of public (political) action are interrupted by private (domestic) pathos. Hilary M. Schor, *Scheherazade in the Marketplace: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>86</sup> Later works depict the importance of godly women to improve the lives of those around them (see chapter two).

<sup>87</sup> Gaskell takes up this idea again in 'Cranford'. Niles argues that Miss Matty's reading of *A Christmas Carol* is suggestive, since it 'speaks to the power of the childless to assist those with more children'. Lisa Niles, 'Malthusian Menopause: Aging and Sexuality in Elizabeth Gaskell's "Cranford"', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 33:1 (2005), 293-310 (p. 299).

<sup>88</sup> *The People's Journal*, volume 4 (1848), for example, contains overlapping themes and causes with *Howitt's Journal*, like the repeated articles on anti-slavery, co-operation, and education, as well as comments on emigration.

<sup>89</sup> William Howitt mentions how Martineau took Saunders' side and henceforth 'refuse[d] to see us, or even to hear what we had to say on the other side.' (*Howitt's Journal*, Vol. 3, p. 365)

*Journal* pressed him for payment, his last resort was to declare bankruptcy.<sup>90</sup> The final edition of *Howitt's Journal* appeared on 24 June 1848. The new proprietor Saunders amalgamated the two periodicals into *The People's and Howitt's Journal* and as the Howitts had no further involvement, it became more conservative and ceased to be 'a platform for more experimental ideas'.<sup>91</sup> It is an ironic ending for a periodical that aimed to promote co-operation and improve human relations.<sup>92</sup>

### **Contributing to *Sartain's Union Magazine*: Wit and the Critical Voice**

Gaskell's international debut story 'The Last Generation in England' appeared anonymously ('by the author of *Mary Barton*') in the July 1849 edition of *Sartain's Union Magazine*, and was 'communicated for *Sartain's Magazine*' by Mary Howitt. It demonstrates the Howitts' continued support to find a medium for Gaskell's stories after their journal folded. The anecdotal 'The Last Generation in England' differs from her contributions to *Howitt's Journal*, but recalls the tone and style of her letters about Cheshire customs which were likewise a collection of fairly unrelated anecdotes coupled with personal comments. Gaskell explains how a chance reading of Robert Southey's intention to write 'a history of English domestic life' had created a wish 'to put upon record some of the details of country town life' observed by herself, or handed down to her (2, p. 91). She underscores that everything 'is strictly and truthfully told without exaggeration' (Ibid.). As in 'Libbie Marsh' and 'Christmas Storms', women are the focal point.

'The Last Generation in England' (July 1849) with its anecdotes of quaint and backward looking customs seems particularly appropriate to bolster a people celebrating their independence from England. Gaskell's description of old-fashioned manners follows *Sartain's Union Magazine's* editor Caroline Kirkland's 'English and American manners', which had appeared in the previous number. Kirkland made fun of pretentiousness, and tried to instil democratic and Christian principles in her readers as well as love for 'this great country of ours'.<sup>93</sup> In her article she argued that as an Englishman's manner relates to his being 'bred to aristocratic ideas', an American who

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 172.

<sup>92</sup> It illustrates how Gaskell reinvented current affairs to make them topics of reflection and discussion.

<sup>93</sup> C.M. Kirkland, 'English and American Manners', *Sartain's Union Magazine*, Vol. 4 (May 1849), pp. 401-06 (p. 401).

‘has done away with all aristocracy but that of merit’ should behave accordingly and remember that the nation is built on ‘professions of equality and brotherhood’.<sup>94</sup> Americans should be proud that in their country ‘[f]or the first time since the creation, is exhibited the spectacle of an equality almost Christian.’<sup>95</sup> The contrast with Gaskell’s Cranfordian ladies could not be greater.

Gaskell introduces a country town to which single daughters of ‘large landed proprietors of very old families’ retired (2, p. 90). These ‘stately ladies’, who set the tone for society, ‘remember[ed] etiquette and precedence in every occurrence of life’ (Ibid.) and refused to associate with former housekeepers since that would have been ‘an acknowledgment of equality’ (2, p. 92). Gaskell sharply contrasts the rich and the poor, but turns the table on her readers’ expectations. In her account the shopkeepers ‘dared to be original’ and give ‘comfortable suppers’ while the ‘aristocratic dames’ were reduced to ‘a supperless turn-out at nine’ (Ibid.). Gaskell’s sketch of how the daughters of the upper class were reduced to practising ‘the most elegant and economical principles’ (Ibid.) while their brother owned the manor and all its accompanying assets pointedly illustrates the injustice of the law of primogeniture.

Interwoven in ‘The Last Generation’ are references to social problems in England and America. When Gaskell describes two Earl’s daughters who abhorred the name of Washington, she gives the readers food for thought by humorously remarking that these ladies’ brother-in-law, a General, had been ‘more distinguished for a successful comedy, than for his mode of conducting the war in America.’ (4, p. 94) Though apparently a jocular observation, Gaskell may be overtly challenging the (still current) system in which men could buy a commission in the armed forces, resulting in army commanders with impeccable breeding, but little military experience and ability.<sup>96</sup> Another anecdote about Mohocks cleverly connects social conditions in eighteenth-century England with current civic problems in America. Gaskell’s ‘Amazonian town’ is periodically in a state of war, when its young men ‘whip’ ‘ladies returning from the card-parties’ (2, p. 92), a habit she compares to ‘those of the Mohawks a century before’

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 403.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 402.

<sup>96</sup> During the Crimean war the extent of the incompetence of a number of commanders due to this system would become apparent. Gaskell’s civic consciousness helps her pinpoint problems in society; as had been the case with her observations on problems among the working classes in *Mary Barton*, which had been completed a year prior to the 1848 Revolutions, but as she wrote in the Preface in October 1848, ‘received some confirmation from [recent] events’ (5, p. 7).

(Ibid.). Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* defines the Mohawk (or 'Mohock') as 'the name of a cruel nation of America given to ruffians who infested, or rather were imagined to infest, the streets of London', raising the question why Gaskell referred to them.<sup>97</sup> I suggest that, as with her pseudonym, Gaskell may be deliberately playing on the two meanings. Overtly referring to the English Mohocks, Gaskell would have identified them to her American audience as the tribe of Native Americans. Curley demonstrates that eighteenth-century travel documentaries aimed to make readers compare foreign and domestic manners, resulting in their drawing conclusions on manners and morals in their own country.<sup>98</sup> Besides being invited to poke fun at absurd English customs, with her wordplay Gaskell may have wanted to challenge the readers of *Sartain's* to reflect on their own treatment of Native Americans. A surprising facet of Gaskell's humorous autobiographical piece emerges here. Still, considered in the context of this thesis, it is not remarkable. This is quintessential Gaskell: she encourages self-reflection.

Gaskell making an Amazonian town the focus of attention raises further questions, as the women depicted in 'The Last Generation in England', marginalized ladies whose birth or marriage had earlier placed them at the forefront of society, seem anything but warlike. While here she just reflects on communities of women, in subsequent stories she overtly talks about the role of women.

'The Last Generation' may be read as Gaskell's own private joke in which she denotes the transition of 'the last generation' to a new generation of English Amazons, the women's rights activists of the Howitts' circle (herself included), as both generations adhere to principles of co-operation, association and domesticity. The last generation's demise may be attributed to their lack of vision, for they insist on living in the past, are profoundly class-conscious, ignorant of society at large, and reliant on men to solve social problems, whereas the new generation looks to the future, desires to improve the lot of all women, practically undertakes to solve social problems, and fights for their ideals.

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<sup>97</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 4 Vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), III; More information on the Mohocks is given in Daniel Statt, 'The Case of the Mohocks: Rake Violence in Augustan London', *Social History*, 20 (1995), 179-99.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2009).

By invoking Samuel Johnson's translation of the history of the Amazons Gaskell adds some civic lessons as the rise of Johnson's Amazons is not only attributed to unity but also to the queen's ruling that girls be carefully educated.<sup>99</sup> As seen earlier, the radical Unitarian women's activists consider education to be the panacea which will transform women's lives and society.<sup>100</sup> In effect, by inspiring and equipping a new generation of strong reform-minded Amazons Mary Howitt helps sustain progress on gender equality and averts the disaster of the original Amazons, who reverted to 'their original subordination' when after the queen's demise 'no woman of equal spirit or capacity' seized the throne.<sup>101</sup> The Howitts' circle of radical Unitarians proved a 'training ground' for future women's rights leaders like Leigh Smith and Rayner Parkes, as they represented the 'new generation of activists [who] drew upon the intellectual pabulum of the older writers, whom they had idolized in the 1840s', and who in years to come they continued to rely on for encouragement and advice.<sup>102</sup> 'The Last Generation' may not include a direct reference to this new generation, but their vision and ideas pervade Gaskell's work, as chapter two will demonstrate.

The Howitts helped Gaskell find her voice. They shared a Dissenting heritage, social consciousness and interest in the Romantics, and as seasoned writers and 'radicals' they served as a sounding board for her ideas. Moreover, by introducing Gaskell to their reform-minded friends, they increased her knowledge of social matters, as letter exchanges with, for example, Eliza Fox and Anna Jameson show. The Howitts not only aided Gaskell's first foray into the international marketplace, they provided a model for weaving English, European and American political, religious and social causes into her narratives. They in effect helped Gaskell define herself as a 'citizen of the world' writer.

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<sup>99</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. XI, 1741, pp. 202-08 (article attributed to Dr Johnson by Boswell): 'A Dissertation on the Amazons, from the History of the Amazons, written in French by the Abbé de Guyon'.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, pp. 182-83.

## Chapter 2: 1850–1856 Battling Patriarchal Notions

This chapter explores how through form, experiment and narration Gaskell created new perspectives on the Woman Question. Though using a variety of genres, the short stories offer a unified view of how Gaskell's consciousness of civic duty developed between 1850 and 1856. Gaskell's style developed partly thanks to master story writer Dickens' editorial comments, while emotionally inspiring conversations with her new acquaintance Charlotte Brontë, coupled with thought-provoking interaction with the Nightingale family at whose house she composed part of *North and South*, helped her more fully appreciate the hardships of single middle-class women. Furthermore, first-hand experience gained in philanthropic activities in aid of distressed gentlewomen and fallen women translates into her stories. It is a reminder of the texture of rational Dissent with its overlapping networks, which Uglow terms a 'mesh of connections'.<sup>1</sup> In Rubenius' view Gaskell's social influence was limited, arguing that '[...] characteristically, she contented herself with pointing out the evils, and left it to others to suggest the necessary reforms.'<sup>2</sup> This is not borne out by the short stories, which demonstrate that Gaskell was well informed and occasionally ahead of her time, pointing out women's need for a mission in life as early as 1850, and repeatedly suggesting nursing as a viable and respectable occupation for women before Florence Nightingale made it socially acceptable.

After the folding of *Howitts' Journal of Literature and Popular Progress* and the publication of *Mary Barton* Gaskell became involved in *Household Words*, Dickens' newly established periodical. To her it may have seemed like exchanging one journal of popular progress for another, as Dickens had described the aim of his weekly periodical in similar terms to the Howitts had done in 1847: 'the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social conditions.'<sup>3</sup> Both periodicals aimed at a cross-class readership, described past and present, focused on progress in the present age, and underlined their international perspective. '[T]he sense of the past has a peculiar oppressiveness' in Gaskell's shorter fiction, but as she tends to lighten the

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<sup>1</sup> Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> Aina Rubenius, *The Woman Question*, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Jenny Hartley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 210. Letter dated 31 January 1850.

mood by showing how conditions improve over time, her narratives fit in well with Dickens's 'politics of national progress', evident in *Household Words* through its improving motif, which similarly permeated journals of popular progress.<sup>4</sup> Anne Lorhrli's analysis of *Household Words* as containing 'material of social import, informational articles and material for entertainment' also applied to *Howitt's Journal*.<sup>5</sup> In fact, in the Preliminary Word to the first issue of *Household Words* Dickens alludes to the importance of *Howitt's Journal* as one of the 'tillers of the field into which we now come, [that] have been before us', whose 'high usefulness [he] readily acknowledge[s].'<sup>6</sup> Still, *Household Words* was less overtly political and somewhat lighter in tone as the Hungry Forties were past, and Dickens aimed to 'cherish the light of Fancy'.<sup>7</sup>

Gaskell's early contributions to *Household Words* resemble her stories for *Howitt's Journal* in their use of simple language, a straightforward Christian and social message, and easy-to-follow narrative. The stories published in 1850 differ greatly from later ones. As d'Albertis notes, these early short stories 'represent problems of reform in terms of individual lives and character development' while later ones 'advance a more comprehensive overview of social organization.'<sup>8</sup> In 'Lizzie Leigh' (30 March, 6 and 13 April 1850) Gaskell addresses the problem of the fallen woman in a tale in which recently widowed Anne Leigh and her sons Will and Tom temporarily move from the countryside to Manchester in search of lost daughter Lizzie. Published later that year, 'The Well of Penmorfa' (16 - 23 November 1850) explores the problem of abandoned single women, and illustrates woman's fitness to provide home-based primary care for invalids and the mentally ill, while 'The Heart of John Middleton' (28 December 1850) depicts the harshness of patriarchal society, and denounces its intolerance and unforgiveness.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Terence Wright, *'We Are Not Angels': Realism, Gender, Values* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 185; Sally Ledger, 'Household Words, Politics and the Mass Market in the 1850s' in *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 168-92.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Lorhrli as quoted by Alan Shelston in *Works of Elizabeth Gaskell*, Volume 2, p. xvii.

<sup>6</sup> *Household Words*, Vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Deirdre d'Albertis, *Disassembling Fictions*, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Howitt wrote to Gaskell on 20 October 1849 suggesting, 'Perhaps you can send me the article - for I presume it is already written and is one of the many manuscripts which lie in a certain desk drawer, & may have lain there for years'. As the story is set in Wales where Gaskell spent her honeymoon, Shattock argues that this may be one of these early stories (1, p. 157).



This chapter considers ‘Our Society at Cranford’ (13 December 1851) as a standalone short story and suggests that the form helps appreciate Gaskell’s civic message. Critical reviews tend to consider the tale as part of the novel, but as Uglow states, the story ‘is complete in itself’.<sup>10</sup> Hence Gaskell’s clarification to Ruskin, ‘I never meant to write more, so killed Capt. Brown very much against my will.’<sup>11</sup> Considering the story on its own solves apparent inconsistencies in the novel, like the opening statement which states that while women are in possession, gentlemen are absent from Cranford. Though not directly commenting on the opening statement, Foster sees *Cranford* as ‘an interweaving of visions which look forward as well as backward’.<sup>12</sup> This thesis also contends that the stories of the past reflect on the present and future. Despite having a divergent style and tone from previous narratives, in the ‘Cranford’ stories Gaskell not only revisits the concept of women’s marginalization in patriarchal society, but also incorporates the plight of the fallen woman. This chapter builds on Huber’s argument that *Cranford* contains ‘an undercurrent of social commentary’ which, had they recognized it, ‘might have been profoundly disturbing to the patriarchal establishment’.<sup>13</sup>

While in *Cranford* Gaskell comments on women’s position in society in a subtle and witty way, in ‘Morton Hall’ and ‘The Poor Clare’, novellas with a darker tone, Gaskell employs narrators who play crucial parts in the story, and whose observations draw out civic problems women have to contend with. Though distinctly different in form, setting, and type of character, in ‘Morton Hall’ (19 and 26 Nov. 1853) and ‘The Poor Clare’ (13, 20, and 27 December 1856) Gaskell’s use of unreliable narrators forces the reader to challenge what they are reading, and decide on what is truth. ‘Morton Hall’ relates the history of four generations of women of the Morton family and the hardship they endured due to the absence of legislation to effectively protect women. ‘The Poor Clare’, a gothic story set in the eighteenth century, intertwines accounts of the trials of gentlewoman Lucy and her working-class grandmother, and re-examines the intolerance of English society towards unmarried mothers and their offspring. Written while researching the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, this powerful,

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<sup>10</sup> Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 282.

<sup>11</sup> [?Late February 1865], *Letters*, p. 748. Foster argues that even at that early stage ‘the story had claimed a hold on her.’ See Shirley Foster, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> Shirley Foster, *A Literary Life*, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Caroline P. Huber, “‘Heroic Pioneers’: The Ladies of Cranford”, *GJ*, 21 (2007), 38-49.

disturbing narrative may be seen to incorporate elements of Gaskell's late friend's life and work. I suggest that this complex novella is the culmination point in which Gaskell provides a temporary conclusion to a variety of women-related-concerns she had broached in her early narratives.

Contributing to *Household Words* changed the way Gaskell wrote and how her work was perceived. Importantly, periodicals provided food for thought in the family home, with the intervals between installments offering time to 'forecast[], interpret[] and discuss[] an ongoing literary work.'<sup>14</sup> This chapter builds on Duthie's arguments that for Gaskell form was subservient to purpose, that what she wrote was underpinned by her faith, and that she kept repeating 'the same basic themes'.<sup>15</sup> By using different genres Gaskell veils the recurrence of certain civic themes, but promotes a continuing dialogue about the condition of England. In order to contextualize her stories and elucidate the relation between her practical activities and literary output, this chapter will first place woman's social position in a historical context, and discuss Gaskell's philanthropic activities relating to the welfare of disenfranchised women. Then the role of *Household Words*' editor Dickens on Gaskell's creative and stylistic development is explored, followed by close readings of multiple short stories as well as *Ruth* and *North and South*, that depict injustices women endured over the centuries – evils which were, in fact, still current. Importantly, all narratives combine to strengthen public discourse on the Woman Question.

### **Gaskell and the Woman Question**

As discussed in the previous chapter, Gaskell was part of the radical Unitarian circle surrounding the Howitts and its influence may be observed in her literary output. During the early 1850s these activists were not only involved in philanthropic activities to help marginalized women, but they also circulated a profusion of publications advocating enfranchisement, education, property rights, and justice in the marriage and

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<sup>14</sup> Linda Hughes and Michael Lund, *Victorian Publishing*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Enid Duthie, *Themes*, pp. 181, 201.

divorce laws. Gaskell actively participated in the intellectual debate through her stories, and engaged in several charitable causes.<sup>16</sup>

Education was the main priority of the radical Unitarian women's rights activists. In 1854 Bessie Rayner Parkes' *Remarks on the Education of Girls* was published, as well as Anna Mary Howitt's *An Art-Student in Munich*, which revealed how gender restrictions imposed by the Royal Academy forced women interested in pursuing the fine arts to find training opportunities abroad.<sup>17</sup> The following year Anna Jameson's *Sisters of Charity: Catholic and Protestant, Abroad and at Home* similarly identified oppressive restrictions English women were subjected to.<sup>18</sup> Jameson posited that though Florence Nightingale, who had by then achieved national recognition, was 'in a position which gave her social influence to overcome the obstacles of custom and prejudice', many English women who had a similar sense of duty and charitable feelings lacked the skills and experience needed to fulfil a demanding task.<sup>19</sup> By pointing out that Nightingale had spent years in study and training – but not in any school 'that England affords to her daughters' – she expounded the necessity for proper educational facilities for English women.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, she posited that Nightingale's willingness to relinquish the splendours of her luxurious home should not be marvelled at since many English women, whose enforced idleness was causing 'a slow wasting disease of body and mind', would rejoice to be sent on some mission of mercy.<sup>21</sup> After

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<sup>16</sup> Kathryn Gleadle (*The Early Feminists*, p. 184) notes that literature was especially geared towards developing new ideas about 'woman', noting the work of radical Unitarian feminists like Mathilda Hays and Meteyard who meted out women's qualities, and their ability for hard work.

<sup>17</sup> Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Patricia Zakreski, eds, *What is a Woman to Do?: A Reader on Women, Work and Art, c. 1830-1890* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 134. According to Mary Howitt it had been Gaskell's idea to publish the book. In 1850, while Anna Mary Howitt was studying in Germany, her mother had shown Gaskell some of her writings, drawing from Gaskell the idea that on the girl's return to England she might 'collect and publish [her] letters in a volume – a sort of "Art Life in Munich"' (Mary Howitt, *Autobiography*, p. 66).

<sup>18</sup> See J.J.S. Wharton, *An Exposition of the Laws Relating to the Women of England, Showing Their Rights, Remedies and Responsibilities* (London: Longman, 1853); Bessie Rayner Parkes, *Remarks on the Education of Girls* (London: Chapman, 1854).

<sup>19</sup> Anna Jameson, *Sisters of Charity: Catholic and Protestant, Abroad and at Home* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1855), p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 91. Nightingale had received training among the Sisters of Mercy in Paris and the Deaconesses in Kaiserswerth.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 92. In fact, before her parents gave her permission to follow her calling as nurse, Nightingale's own 'health worsened under the strain of idleness.' In a private note, possibly written in 1851, she cried out to God 'in anguish and utter hopelessness – why didst make me what I am?' *Ever Yours, Florence Nightingale: Selected Letters*, ed. by Martha Vicinus and Bea Nergaard (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 39, 45. Nightingale's

reading Jameson's 'lecture' Gaskell thanked her for her 'noble end and true ideas'.<sup>22</sup> In 1856 Jameson's *The Communion of Labour* reiterated the need for enlightened education and the advantages of training women for social employments. She pleaded for women to be allowed an occupation.

Around 1854 laws unjust towards women became a further focal point of the women's rights' campaign, as in Barbara Leigh-Smith Bodichon's *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women*, which made an earlier work by J.J.S. Wharton accessible to a wider public. The theme of unjust laws was given a human face with the publication of *Caroline Norton's Defence: English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century*, which caused a public outcry as – taking her own life as an example – Norton criticized the English law which failed to protect wives against profligate, abusive husbands. She called for a reform of the laws of marriage, which specified that children and earnings are the husband's property, and divorce. All this activity on behalf of women resulted in March 1856 in a petition for Women's Property Rights spearheaded by Mary Howitt, Anna Jameson and their friends. Though Gaskell did 'not think it is very definite, and pointed; or that it will do much good, [...] she decided to sign since 'our sex is badly enough used and legislated against'.<sup>23</sup>

Gaskell's literary and social activities can be seen to inform each other, as after publishing *Cranford* and *Ruth* she became practically involved with the 'Hospital for Sick Ladies'. In April 1853 she expressed an interest in becoming a 'corresponding member' - distributing information and acting as a reference - for the Establishment for Invalid Gentlewomen of Moderate Means, also known as 'Establishment for Invalid Gentlewomen' and 'Institution for the Care of Sick Gentlewomen in Distressed Circumstances'. Gaskell promised to 'do all in [her] power to make it known'.<sup>24</sup> It had been established in April 1850 in Upper Harley Street, London, and provided for

The wives, daughters, and relatives of clergymen, naval, military, and professional men, governesses, artists, and ladies depending for support upon their own exertions[...] – persons of cultivated minds and sensitive feelings, reduced to

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'Cassandra' (1852), an unpublished autobiographical essay explicating the stultifying results of upper class women's domestic confinement, supports Jameson's ideas.

<sup>22</sup> *Further Letters*, [?12 April 1855], p. 132. See also *Letters*, p. 338 which illustrates Jameson's influence on Gaskell as the latter states, 'you don't know the good you have done me in your life-time'.

<sup>23</sup> To Eliza Fox, [c. 1 Jan. 1856], *Letters*, p. 379.

<sup>24</sup> To Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 7 April 1853, *Letters*, p. 228. Lady Kay-Shuttleworth seems to have invited Gaskell to get involved.

comparative poverty.<sup>25</sup>

A letter written to 'the Editress of *The Belle Assemblée*' denotes its significance since, whereas hospitals and dispensaries were available to the poor, for 'a more educated class' 'in *their* hour of need, there exists at present no relief, no provision.'<sup>26</sup> As Florence Nightingale was the superintendent of the Establishment from July 1853 until her departure for the Crimea in 1854, Gaskell may have made her acquaintance here.<sup>27</sup> In her charitable activities for the Establishment some aspects of *Cranford* (a concern for impoverished gentlewomen) and *Ruth* (the notion of making nursing an honourable profession) are interlinked.

Another philanthropic activity Gaskell was involved in was an emigration scheme for fallen women, an interest originally triggered by a message Dickens sent her sometime during the 1840s.<sup>28</sup> Gaskell was aware that Dickens and Angela Burdett-Coutts had set up Urania Cottage where a group of thirteen specially selected girls were given moral and practical support to re-enter society and make a fresh start overseas.<sup>29</sup> So, recalling his long-term involvement with fallen women, she contacted him on 12 January 1850 to solicit advice regarding sixteen-year-old Pasley, the daughter of an Irish clergyman whose sad story of neglect, seduction and eventual incarceration in Manchester's New Bayley Prison had inspired her and Eliza Fox to pool their resources to help her emigrate.<sup>30</sup> Pasley became the inspiration for *Ruth*, showing again how Gaskell intertwined her literary and philanthropic activities. With *Ruth* Gaskell was 'one of the very first Victorian writers of fiction openly to attack the generally accepted double moral in sexual matters', which - coupled with a lack of Christianity - she considered 'wholly responsible for prostitution itself.'<sup>31</sup> Gaskell had established her

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Bence Jones, F. Weber and W. Bowman, 'The Establishment for Invalid Gentlewomen', *The Lancet, A Journal of British and Foreign Medicine, Physiology, Surgery, Chemistry, Criticism, Literature, and News*, 23 November 1850, p. 591.

<sup>26</sup> Caroline Frances, 'Asylum for Invalid Gentlewomen during Temporary Illness', *The New Monthly Belle Assemblée*, February 1849. pp. 123-24 (p.123).

<sup>27</sup> *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale: The Nightingale School*, ed. by Lynn McDonald (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), pp. 60-61.

<sup>28</sup> To Dickens, 8 January [1850], *Letters*, p. 99.

<sup>29</sup> The House had been established in 1846. See Jenny Hartley, *Dickens and the House of Fallen Women* (London: Methuen, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> To Eliza Fox, 26 November 1849, *Letters*, p. 91. Also, to Eliza Fox, [22?] 24 January 1850, *Letters*, p. 101. Pasley is believed to have inspired *Ruth*. See Hilary Schor, *Scheherazade*, p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> Aina Rubenius, *The Woman Question*, p. 188; Monica C. Fryckstedt, *A Challenge to Christian England*, p. 141.

own network to support fallen women and, accompanied by her friend Agnes Ewart, she visited prisons and refuge homes in Manchester.<sup>32</sup> Her confirmation to Dickens that ‘we can pay all her expenses &c’, suggests that hers was a fairly well organized effort, involving a number of wealthy patrons. This is borne out by a letter to Mary Cowden Clarke, in which Gaskell indicated that there were enough wealthy Mancunians who were willing to donate for a good cause. What exasperated her, however, was the fact that people’s modus operandi was ‘spare my time, but take my money’.<sup>33</sup> She viewed ‘moneygiving as a lazy \way of serving others/, often impertinent, and most often injurious to character’, and considered ‘individual intercourse, & earnest conscientious thought for others’ much more beneficial.<sup>34</sup>

Shortly after Dickens came to her assistance, on 31 January 1850, he in turn dispatched a missive requesting her help for *Household Words*, his new cheap weekly journal of general literature. As Dickens had assured Gaskell that ‘every paper will be published without any signature’, she felt some freedom to explore the topic of the fallen woman, considered scandalous by many contemporaries.<sup>35</sup>

### **Dickens’s Literary Influence**

Dickens not only helped Gaskell develop her charitable pursuits, his editorial comments proved formative for her as a writer. As John Drew notes, Dickens was continually adopting unconventional modes of writing, combining articles on urgent social questions with comic sketches, moral essays, amateur inspector’s reports, satire, songs, travelling letters, political spoofs, and multi-authored Christmas Numbers.<sup>36</sup> Besides that, he experimented ‘with modes of representing speech, conversation, dialogue and monologue, both interior and dramatic.’<sup>37</sup> While the Howitts had provided encouragement and opened doors, Dickens was a more directive ‘conductor’, with strong ideas concerning the content of his periodical. Ellen Casey, quoting Phillip Collins, notes that the ‘inky fishing nets’ which emerged from Dickens’s editorial desk

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<sup>32</sup> *Letters*, pp. 91, 101. Fittingly, part of the proceeds of ‘Lizzie Leigh’, Gaskell’s first story on a fallen woman, were used for ‘the Refuge’ (*Letters*, p. 113).

<sup>33</sup> To Mary Cowden Clarke, [?23 May 1852], *Letters*, p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>35</sup> *Letters of Charles Dickens 1833-1870*, ed. by Georgina Hogarth and Mary Dickens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 213.

<sup>36</sup> John M.L. Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Gordonville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 169.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

as corrected copy were proverbial.<sup>38</sup> She also comments on ‘Dickens’ insistence on showing - using dialogue and action – rather than telling.<sup>39</sup> In fact, soon after joining Dickens in his venture Gaskell’s work begins to show a distinct change in this respect.

Dickens’ editorial suggestions helped Gaskell develop her creativity and versatility. Annette Hopkins, in her portrayal of Dickens and Gaskell’s relationship, notes that Dickens proposed a free exchange of critical opinion, which at the outset tended to mean Gaskell’s acceptance of his stylistic suggestions.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, their letter exchange furnished Gaskell with crucial first-hand insight into Dickens’s masterful narrative techniques. For example, for Lizzie Leigh ‘he urge[d] an important alteration in the denouement, in the interest of natural behaviour and dramatic effectiveness’, arguing that instead of Lizzie abandoning her illegitimate child completely, she must ‘put it into the arms of Susan’ as that would ‘do Lizzie an immense service’.<sup>41</sup> Gaskell duly made the alterations. Clearly, theatrically-talented Dickens understood how by describing small gestures he could develop characters into three-dimensional lifelike figures which inspired the readers’ compassion. The letters further reveal Dickens’ audience awareness, as he considers the death of John Middleton’s wife ‘an unnecessary infliction of pain upon the reader’ and superfluous for the story. Soon, however, Gaskell began to gain confidence in her style and message, and at times opposed Dickens’s proposed changes. Perhaps her protracted outside activities on behalf of women had provided her with clearer ideas of how to address women’s problems, as her practical and literary activities on behalf of women dovetail at this time.

### **From ‘Lizzie Leigh’ to *Ruth*: Jobs for Women, Fallen Women and Illegitimate Children**

‘Lizzie Leigh’ was the lead story of the first number of *Household Words*, and immediately followed Dickens’ Preliminary Word, in which Dickens expressed his intended focus on ‘fancy’. Recchio notes the juxtaposition of this aim and the somber tone of ‘Lizzie Leigh’, but concludes that Gaskell’s story was probably placed first

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<sup>38</sup> Ellen Casey, “‘That Specially Trying Mode of Publication’: Dickens as Editor of the Weekly Serial”, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 14:3 (1981), 93-101.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>40</sup> Annette B. Hopkins, ‘Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 9:4 (1946), 357-85.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

because it was ‘the most apt statement [...] to capture the essence of [Dickens’s] ambitions.’<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, John Drew argues that Dickens ‘viewed his leader-writing in *Household Words* in context of the journal’s overall response and that of the press in general to the national scene.’<sup>43</sup> This might indicate that Dickens gave ‘Lizzie Leigh’ pride of place not only in acknowledgement of a shared concern for the fallen woman, but also because he considered the public ready to contemplate this social issue.

‘Lizzie Leigh’ describes how the social fabric of patriarchal society encourages women’s downward spiral. Though living happily with her parents on the farm, Lizzie’s father sends her to Manchester to ‘learn to rough it’ (1, p.142). Unprotected and unprepared for this transition she is led astray, following which her employer dismisses her, her father cuts her off, and even the workhouse, to which she had turned in desperation, forces her out because, though a nursing mother, she was able-bodied and expected to find employment. She therefore needed a carer for her child and found one in compassionate Susan Palmer who ‘[had] heard what workhouse bringing up is’ (1, p. 143). This remark is loaded. It touches on the tragedy of the illegitimate child, which Victorians tended to view as ‘tainted with sin’.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, innumerable illegitimate children ended up in baby-farms, first denounced by Dickens in *Oliver Twist* (1839), where many met an early death through starvation, cold and abuse.<sup>45</sup> Gaskell the realist condition-of-England writer had no recourse but to kill off baby Nanny, as her morally upright contemporaries excluded such from society. They still had to learn that ‘[g]oodness is not goodness unless there is mercy and tenderness with it’ (1, p.152).

Job Leigh’s deathbed forgiveness of his daughter breaks the bonds that kept his indignant but powerless wife tied to the home, and enables her to restore her daughter to her proper place. Emily Jane Morris argues that ‘Gaskell saw the re-evaluation and rescue of the fallen woman [...] as the duty of womankind’, and notes that after the loss of her husband Mrs Leigh transforms from a timid woman into ‘an action-heroine’ who

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Recchio, *Elizabeth Gaskell’s Cranford: A Publishing History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> John Drew, *Dickens the Journalist*, p. 117.

<sup>44</sup> As Rubenius notes, in ‘Lizzie Leigh’ Susan’s father thinks of Lizzie’s child as ‘tainted with sin’. Exclaiming, ‘To think of Susan having to do with such a child!’ Anna Rubenius, *The Woman Question*, p. 181.

<sup>45</sup> Paid a lump sum down at the start of their ‘care’, it was lucrative for those running the baby farms to kill off their charge as quickly as possible. In fact, only with the 1897 Infant Protection Act did the government decide to act in the interest of illegitimate children and actively oppose baby farming.



perseveres until she is reunited with her daughter.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Marie Williams points out Anne Leigh's paternalistic role as she initiates her family's move to Manchester, and stays out late searching for Lizzie.<sup>47</sup> Importantly, she adopts the role of spiritual leader after her husband's demise. She teaches her sons a lesson in forgiveness by making them read the story of the prodigal son and warns Will not to censure his sister about 'her sin' but to help one 'who was lost and is found' (1, p. 147). Transformed from 'meek, imploring gentle mother' to 'firm and dignified, [...] the interpreter of God's will' (1, p. 147), Anne Leigh is empowered in her fight for her prodigal daughter. As in Gaskell's next two stories for *Household Words*, she describes the moral and social strength of an upright Christian woman who follows Christ's command to forgive sinners.

'The Well of Penmorfa', published on 16 and 23 November 1850, is composed of two tales about abandoned women. First, Gaskell sketches the dramatic life-story of a nameless local girl who returned home pregnant after a year in service, and subsequently spent her life caring for her deformed and crippled child. With this anecdote she floats the idea of fallen women becoming accepted in society, which she would further develop in *Ruth*, by describing how the mother's dignified sorrow, patient love and endurance won her neighbours' respect and '[they] would fain have been friends' (1, p. 160). The second tale relates how Nest Gwynn's fiancé deserts her when a fall leaves her crippled. An itinerant Methodist preacher's counsel to deny her own sorrows, 'love like Christ; without thought of self, or wish for return' (1, p. 171) ultimately helps her overcome her depression and apathy. She finds her life's mission in caring for the needy, and sheltering Mary, a 'half-witted woman' (1, p. 172). Though shaken by adversity, Gaskell's heroines learn to be strong and make a difference in the lives of those put in their care.

Gaskell describes how people's misconceptions about the humanity of lunatics resulted in cruel behaviour. This is illustrated in John Griffith's care of Mary for, though paid by the Parish for her upkeep, he regularly beat and kept her without food 'to try and tame her' (Ibid.). Problems in the treatment of half-witted people are also at the heart of 'Martha Preston' (February 1850), published in *Sartain's Union Magazine*,

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<sup>46</sup> Emily Jane Morris, "'Ready to Hear and to Help': Female Agency and the Reclamation of the Fallen Woman in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Lizzie Leigh'", *GJ*, 23 (2009), 40-53, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Marie Fitzwilliams, 'The Politics Behind the Angel: Separate Spheres in Elizabeth Gaskell's "Lizzie Leigh"', *GJ*, 8 (1994), 15-27 (p. 17).

in which the heroine makes great personal sacrifices to prevent ‘her idiot brother’ (1, p. 124) from being ‘shut up in an asylum’ (1, p. 123). Following the Christian precept to aid the needy, Nest visits the Parish offices and offers to provide Mary with room and board, charging the same fee as Griffiths.

Significantly, Nest receives payment for her care of a lunatic, as Lizzie Leigh pays Susan Palmer for childcare and Ruth receives high wages as matron of the fever ward. Gaskell argues for a radical change in how the health services are run: to allow women paid employment in the nursing profession, and to change the way nursing is undertaken. *Ruth* makes a point of this as Faith Benson’s initial opposition to Ruth’s wish to become a nurse expresses contemporary notions that this kind of employment is unsuitable for educated and refined women. Ruth’s response echoes Gaskell and Nightingale’s opinion to the contrary, ‘I feel as if all my education would be needed to make me a good sick nurse’ (6, p. 287). Moreover, she reasons, ‘Would you not rather be nursed by a person who spoke gently and moved quietly about than by a loud bustling woman?’ (Ibid.). Gaskell drew on ideas discussed within the Howitts’ circle on how single women could make an honest living, and explored the feasibility of women as paid carers in the medical profession, bringing fulfilment to themselves and benefiting society.<sup>48</sup>

In ‘The Heart of John Middleton’ (28 December 1850) the eponymous hero’s struggle for social acceptance resembles the difficulties illegitimate children encounter as outcasts owing to the sins of a parent. Gaskell attacks her compatriots’ prejudice and intolerance, and calls for Christian forgiveness. Like the previous stories in which she evoked Christ’s characteristics - ‘Lizzie Leigh’ illustrates seeking and saving the lost, while ‘Penmorfa’ exemplifies loving like Christ - in ‘John Middleton’ Gaskell highlights the redemption of sins through forgiveness. Though a minor character, like

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<sup>48</sup> Gaskell continued to push at doors of opportunity for women. In *My Lady Ludlow* (1858) ‘the fact that [...] changes are unrevolutionary, though quite significant, is an index of Gaskell’s subtlety in normalizing middle-class women’s work as of a piece with professionalizing trends and ideals normative to men.’ Susan E. Colón, ‘Professional Frontiers in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *My Lady Ludlow*’, in *The Professional Ideal in the Victorian Novel: The Works of Disraeli, Trollope, Gaskell and Eliot* (Gordonville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 75-96 (p.76).

Anne Leigh and Nest Gwynn, Middleton's frail and crippled wife Nelly establishes herself as a force for good due to her godly character.

Gaskell introduces the idea of being accursed by society, a theme she would revisit repeatedly over the years.<sup>49</sup> John Middleton grows up with an abusive father who ultimately has to flee the country as a convicted murderer, imprinting on him the belief that he was of a 'doomed race' (1, p. 180), for though he strove to break free of the curse of his family name and acquire a good character for the sake of God-fearing Nelly, people persisted in condemning him for his father's sins. This idea is revisited in *Ruth*, where similar wording is used in an anecdote inserted into the main narrative which describes how Thomas Wilkins's face took on a 'Cain-like look' 'as the obnoxious word in the baptismal registry told him that he must go forth branded into the world' with 'every man's [hand] against him' (6, p. 90). He chose to go to sea and drown rather than face his shame.

Middleton, who by the time he narrates his life-story seems to have become an itinerant preacher, repeatedly refers to the work of Christ, the model of civic duty for Unitarians. His attendance of a 'hill-side preaching' where a 'ranter' addresses a motley crowd is a tacit reminder of the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' compassion for the social outcasts, 'care-worn, diseased, sorrowful, criminal' (1, p. 190). The story appeared around Christmas time, as Gaskell ironically points out when John, out in the cold scavenging for his starving family, hears the peal of church-bells heralding in the festive season. As in the previous stories, Christian forgiveness is a key theme. It is repeatedly referred to, as when John first hears about God through Nelly's recital of the Lord's Prayer with its plea for forgiveness and a promise to forgive others. Moreover, when Nelly lies on her deathbed looking like 'an angel, full of patience and happy faith' (1, p. 195) she persuades him to forgive the man he considered the bane of his life. Like Anne Leigh, Nelly is depicted as the spiritual leader in the family. The editorial interaction and relationship between Dickens and Gaskell again came to the fore when Dickens opposed Nelly's death, instead suggesting she could continue to be a good influence on her husband. Hopkins notes that Gaskell would have complied, which would have meant moving away from relying on death as a plot strategy, but that his message did not find her before the press started rolling.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Works discussed in chapter three, notably 'The Accursed Race', further explore this notion.

<sup>50</sup> Annette Hopkins, 'Dickens and Mrs Gaskell', pp. 361-62.

Ideas of sin and shame expressed in ‘John Middleton’ would be revisited in *Ruth* (1853) where Gaskell further denounces the hypocrisy and injustice of society. Volume I Chapter XI records a long conversation between Thurstan and Faith Benson, which entirely focuses on the question how illegitimate children should be viewed. Thurstan may be seen to voice Gaskell’s opinion, which is juxtaposed with those of the average Victorian, expressed by Faith. Thurstan argues for the social acceptance of illegitimate children, noting that society’s treatment makes them miserable, ‘innocent as they are’ (6, p. 89). He doubts this is ‘the will of God’ and admonishes not to ‘confuse the consequences with the sin’ (Ibid). His radical ‘new ideas’ of rejoicing over the birth of an illegitimate child, as he considers each child ‘a blessing from God’, are rejected by his sister who considers such notions ‘questionable morality’ (Ibid) – the same accusation Gaskell would encounter on *Ruth*’s release. Thurstan’s outcry, ‘[D]o not accuse me of questionable morality, when I am trying more than ever I did in my life to act as my blessed Lord would have done’ (Ibid.) may indicate how close to Gaskell’s heart this topic is – while it also reflects on her fears concerning the reception of her novel.

Apart from moral lessons, Gaskell inserts a dose of sarcasm as when Bradshaw, on realizing Lennard was born out of wedlock denounces him for having been ‘stained and marked with sin from his birth’ (6, p. 252). As such he completely overlooks the Christian doctrine of Original Sin, which holds that all human beings are born sinful.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, while this ostensibly pious Christian disregards Christian precepts, ‘fallen’ Ruth explains them to her son, impressing upon him God’s love and righteousness and that ‘it is only your own sin that can make you an outcast from God’ (6, p. 256). Gaskell uses parts of the basic Christian creed to condemn the self-righteous and encourage the downtrodden.

### **Turning the Tables: The Fallen Man in Matriarchal Society**

‘Our Society at Cranford’, the lead story on 13 December 1851, appeared just months after the 1851 Census which revealed the problem of surplus women, illustrating Gaskell’s engagement with emerging social problems and her quick response in the way

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<sup>51</sup> Unitarians reject the doctrine of Original Sin.

she knew best: by telling stories.<sup>52</sup> Gaskell takes the reader unaware as serious topics like women's poverty and the fallen woman unexpectedly crop up, humorously described. Possibly she had come to the conclusion that a relaxed and amused reader would be more open-minded. Gaskell's witty style fully complies with Dickens's intended tone for *Household Words*, as she 'cherish[ed] the light of Fancy'.<sup>53</sup> Her first stories had been in the more serious vein of *Howitt's Journal*, which did in fact fit in with the early numbers of *Household Words*. However, by 6 October 1851 Dickens had realized that the tone of his periodical was not as upbeat as he desired, for in a letter to sub-editor W.H. Wills he criticised the back numbers for 'wanting elegance of fancy' and lapsing repeatedly into 'a dreary [...] dustiness that is powerfully depressing'.<sup>54</sup>

'Our Society at Cranford' is a clever piece of social criticism which combines humour with a lopsided view of society. While Stoneman argues that 'the hostility and the community of Cranford are effects of the [...] doctrine of separate spheres, and thus [...] results of marginalisation', Uglow concludes that '*Cranford* is [...] an appeal *against* separate spheres' which showcases a society 'where men and women live together side by side and benefit from both 'masculine' and 'feminine' virtues'.<sup>55</sup> My reading concurs with Uglow as I see Gaskell, in a very creative and radical way, elucidating the folly of this ideology of separate spheres. Instead of emphasizing the problems of women living in a patriarchal society, Gaskell depicts how, in order to be socially accepted, men must obey strict Cranfordian rules on what is 'elegant', 'vulgar and ostentatious' (2, p. 167). The story describes the 'invasion of [the Amazons'] territories' by a Captain with 'a loud military voice' (Ibid.) who soon after arrival breaks one of Cranford's strictest unwritten laws by publicly proclaiming his poverty. When women in patriarchal society fell short of society's rules, their fate was social isolation or death; matriarchal society, however, proves more forgiving of 'disgrace' (Ibid.). In fact, before long Captain Brown quite disarms the Amazons, whose 'ruffled brows' and 'sharp voices' (2, p. 170) disappear on his approach. Cranford develops into an inclusive society which allows him to be his own kind-hearted, helpful, and rather outspoken self. Society is the better

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<sup>52</sup> The census showed how Over Knutsford was dying out, as its population decreased from 320 in 1801, to 225 in 1841, to 208 in the Census of 1851. See Henry Green, *Knutsford, Its Traditions and History* (London: Smith, Elder & Cornhill, 1859), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Household Words*, vol. 1 (1850), p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Sandra Spencer, 'The Indispensable Mr. Wills', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 21:4 (1988), 145-51 (p. 148).

<sup>55</sup> Patsy Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 88; Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 288.

for it. True to Victorian moral standards, though, Brown is made to pay the price of having fallen: he dies – the same fate fallen woman Ruth would meet.

In *Cranford* Gaskell again touches on the important task of nursing. Jessie Brown, an immigrant to Cranford, lacks Amazonian qualities, but she resembles heroines in Gaskell's early stories in being described as 'an angel' who nurses her invalid sister and bears her crossness with a 'bright face' (2, p. 271). Gaskell uses both the image of the militant Amazon to harness support for women's rights, as well as the angelic woman, whose patient, sacrificial spirit makes her especially effective as a nurse. The morning after Captain Brown's funeral Miss Jenkyns, resembling the Amazons of old who geared up before doing battle in man's territory, puts on her 'helmet' bonnet before she departs to 'help to nurse' Miss Brown (2, p. 179). As in 'Penmorfa' and *Ruth*, Gaskell promotes nursing as a respectable woman occupation – undertaken here by a Rector's daughter. Caroline Huber argues that Cranford's elderly single women – including Gaskell herself – are 'heroic pioneers' for giving 'the first glimmerings of an exciting feminist concept' of the original community of Amazons, while they 'wait[] for the day when the world will recognize their hegemony as a possible solution to some of its evil'.<sup>56</sup> Earlier Anne Leigh and Nest Gwynn had pioneered into man's territory and proven themselves more than capable of this task.

Apart from having her say about the woman question, Gaskell inserts messages concerning Dickens' role as social reformer and writer. This intelligence was missing from *Household Words* as Dickens changed Gaskell's references to Boz, *The Pickwick Papers* and 'Christmas Carol' into *Hood's Own*, Hood's *Poems* and 'Miss Kilmansegg and her Golden Leg'. He had not realized the deeper implications of the story and was taken by surprise that an upset Gaskell was seriously contemplating withdrawing her contribution. Several critical explanations for Gaskell's irritation have been given. Thomas Recchio suggests that Dickens's 'heavy-handed intervention' contravened Gaskell's own understated, subtle and indirect statements, while Uglow argues that the contrast between 'Johnson's solemnity and Dickens's humorous humanity was integral

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<sup>56</sup> Caroline P. Huber, "'Heroic Pioneers': The Ladies of Cranford", *GJ*, 21 (2007), 38-49. Similarly, Anna Fenton-Hathaway comments on Gaskell's treatment of the Cranford ladies as 'a revolutionary alternative' to the common perception of 'redundant' women as marginalized and having missed their calling. See 'Gaskell's Detours: How *Mary Barton*, *Ruth* and *Cranford* Redefined 'Redundancy'', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 42 (2014), 235-50 (p. 243).

to her argument.<sup>57</sup> Hilary Schor notes that by deleting his name Gaskell's text loses humour and authority, as it refers to Dickens as editor of *Household Words*, and as the representative of modern life and a new literary style. Moreover, she lost power over her own creation.<sup>58</sup> I agree with Schor that the work loses extra layers of wit and remarks on literary and social developments in England.

Gaskell comments not only on Dickens's literary career, but also on her own. Gaskell mixes fiction and reality in a humorous way when in 'Our Society at Cranford' she encourages *Household Words*' readers to discuss Miss Jenkyns and her Amazons, while in the narrative Cranfordians have a fiery exchange about 'Mr. Boz' (2, p. 171) and periodicals. Miss Jenkyns is especially vocal and opinionated, considering publishing in a periodical 'vulgar' (2, p. 172). Here Gaskell seemingly pokes fun at herself. Moreover, whereas Miss Jenkyns modelled her letters on Dr Johnson's style, Gaskell was drawing on Dickens's mastery of language and style. Tellingly, at the end of the story Captain Brown's granddaughter Flora, who reads sections of the *Rambler* to Miss Jenkyns, 'gets a good long spell at "Christmas Carol"' (2, p. 183) which Miss Matty had left on the table when the elderly woman is otherwise engaged. It is Gaskell's nod towards Dickens, acknowledging his universal appeal, and showing her belief that his work will stand the test of time.

It needs pointing out that, as often with Gaskell, the issue is not clear-cut, for how does one explain the fact that Captain Brown is killed while 'deeply engaged in the perusal' of the *Pickwick Papers*? It almost suggests - and this is how Miss Jenkyns views it - he was killed for reading Dickens. Arguably, it may be linked to his 'fallenness', the theme permeating this story. In this respect Miss Jenkyns' reaction to hearing the news of Captain Brown's untimely death is significant, as she blurts out, 'Poor, dear, infatuated man' (2, p. 179). Not only does 'infatuated' associate Brown's demise with passionate, transitory love, as that experienced by fallen women, 'poor' is also a loaded term with Gaskell.<sup>59</sup> When Bellingham-Donne meets Mrs Denbigh she reminds him of 'poor Ruth' (6, p. 204), his abandoned love interest, realizing that 'of course, there was but one thing that could have happened [to her], and perhaps it was as

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Recchio, *Cranford: A Publishing History*, p. 47; Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 283.

<sup>58</sup> Hilary Schor, *Scheherazade*, pp. 91, 94.

<sup>59</sup> In the novel version 'Memory at Cranford' is divided into two chapters, 'Old Letters' and 'Poor Peter', further emphasizing the import of 'poor' in connection with the plight of the fallen woman.

well he did not know her end' (6, pp. 204-05). Moreover, a later Cranford tale features 'poor Peter', Miss Matty's brother, who leaves Cranford in disgrace and becomes as one dead when all communication ceases for decades.

Apart from her unique reflections on 'fallenness' in a matriarchal society, in 'Memory at Cranford' (13 March 1852) Gaskell revisits the topic of the fallen woman in a patriarchal society.<sup>60</sup> In this episode Miss Matty narrates an incident which occurred in her youth, when Cranford was still a patriarchy where women were marginalized. She relates how her brother Peter disguised himself in Deborah's clothes and hat, and strolled around cradling what appeared to be a baby.<sup>61</sup> Aware of what harm this might cause his daughter, on discovering his son's prank Rector Jenkyns thrashed him publicly. The incident strikingly illustrates how a man's thoughtlessness might destroy a woman's reputation. Ironically, Deborah Jenkyns, whom Cranford's Amazons look to for social and moral guidance, narrowly escaped being branded a fallen woman in an era when Cranford was men's territory. Fortunately, such dramas are avoided now that women are looking out for each other and Cranford 'is in possession of the Amazons' (2, p. 165).

### **Cranford in Haworth Territory**

According to Auerbach, *Cranford* reveals Gaskell's 'obsession' with the Brontë sisters as several of the Jenkyns sisters' characteristics can be traced back to them.<sup>62</sup> Though instalments of *Cranford* had appeared intermittently since December 1851, intriguingly, after her visit to the Brontës' home in September 1853 Gaskell wrote no more witty episodes of *Cranford*.<sup>63</sup> The stark reality of life in Haworth seems to have profoundly affected her.

'Morton Hall', which appeared around Christmas 1853, resembles *Cranford* in

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<sup>60</sup> Linda Hughes and Michael Lund (*Victorian Publishing*, p. 94) argue that "'Lizzie Leigh" retold in *Ruth* continued in *Cranford*.' They suggest that narrator Mary Smith is another fallen woman.

<sup>61</sup> Shirley Foster (*A Literary Life*, p. 99) uses this episode to note 'an interest in transformation and disguise' in the novel.

<sup>62</sup> Nina Auerbach, 'Elizabeth Gaskell's "Sly Javelins" Governing Women in Cranford and Haworth', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 38 (1977), 276-91 (p. 286).

<sup>63</sup> 'A Happy Return to Cranford' was the concluding episode, which appeared on 21 May 1853. In fact, a decade later Gaskell would write one more episode ('The Cage at Cranford') but, as Shirley Foster comments (in Jill Matus, *The Cambridge Companion*, p. 117), she seemed to have lost interest in that genre. 'The Cage at Cranford' is discussed in chapter five.



multiple ways: it is set a few miles from the town of Drumble (Manchester), features an elderly spinster and her sister, and considers the lives of a restricted group of genteel women. Moreover, the motivation for the precursor to *Cranford*, 'The Last Generation in England' resembles that of 'Morton Hall'. With the former piece Gaskell desired to 'put upon record some of the details of country town life, either observed by myself, or handed down to me' before they would fade from man's memory, whereas in the novella because of the imminent demolition of Morton Hall Bridget Sidebotham's sister admonishes her to write its history since 'it will be a shame if [the Mortons] pass away completely from men's memories while we can speak or write' (3, p. 23). Like Gaskell's narrative, Biddy's account not only relies on her own observations, but also records information she obtained from the previous generation. Both in 'The Last Generation' and 'Morton Hall' Gaskell 'conceal[ed] the name of the town to which [she] refer[ed]' (2, p.91), for though 'Morton Hall' is seemingly set near Manchester the historical references (perhaps not all, but certainly those about Miss Phillis) relate to Haworth.<sup>64</sup>

The use of narrator Bridget adds *Cranford*-like humour, as she reimagines and reinvents the past. However, though published in *Household Words*, the Dickens' context, the story is moving into another direction owing to Brontë's influence. 'Morton Hall' has a darker atmosphere than *Cranford*. No longer are the injustices towards women hidden - they are put on record as women's history. 'Morton Hall' is *Cranford* society in Haworth territory. There is social isolation, gloom and doom. Through Brontë Gaskell experienced a darker side of life. She turns a new page as witty *Cranford* ends and a new, more serious and darker chapter opens. 'Morton Hall' was Gaskell's most outspoken criticism against women's polarized position in society until then. Importantly, though put in a historical context, many of the injustices recorded still existed in 1853. It is telling that for the first chapter of 'Morton Hall', which was the lead story, Dickens had put his ongoing 'A Child's History of England' on hold. Both works provide historical timelines interspersed with ironical comments on injustices as Dickens and Gaskell considered it their civic duty to reflect critically on the past and point out errors.

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<sup>64</sup> The Brontë's old servant Tabitha Aykroyd showed Gaskell around the Balcony Field where Morton Hall had originally stood, and related the story of Miss Phillis. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë with a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends*, ed. by Margaret M. Smith, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), II, p. 217.

‘Morton Hall’ characterizes women’s history as an unbroken chain of injustices. First, during the Restoration Alice Carr’s husband took possession of her property after he falsely declared her insane and had her locked up. She was only released on his death.<sup>65</sup> Adding to the mesh of connections which informed and influenced Gaskell’s literary output is the fact that her brother-in-law Samuel Gaskell had been appointed Resident superintendent of Lancaster Lunatic Asylum in 1840, where he instigated revolutionary changes.<sup>66</sup> Small wonder that Gaskell, a most empathetic listener, would develop a heartfelt concern for past and present inmates of asylums while listening to her brother-in-law’s reports of having several tons of iron bars and gates removed, as prior to his appointment the asylum had been using numerous restraining devices. He also improved the diet of inmates and, again illustrating the importance Unitarians attached to universal education, introduced basic literacy classes for inmates, including the ‘idiot’ inmates who had hitherto been mainly ignored.<sup>67</sup> An interesting link with ‘Morton Hall’ is the fact that, despite refutations by the Lunacy Commission, throughout the nineteenth century allegations of wrongful confinement in asylums kept cropping up.

After recounting women’s history as it had been orally transmitted to her, Biddy expands on the position of women in her own lifetime. Her tale of late eighteenth-century Miss Phillis Morton, who eventually starved to death in a dilapidated cottage after her nephew squandered her fortune, exemplifies women’s continued lack of legal financial protection. Phillis’s forgiving and forbearing attitude is reminiscent of Gaskell’s earlier stories, but the narrative fails to end on a positive note. Women’s history was too dire for that. Finally, the Miss Mortons take possession of ‘Morton Hall’, which now becomes a mini-Cranford where woman’s rule is law. However,

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<sup>65</sup> To put Gaskell’s repeated references to the mentally ill and asylums in perspective: in 1853 the County Asylums Act was passed, which required a medical certificate signed by two doctors to admit someone into a mental asylum. Importantly, it gave the inmate the status of patient, which meant he could be discharged if someone was willing to look after him. Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford, *Scandal, Social Policy and Social Welfare* (Bristol: the Policy Press, 2005), pp. 7-32.

<sup>66</sup> Andres Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie and Nicholas Herve, *Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 161-86.

<sup>67</sup> For Unitarians education was not just ‘learning appropriate subject matter, [it] was also about mental training’, and, as such, it was thought to play ‘a crucial role in the cultivation and maintenance of a sound mental disposition.’ For more on the subject of Gaskell and mental health, see Louise Henson, “‘Half Believing, Half Incredulous’: Elizabeth Gaskell, Superstition and the Victorian Mind”, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24:3 (2002), 251-69 (p. 263).

whereas in Cranford the Amazons build a viable community through mutual support, the Mortons - backbiting, jealous, unreasonable - rule and divide and come close to destroying the spirit of their young niece Cordelia. The novella highlights the importance of women's co-operation, earlier discussed in chapter one, to build a sustainable future for themselves.

'Morton Hall' contains a subtly hidden message about the importance of education as Gaskell, by employing unreliable narrator Biddy, illustrates how women's lack of education affects their sense of justice. It soon becomes clear that Biddy seems oblivious to the fact that, depending on the political stance of the Morton family, she fluctuates between ardently supporting Catholics and utterly condemning them. While at the beginning of her story she explains how one of her ancestors had been with Lord Monteaule when he discovered Guy Fawkes under the House of Lords (hence her fear that Catholics hold a grudge against her family), later she is siding with Cavalier Sir John Morton, an ardent supporter of James II. Biddy mindlessly follows her master's commands, which in effect perpetuates the attitude of the tenants of old who stood passively by when Sir John put his wife on public display in the village before forcefully removing her to an asylum. With 'Morton Hall' Gaskell exemplifies that 'it is so true [...] about evil being done by want of thought.'<sup>68</sup>

When Morton Hall is razed to the ground it effectively ends the history of despair and madness. The conclusion of the novella depicts a more open and egalitarian society, bustling with confidence and ideas for improvement, linked with a happy ending for Cordelia who releases herself from the 'curse' of being a Morton by marrying a mill owner. Intriguingly, as Diana Wallace points out, though 'Morton Hall' hints at 'the possibility of a new equality between the sexes', 'Gaskell destabilises this interpretation through her use of Bridget as a potentially unreliable narrator.'<sup>69</sup> In the mid-1850s the future of England seems bright but is still undecided. Gaskell pleads for a new chapter to be opened in the treatment and position of women.

### **Eradicating Prejudice and Superstition: The Need for Enlightened Education**

This section focuses on an interpolated tale which shows how early themes concerning the role of women foreshadow later ones. Shortly before the book version of *North and*

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<sup>68</sup> To Lady Kay Shuttleworth, 7 April 1853, *Letters*, p. 227.

<sup>69</sup> Diana Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic* (University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 80.

*South* was to go to print Gaskell was uncertain whether to 'alter & enlarge what is already written', asking women's rights' campaigner Anna Jameson, 'would you give me your *very* valuable opinion as to this?'<sup>70</sup> Based on Jameson's advice Gaskell decided to make alterations in the novel format, going so far as to try 'to stop the press'.<sup>71</sup>

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the added sections hold radical messages.

'Morton Hall' might have been subtitled 'Once and Now' as, following the Howitts' example, Gaskell depicts evils of the past alongside the progress of society. 'Once and Now' is in fact the title of an interpolated chapter in *North and South* which describes Margaret Hale's return to Helstone after several years' absence. The chapter is one of several additions Gaskell wrote for the book publication, as she had earlier felt seriously constrained by Dickens's format.<sup>72</sup> Barbara Weiss, in opposition to critics who argue that Gaskell's interpolated tales are unrelated to the progress of the novel, contends that they are not random but strengthen the central theme.<sup>73</sup> I concur and suggest that these inserted tales may offer insight into how the short story technique Gaskell developed while contributing to *Household Words* feeds into the novel.

As in the short stories, *North and South* depicts a heroine's civilizing influence, and how she 'take[s] the values of home out into the world.'<sup>74</sup> The novel reiterates that (part of) woman's mission is to improve social relations between genders and classes. Gaskell subtly pushes at Victorian rules of propriety for women as, for example, in the stone-throwing incident that occurred both in 'John Middleton' and *North and South*. Foster argues that Nelly and Margaret Hale, who both try to physically protect the man they love, are 'the victim of generic male violence and [...] take[] on an active masculine role.'<sup>75</sup> Both Elisabeth Jay and Jane Spencer note how Gaskell transfers the historically male-dominated role of religious leader to a woman, a role which, as argued earlier, was also taken up by Anne in 'Lizzie Leigh'. Jay contends that Margaret 'takes up the

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<sup>70</sup> [January 1855], *Letters*, p. 329.

<sup>71</sup> To Anna Jameson, 30 January [1855], p. 331. *The Critic* and *Publishers' Circular* for 1 March 1855 both noted that the novel would shortly be issued, which message is repeated in *The Critic* of 15 June, so it would seem Gaskell did gain some additional time.

<sup>72</sup> Gaskell allowed Dickens to 'shorten it as you think best for HW.[...] Shortened I see it must be', while a letter to Anna Jameson explains how the problem came about: Gaskell was told 'five months' and thought it equalled 22 issues, whereas her allowance was in fact 20 issues. To Dickens, [?17 December 1854], *Letters*, p. 323; To Jameson, [January 1855], *Letters*, p. 328.

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Weiss, 'The Telling of Feminine Tales', *Studies in the Novel*, 16:3 (1984), pp. 274-87.

<sup>74</sup> Jane Spencer, *Women Writers: Elizabeth Gaskell* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 91.

<sup>75</sup> Shirley Foster, *A Literary Life*, p. 85.

ministry her father has abandoned', quoting comforting Bible verses at her mother's funeral and 'ministering' to Mrs Boucher (7, p. xxi) and as such 'pos[ing] a Christian challenge to the doctrine of Political Economy', while Spencer argues that 'femininity has become a religious vocation.'<sup>76</sup> The tale thus embroiders on themes already present in Gaskell's early contributions to *Household Words*.

While in 'Morton Hall' Biddy's narrative provides a running commentary on historical injustice, in 'Once and Now' Gaskell uses dialogue to unveil civic problems. On revisiting Helstone Margaret discovers that a parochial school has been established and accordingly her friend Susan, whose mother used to teach her what little she knew at nights, now attends day school. Both Margaret and her companion Mr Bell are disappointed, drawing from Oxford academic Mr Bell the established view of patriarchal society that 'the child was getting a better and simpler, and more natural education stopping at home [...] than from all the schooling under the sun' (7, p. 353). This viewpoint, which he himself is quick to discount as being a 'hundred years behind the world' (ibid.), is effectively dispelled when Susan's mother tries to convince them of the efficacy of a cruel and superstitious belief.<sup>77</sup> Margaret's efforts to edify her prove in vain since the irrational ideas are ingrained in her mind. Earlier Barbauld had pointed out the need to eradicate prejudice and superstition, and through 'a spirit of inquiry' radically 'throw[] to the ground' 'whatever is not built on the broad basis of public utility'.<sup>78</sup> The interlude in *North and South* has a distinct feel of eighteenth-century Dissenting tradition as here the readers are made to inquire into the reason for the countrywoman's irrational beliefs. Building on 'Morton Hall', 'Once and Now' describes the evil which continued for centuries because of men's old-fashioned notions concerning the role and capabilities of women. Whereas Barbauld attacked the prejudices of the Establishment towards Dissenters, Gaskell opposes the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in 'Morton Hall' home education for girls is shown to be useless, as it is conducted by women whose own education was limited, who likely are superstitious, prejudiced or close-minded themselves or may be defined as 'not a thinking woman in general'. This results in a confused, dispirited pupil. Stoneman argues that with Cordelia's education Gaskell depicts the different ways in which women are marginalised and end up 'dogmatists, invalids or eccentrics'. Patsy Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, ed. by Lucy Aikin, 2 vols (1825, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), II, p. 372.

Establishment's repressive thoughts concerning women. 'Once and Now' may be read as a radical appeal for enlightened women's education.

### **A Happy Ending?: Women's Open-Ended Story**

Apart from early narratives, apparently minor works may also help understand Gaskell's radical mind-set and message. 'The Poor Clare' provides further insight into Gaskell's ideas concerning the role and position of women, and illustrates how her mesh of connections shapes her multiplicity of approach.

After Charlotte Brontë's death on 31 March 1855, Gaskell was invited to write her biography, which meant extensive research into her late friend's life. In May 1856 Gaskell followed in Brontë's footsteps and travelled to Belgium, while in July 1856 she visited Haworth to retrieve some manuscripts. Among these were the 'Little Magazines' the young Charlotte wrote in minuscule handwriting, which up to then had been seen by none but Brontë's siblings, now all dead. These juvenilia, many written in the Gothic mode, gave Gaskell new insight into the deceased author's powers of writing, but also evoked her assessment that Brontë's 'creative power [was] carried to the verge of insanity'.<sup>79</sup> Conceivably, the eccentricity of her late friend's work and life stimulated Gaskell's creativity and inspired a darker streak. Like Gaskell, in 'The Poor Clare' the narrator's extensive research into the antecedents of a particular person necessitates trips to Yorkshire and Belgium. In Yorkshire, he encounters the accursed woman for the first time and suffers a mental breakdown, while the setting of Belgium in chaos owing to a revolt may signal Gaskell's state of mind when she unexpectedly discovered the secret of Brontë's unrequited love for a married man while in Brussels. Gaskell was perturbed by what her research unveiled, and her story shows it.<sup>80</sup>

The first instalment of the three part story 'The Poor Clare', set 12 December 1747, appeared on 13 December 1856. The novella may be read as another Christmas appeal for more tolerance and improved class and gender relations. 'The Poor Clare' is the culmination point in which Gaskell's earlier concerns about the woman question are assembled and expanded in a different context. It intertwines strands about the mission of women and their need for freedom, the acceptance of fallen women and their

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<sup>79</sup> To George Smith, [25 July 1856], *Letters*, p. 398.

<sup>80</sup> Bonaparte argues that in the *Life* Gaskell bypassed the juvenilia and Brontë's relationship with Heger because she 'refused to acknowledge what she knew.' Felicia Bonaparte, *The Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester: The Life of Mrs. Gaskell's Demon* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 253.

offspring, 'sins of the father' and the importance of forgiveness. The chapter endings are well chosen, as they not only provide readers with food for thought, but also echo themes from Gaskell's earlier work. Part one ends with the curse being cast; part two with Bridget's departure to 'work her work', and part three finishes on the note that 'she is freed'. Letters reveal that often Dickens decided where to split the narratives into chapters, which exemplifies Gaskell and Dickens's co-operation.

'The Poor Clare' is reminiscent of 'Morton Hall' in its allusions to abusive men. Bridget Fitzgerald had been unhappily married to a 'wild and dissipated' man (3, pp. 388 and 396), while her daughter Mary when employed on the continent had left with Mr Gisborne, an English gentleman, even though her employer 'augured evil of his intentions' (3, p. 409).<sup>81</sup> Years later, Mrs Clarke, the attendant of Mary's daughter Lucy, mentions being unsure 'whether [Lucy] is the legitimate or illegitimate child of her father' (3, p. 404). As on discovering Gisborne's (unnamed) deceit Mary had drowned herself, it may be imagined that she, unprotected in a foreign country, had gone through a marriage ceremony that was not legally binding. Even in England such incidences were known to happen as before 1753 the marriage laws were 'chaotic', while throughout the nineteenth century marriages were annulled by the court due to 'slight errors in their marriage ceremonies'.<sup>82</sup>

Not only did Gisborne cheat Mary Fitzgerald, he later abandons his daughter Lucy on hearing dreadful (but untrue) rumours concerning her. These reports were caused by a 'fiendish double', a phantom that was 'nothing but empty air' but which, as the narrator explains, held a terrible power since he would become so 'fascinated by the creature beyond', whose actions are a distortion of Lucy's, that for a while he 'could not see' the real woman standing before him (3, p. 408). Lucy is not changed by IT, but whenever people espy IT she is left 'still, white, trembling, drooping' and swooning (3, p. 414). 'The Poor Clare' is a gothic tale, open to interpretation. Maureen Reddy and Felicia Bonaparte link IT with Brontë, Reddy claiming IT resembles Gilbert and Gubar's representation of Jane Eyre's repressed sexuality and Bertha Mason's

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<sup>81</sup> Gaskell repeatedly cautions her readers to carefully consider whom to marry. Libbie Marsh warns that a drunk husband will ruin his family's life, while John Middleton discloses that Nelly's friends thought, 'as many a one does, that a bad husband was better than none at all' (1, p. 186).

<sup>82</sup> Ginger Frost, *Gender in History: Living in Sin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 9-18.

rebellious rage, while Bonaparte draws a link between the novella and the *Life*.<sup>83</sup> She argues that the discrepancy of ‘coarse’ IT and the holy nature of Lucy resembles the perceived coarseness of Brontë’s works and her innate goodness.<sup>84</sup> I likewise draw on Gaskell’s other work to explain IT. ‘Lizzie Leigh’, for instance, describes a similar kind of double identity as Will Leigh raises Susan Palmer into the likeness of a saint, around whom hung an ‘inaccessible air of glory’, while in reality she is cognizant of social evils, having consciously acceded to care for illegitimate Nanny. The germ of IT may be glimpsed in Will’s fear that Susan will loathe him on ‘becom[ing] acquainted with the dark secret behind’ him, that of ‘the family shame’ (1, p. 138). In ‘The Poor Clare’, as in ‘Lizzie Leigh’, this dark identity behind the person is linked with illegitimacy and a person’s fallen state, as both Nanny and Lucy Fitzgerald are illegitimate.

In ‘Lizzie Leigh’, *Ruth*, and ‘The Poor Clare’ Gaskell identifies society’s unreasonable malice towards illegitimate children. Apart from the already noted reference to Susan Palmer, *Ruth* contains a telling scene. When Bellingham, the father of her illegitimate son Leonard, reappears after many years, Ruth’s reference to her shameful past resembles the description of IT: she mentions ‘this mocking echo, this haunting phantom’ that ‘might reappear at any moment’ (6, p. 233). The report of how people shrink from Lucy evokes Mr Bradshaw’s attitude towards Leonard when he realizes the boy is illegitimate. Ruth warns her son, ‘they will speak shameful things of you, poor innocent child’ (6, p. 255). In the end the curse on Lucy is undone because of fasting, prayer and Bridget’s (now ‘sister Magdalen’) forgiveness of her enemy Gisborne. The importance of forgiveness as a cure to undo social curses, a key theme in the early stories, is emphasized when half way into the story a Catholic priest observes, ‘all hate [...] cannot be quenched in her heart; all Christian forgiveness cannot have entered into her soul, or the demon would have lost its power’ (3, p. 421).

By the time ‘The Poor Clare’ was published Florence Nightingale had become a national symbol of hope and light, and a model of unselfishness. The Crimean War, covered in-depth by journalists like *The Times*’s William Howard Russell, had ended earlier that year. So when Gaskell moved the story from the English countryside to Antwerp in revolt, and incorporated battle scenes in which ‘a gray-robed and gray-veiled figure’ is pictured ‘stoop[ing] over some one, whose life-blood was ebbing’ (3, p

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<sup>83</sup> Maureen T. Reddy, ‘Female Sexuality in “The Poor Clare”: The Demon in the House’, *Studies in Short Fiction*, 21:3 (1984), 259-65 (p. 263).

<sup>84</sup> Felicia Bonaparte, *The Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester*, pp. 242-43.



425) readers would likely have recalled the recently ended conflict, and envision Nightingale at work. All classes felt united in their admiration for her. Gaskell recalls a working man who accused her and some other charitable ladies of only ‘play[ing] at benevolence’.<sup>85</sup> He advised them to ‘[l]ook at Florence Nightingale – there’s a woman for you’.<sup>86</sup> Though Gaskell had kept ‘humble silence’, this incident may have apprised her of the pitfall of Nightingale’s enormous popularity: people idolised her.<sup>87</sup> Gaskell herself seems fascinated, lauding Nightingale’s extraordinary intellect, ‘great beauty’ and ‘holy goodness’.<sup>88</sup> ‘The Poor Clare’ contains a reality check, for the reader knows that this Bridget Fitzgerald, the later Sister Magdalen, is anything but a saint. The point is, however, that women with human weaknesses can aspire to great things. Nightingale is to be commended for her dedication, but still more for opening the door of opportunity for other women.

Nightingale fashioned nursing into a respectable occupation, and attested that women are capable of being more than ornaments in the home. Inspired by her example, in 1855 Gaskell’s daughter Meta expressed an interest in becoming a nurse. Gaskell’s reaction to this news reveals her notions of what makes a good nurse: a woman who is not overly young - she might begin ‘a nurse’s life of devotion’ around thirty or so, as Nightingale had done - who has had proper training and experience tending sick people, who knows how hospitals are run, and feels a sense of vocation.<sup>89</sup> Gaskell had begun advocating paid nursing jobs in 1850, when this was regarded as unsuitable for educated middle class women, but when she composed ‘The Poor Clare’ in 1856, her vision of nursing as an accepted and respectable profession had become reality. It was a step towards more freedom for women, as anticipated by the women’s rights’ activists of the Howitts’ circle.

‘The Poor Clare’’s open ending conveys the powerful feminist message that women must be allowed to have a mission. Bridget takes on the name of a fallen woman, ‘Magdalen’, as a reminder that her mission is to undo the sins of the past and find redemption for the accursed.<sup>90</sup> However, in her attempt to effect deliverance for her granddaughter, Sister Magdalen accomplishes her own social redemption: as with Ruth

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<sup>85</sup> To Parthenope Nightingale, [18 January 1856], *Letters*, p. 383.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> To Catherine Winkworth, 1 January 1855, *Letters*, p. 327.

<sup>89</sup> To Emily Shaen, 27 October 1854, *Letters*, p. 320.

<sup>90</sup> Penitentiaries for fallen women were called ‘Magdalen Houses’.

Benson, her fulltime service to the needy transforms her from social outcast to honoured citizen. The novella concludes with Sister Magdalen's deathbed claim, 'she is freed' (3, p. 427). This seemingly positive ending does leave the reader with questions for, as Koustinoudi notes, the novella 'ends rather abruptly, with many of its narrative strands remaining loose, incomplete and problematic'.<sup>91</sup> In fact, the conclusion resembles that of 'Morton Hall', as it remains unclear what the future will hold. Lucy's story is still to be written. It is up to England's women and illegitimate children to claim their place in society and make history.

Gaskell, who throughout her writing career tried to depict social problems from different angles, leaves room for the reader to discuss and interpret the story. She portrays the complexity of life, where often there are no easy answers. The multiplicity of female-related themes results in what Maureen Reddy calls Gaskell's indecision of exactly what sort of tale 'The Poor Clare' should be and who the main character is, working class Bridget or upper-middle class, illegitimate Lucy.<sup>92</sup> In 'The Poor Clare' Gaskell's quest for woman's mission, started among women from the working classes, triumphantly records the unshackling of women of all classes as fiction meets reality in the person of Nightingale, with whom she had earlier served marginalized ladies in the Establishment for Invalid Gentlewomen, and at whose family home she composed large sections of *North and South* with its heroine who ventures into uncharted territory and in doing so aids the closure of class and gender gaps.<sup>93</sup>

'The Poor Clare' reveals Gaskell's leap in creativity and the mingling of literary modes, crisscrossing time and place, and using multiple narrative voices as well as dialogue to advance plot. She can now address several concerns in one work. From her early years with *Household Words* her writing style has broadened and deepened owing to Dickens's suggestions and example; moreover, through her effort to gauge Brontë's creativity and brooding mind with a view to writing the *Life*, Gaskell's own creativity reached new heights. Brontë's legacy challenged and enriched her ideas concerning citizenship, and made her a superior writer.

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<sup>91</sup> Anna Koustinoudi, *The Split Subject of Narration in Elizabeth Gaskell's First-Person Fiction* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 32.

<sup>92</sup> Maureen Reddy, 'Female Sexuality in "The Poor Clare"', p. 261.

<sup>93</sup> Gaskell's early stories about working class women depict their freedom to explore the world of work, while 'Morton Hall' illustrated genteel women's social restrictions. It seems fitting that gentlewoman Lucy's freedom is secured by her grandmother, a former working class woman.

In 'Morton Hall' and 'The Poor Clare' Gaskell exposes the centuries-long discrimination women had to contend with. Apart from a focus on women's marginalization, around the mid eighteen-fifties she also records instances of racial and religious discrimination. In fact, 'The Poor Clare' incorporates multiple references to government-condoned religious inequality against Roman Catholics, and exposes the Anglican Church as having been actively involved in the oppression of Dissenters. Gaskell visibly wrestles with questions pertaining to religious and racial persecution. Chapter three explores her use of historical treatises about discrimination on the continent to address contemporary religious prejudice in England.

### Chapter 3: 1853-1856 Fighting Religious Discrimination

This chapter covers the years 1853 to 1856, and therefore partly overlaps with chapter two. While Gaskell was contemplating the position of women in society, as evident in ‘Morton Hall’ and ‘The Poor Clare’, she also emphasized instances of religious discrimination. The short non-fiction works under review in this chapter were published around a time of religious dissension at home and abroad. In England, Christian socialist Frederick Denison Maurice was dismissed from his Professorship at King’s College on religious grounds at the end of 1853. The serious charges against a man Gaskell revered and considered to have ‘more influence over the more thoughtful portion of the English people than any one else [she] kn[e]w of’, appalled her.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, from October 1853 to March 1856 the Crimean war took place, which started in essence because of a religious conflict in Ottoman-occupied Jerusalem where Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests tried to get precedence of the Holy sites. This soon escalated out of proportion owing to long-standing political tensions between France, England and Turkey on the one hand and Russia on the other. Gaskell is conscious of such political issues, and they may be observed throughout her work. *Sylvia’s Lovers*, for instance, mentions the Siege of Acre of 1799 where the Ottoman empire, Russia and Britain were allies against Napoleonic France.

During these years Gaskell’s publications in *Household Words* included three historic accounts relating to the persecution of religious and racial minority groups in Europe, namely ‘Traits and Stories of the Huguenots’ (10 December 1853), ‘Modern Greek Songs’ (25 February 1854) and ‘An Accursed Race’ (25 August 1855). ‘Traits and Stories’ combines a factual account of the oppression of French Dissenters following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes with anecdotes Gaskell collected from descendants of Huguenot immigrants. ‘Modern Greek Songs’ combines literary facts on different types of Greek ballads with a short history of Greek Orthodox rebels’ fight against their Ottoman oppressors. Despite the grave theme the tone in both works is kept fairly light, which is not the case, however, in ‘An Accursed Race’, an essay portraying the trials of a racial minority group in France and Spain called the Cagots, who – despite being devout Catholics – encountered harsh discrimination in both civil

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<sup>1</sup> To F.J. Furnivall, 3 December [1853], *Letters*, pp. 256-57.

and religious life. The works raise questions of religious and national identity and illustrate how Gaskell sees citizenship in a European context. She combines ideas of good citizenship and the persecution of minority groups to encourage critical reflection and debate in a bid to increase social tolerance.

This chapter demonstrates how short works can build towards and give perspective on a novel. The non-fiction works show a serious and darker side to Gaskell, which would culminate a decade later in *Sylvia's Lovers*, her only historical novel with its brooding atmosphere, which provides little relief, but points up perennial human problems and the way an unjust government can fan prejudice and discrimination. They also convey the importance Gaskell attaches to transmitting harrowing and easily forgotten historical incidents relating to discrimination at home and abroad. Gaskell the non-fiction writer is clearly present as narrator, guiding the reader while interspersing her narratives with astute remarks, rhetorical questions, ironic observations, literary references, and whenever possible linking these to ongoing interests such as the Lancashire dialect, culture and customs. Gaskell's narrative voice in her non-fiction work is distinct, as she seems to take the narrated instances of injustice very personally.

With 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' Gaskell voices her interest in detailing instances of adversity Dissenters from around the world had encountered, as she opens with a black chapter in France's past and follows it up with personal testimonies of Huguenot descendants, narrated in the form of short tales. This short work differs from the style of 'Modern Greek Songs', which brings to mind her early non-fiction piece 'Cheshire Customs' that originated with a letter to the Howitts. True to form, the review with its fast-moving upbeat tone resembles the style of her letters. 'An Accursed Race' is the most somber of her short non-fiction works. To guarantee that her readers are mindful of their own nation's violations towards humanity, Gaskell opens by listing multiple examples of prejudice and discrimination in England before moving her story to the continent. Her sober tone and short sentences, interspersed with personal comments on instances of gross injustice serve to emphasize the witlessness of prejudice and superstition. Dripping with irony, she lambasts oppressors and their cruelty with her choice of words. The serious nature of the discrimination she recounts does not allow for humour. 'An Accursed Race' reads like an inventory of injustices.

In the works under discussion Gaskell takes the debate of the eighteenth-century Dissenters forward. Though Dissenters had gained civic equality in 1828 with the repeal

of the Test and Corporation Acts, contemporary events underscored the need to keep addressing religious intolerance and prejudice. I suggest that 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' is Gaskell's response to the religious discrimination of F.D. Maurice, and that the religious prejudices she noted in England made her more alive to similar problems elsewhere. 'Traits and Stories' and 'An accursed Race' depict times devoid of brotherhood and peace because people who all professed to be Christians excluded one another for dogmatic or racial reasons, while 'Modern Greek Songs', with its description of the religious problems Greek Orthodox subjects encountered under Ottoman rule, seems geared towards current events in the Crimea. Gaskell is highly critical of any type of discrimination, instead promoting ideas of Christian brotherhood which, besides being spiritual, encompass practical action.

The three little known non-fiction works tie in with sections of *North and South* which also centre around religious discrimination. I argue that the little understood chapter in which Mr Hale informs Margaret of his doubts as to the authority of the Church, causing him to relinquish his living, becomes clearer when considered in the context of the shorter works and vice versa. Andrew Sanders and Jenny Uglow have linked this section with Maurice, noting that Mr Hale's refusal to sign the Thirty-Nine Articles resembles Maurice's failure to sign in 1830 and again in 1853.<sup>2</sup> To Sanders this section contains 'the vital themes and ideas of her story, its religious and moral base, as much as its narrative drive.'<sup>3</sup> Earlier Angus Easson had depicted *North and South* as 'a novel of reconciliation' which 'offer[s] more versions of belief than any other work of Mrs Gaskell'.<sup>4</sup> Undecided why Gaskell incorporated this particular section, he called for an investigation into Brontë's comment that Gaskell was doing it for the good of the Church, which has as yet been largely ignored by contemporary critics.<sup>5</sup> Her exact words are 'I think I see the ground you are about to take as far as the Church is concerned [...] not that of attack on her but of defence of those who conscientiously

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<sup>2</sup> Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 354.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Sanders, 'Serializing Gaskell: from *Household Words* to *The Cornhill*', *GJ*, 14 (2000), 45-58 (p. 53).

<sup>4</sup> Angus Easson, 'Mr Hale's Doubts in *North and South*', *The Review of English Studies*, NS 31 (1980), 31-40 (p. 39).

<sup>5</sup> Brontë's religious beliefs resembled those advocated by the Broad-Church Movement, and she admired Maurice and considered it 'raving madness' that the teaching of this 'faithful son and true champion' would be condemned. See Marion Phillips, 'Charlotte Brontë's Favourite Preacher: Frederick Denison John Maurice (1805 – 1872)', *Brontë Society Transactions*, 20:2 (1990), 77-88 (p.78).

differ from her, and feel it a duty to leave her fold.”<sup>6</sup> This chapter illustrates how not only *North and South* but other short works engaged with this problem, and how to Gaskell the solution to religious conflicts was the unity a universal church represented. Arguably, in the novel Gaskell attempts to represent the universal church, while the three short works embody concerns about a lack of Christian brotherhood between Christians of different denominations and nationalities.

This chapter first explores the influence of Parisian salonnière Mary Mohl (née Clarke) on Gaskell’s ideas of French citizenship and continental history. Next, it analyses Maurice’s influence on social and religious England, the problems he encountered, and Gaskell’s practical engagement to support and exonerate him after his dismissal. Close readings of the short works and novel reveal Maurice’s influence and help appreciate Gaskell’s perspective on religious and national identity. The final part of the chapter considers the influence of editors on Gaskell’s works. First, the *Household Words* context which influenced the readers’ perception of the works is highlighted, followed by an analysis of how *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* reworked ‘Traits and Stories of the Huguenots’ for an American audience, persuasively drawing out the theme of national identity and illustrating the link between following one’s conscience and good citizenship.

### **Gaskell and Mme Mohl’s Salon: Developing a European Consciousness**

The Gaskells’ first trip to Normandy in July 1853 inspired a series of articles and stories in *Household Words* in which the culture, history, politics and citizens of France were the focal point. On 22 October William contributed ‘Bran’, a poem about a youthful Breton knight who fell fighting the Saxons at the battle of Kerloan in the tenth century, while for the Christmas Number he contributed ‘The Scholar’s Story’, the domestic drama of how a knight who fought in the ‘Paynin war’ (the Crusades) lost all he loved through his deputy’s deceit.<sup>7</sup> William Gaskell’s translations of octosyllabic couplets of Breton ballads, which had originally been collected by the Vicomte de la Villemarqué, were followed in December by his wife’s ‘Traits and Stories of Huguenots’ and ‘My French Master’ (17 and 24 December 1853).

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<sup>6</sup> Angus Easson, ed., *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 330.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore-Hersart de la Villemarqué, *Barzaz-Breiz: Chants Populaires de la Bretagne*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Paris: Frank, 1848), pp. 205-16.

Influenced by her trip to France, in 'My French Master' Gaskell investigates the nature of citizenship and cosmopolitanism. She describes how French émigré Mr de Chalabre adjusts to his new position as a French language teacher in England though he continues to adhere to the rules of chivalry Madame Mohl would later expound in *Madame Recamier; with a Sketch of the History of Society in France* (1862). The elderly female narrator retrospectively recalls her French master's foreign behaviour in giving 'courtesies' to women, 'no matter old or young, or rich or poor' (3, p. 57), which she is unaccustomed to in English men. He thus instills in her an appreciation of French culture and a sense of her own value as a woman. Moreover, his liberated ideas help her open up to the world. Ending up an expatriate in Malta and Genoa she asserts, 'I have never looked upon [England] as my home since I left it thirty years ago' (3, p. 68) which evinces her international outlook. The following year this cosmopolitan spirit is personified in *North and South* by sailor Frederick Hale, who adheres to 'universal ideals of justice [that are] untethered to any particular individual or nation.'<sup>8</sup> Gaskell's view of being a citizen of the world ties in with ideas of brotherhood which transcend national manners, customs and laws.

Six months after her journey to Normandy, in January 1854, Gaskell visited Mme Mohl in Paris.<sup>9</sup> With this acquaintanceship a new world opened up since Mohl gave her insight into French life, the position of women, as well as access to historical works about religious and social intolerance in pre-revolution France. The wife of German Orientalist and member of the Academie Française Julius Mohl, Mary Clarke (1793-1883) hosted a salon, a place where 'one judges a man by his wit, and talent for society, and general brilliance of character, rather than by his wealth and hereditary position' (3, p. 62). In the early eighteenth century such salons had become popular for promoting Enlightenment ideas. Longstanding visitors of Mohl's salon were Protestant historian and statesman François Guizot, dramatist and historian Prosper Mérimée, political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville and Victor Cousin, professor of philosophy and former minister of education. The Mohls also counted the Queen of Holland and Florence Nightingale among their longstanding friends.<sup>10</sup> As Margaret Lesser notes,

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<sup>8</sup> Julia Sun-Joo Lee, 'Transnational Politics in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*', *Nineteen Century Literature*, 61 (2007), 449-78 (p. 469).

<sup>9</sup> To F.J. Furnivall, c. 9 January 1854, *Letters*, p. 262.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale* (London: Macmillan, 1913), I, p. 20. Julius Mohl had known Queen Sophie of Holland from when she was a girl, Sophie von Württemberg.



there were several overlaps between Mme Mohl and Gaskell's upbringing for the former had in the past 'frequented Nonconformist circles which included [...] the Aikins and the Stoke Newington Unitarians.'<sup>11</sup> Jenny Uglow acknowledges the significance of this association with Mohl when she points out that 'Elizabeth had found a new network.'<sup>12</sup> The friendship with Mme Mohl added new drive and a more continental focus to Gaskell's works.

Gaskell came away inspired from her time in Paris, contributing several reviews of non-fiction works originally composed by visitors to Mme Mohl's salon. 'Modern Greek Songs' is a reworking of Charles-Claude Fauriel's 'Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne' (1824), 'Company Manners' reviews 'Madame de Sablé', Victor Cousin's second essay in his series about illustrious women of the seventeenth century, and 'An Accursed Race' is mainly taken from Francisque Michel's *Histoire des Races Maudites de la France et de L'Espagne* (1847).<sup>13</sup> I will later provide a suggestion why Gaskell specifically chose to publish reviews of historic material.

The concept of the salon, which promoted new political and social ideas, and the art of 'Sabléing' (conducting a salon) intrigued Gaskell.<sup>14</sup> While 'My French Master' briefly alludes to the salon, it is the principal subject of 'Company Manners', Gaskell's lively depiction of the art of visiting in France, which illustrates how educated women gained political and social influence through salons. 'Company Manners' describes how witty and sensible French 'femmes d'esprit' are the pivot around which men of the world gather to compare notes on a variety of topics. Gaskell explains how visitors would give 'opinions on books, [...] men, or measures', following which the salonnière would 'collect[] and harmonize[]' all that had been said, 'speaking ever with her own quiet sense, till people the most opposed learnt to understand each other's point of view' (1, p. 297). In effect, in 'Company Manners' Gaskell expounds how an evening visit could be transformed into a lesson in democracy, where men and women are equals, and differing opinions are exchanged in an amicable manner, conducive to mutual understanding. In *North and South* Gaskell would likewise illustrate the crucial

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<sup>11</sup> Margaret Lesser, 'Madame Mohl and Mrs Gaskell', *GJ*, 13 (1999), 36-53 (p. 37).

<sup>12</sup> Jenny Uglow, *A Habit of Stories*, p. 349.

<sup>13</sup> Francisque Michel, *Histoire des Races Maudites de la France et de l'Espagne* (Paris: Franck, 1847).

<sup>14</sup> Mme Mohl probably regaled Gaskell with stories about famous salonnières Madame de Sablé and Madame Récamier, who had been an intimate and longtime friend of hers until the latter's death in 1849.

importance of expressing one's opinions in order to bring about reform.

Fauriel (1772-1844), a close friend of Mary Mohl until his death, had collected heroic ballads that characterize the national spirit of Greece during the Greek War of Independence (1821-27). Gaskell's 'Select Committee on French Songs', which appeared in *All the Year Round* on 1 February 1862, contains an allusion to a pamphlet entitled 'Bulletin du Comité de la Langue, de l'Histoire, et des Arts de la France' which was printed in 1853 and contained instructions from M. Ampère.<sup>15</sup> He had been prevented from gathering a 'collection of the popular and traditional poetry of France, before the generation had passed away who had learnt much traditional knowledge in their youth, which had never been displaced by their comparatively little reading'.<sup>16</sup> Ampère draws attention to Fauriel's popular songs of modern Greece as an important predecessor of popular poetry. One may imagine how during a get-together at Mohl's salon, its visitors – among them Gaskell – would discuss this Bulletin. It creates a context in which to view 'Modern Greek Songs' and 'Morton Hall'. Many of her works are geared towards helping preserve the past so that future generations can navigate history without having to disentangle distorted views of the past.

Seemingly a literary pursuit, Fauriel's underlying purpose for 'Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne' was civic, as is evident from Mary Clarke's comment that he was 'the only man in Europe who has taken up [his] pen on their behalf [...] on a grand scale.'<sup>17</sup> This in turn had inspired her to 'translate[] a little of [his] Greek book – and added three pages of [her] own!' which she proposed 'to be put in a little magazine concerned with the slavery question.'<sup>18</sup> Shortly afterward Charles Brinsley Sheridan

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<sup>15</sup> *All the Year Round*, vol. 6, pp. 448-54. Though tentatively attributed to Henry Fothergill Chorley, following the 2015 discovery of Dickens's own annotated version of *All the Year Round* it became apparent that the reviews were Gaskell's. See Elizabeth Ludlow and Rebecca Styler, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the Short Story', *GJ*, 2 (2015), 1-22 (pp. 12-16).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Lesser, *Clarkey: A Portrait in Letters of Mary Clarke Mohl 1793-1883* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 59. The letter is dated 26 August 1824.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. Letter from Mary Mohl to Fauriel, dated 7 September 1825. Though no definite publication has been traced, an anonymous review of 'Modern Greek Songs' in *The Humming Bird; or, Morsels of Information, on the Subject of Slavery: with various Miscellaneous Articles*, an abolitionist periodical printed and published in Leicester, may be by Mohl. The reviewer assumed that as the periodical 'is published entirely for the purpose of exciting interest for the oppressed, [...] something about the oppressed Greeks may be acceptable.' (1:11 (1825), pp. 329-38). Mary Mohl had connections in Leicestershire with the Martin family, and records of memorabilia, letters and a certified copy of her will are still held in the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland archives. It would seem that Mr Martin represented the English relations at Mme Mohl's funeral. See DE718/C/94 to DE718/C/116.

translated Fauriel's 'Les Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne' into English, donating the profits to the Society for the Promotion of Education in Greece, while Wilhelm Müller produced a German version.<sup>19</sup> Though acclaimed, Fauriel's work was not extensively known. Three decades later, shortly after another Greek insurrection took place, Gaskell reintroduced the 'Songs' and trials of the Greeks to the English public. While Gaskell looked at ideas of European citizenship through the lens of Mohl and her acquaintances, her view of England is influenced by the occurrences surrounding Frederick Denison Maurice's dismissal which dredge up memories of similar injustices in her Dissenting heritage.

### Setting the Scene: Religious Prejudice in England

At the end of 1853 Furnivall and Gaskell were in constant correspondence following Maurice's publication of *Theological Essays* which had resulted in an accusation of heresy owing to his denial of eternal punishment. Feeling affinity with Maurice for having been opposed and discriminated against for following his conscience, Gaskell took great pains in supporting him. She collected signatures for memorials, handed out tracts, updated those interested, and wrote to editors on his behalf. While Furnivall proposed publishing letters of admiration in defense of Maurice, Gaskell deemed 'expressions of affection and respectful feeling' powerless in this situation, arguing instead for the kind of address which might encourage discerning individuals 'in forming their judgments by a good reasoning on the subject about which they are perplexed[.]'<sup>20</sup> As she spurned having her letters publicized and felt unable to write a 'grand logical reasoning argumentative letter', but could express herself through stories, I suggest that Gaskell wrote 'Traits and Stories' to address Maurice's religious problems.<sup>21</sup>

Several elements of Maurice's *Theological Essays* appear in Gaskell's work, notably the focus on following one's conscience. The title page of *Theological Essays*

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<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/4679fca4-8533-461e-bb46-31907034d833> [accessed on 19 July 2016].

<sup>19</sup> As stated on the title-page of *The Songs of Greece from the Romaic Text, ed. by M.C. Fauriel, with Additions. Translated by Charles Brinsley Sheridan* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825). Müller, nicknamed 'Griechen-Müller' during his lifetime, is acclaimed as the 'prophet of German Philhellenism'. See <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz66834.html> [accessed on 13 May 2016].

<sup>20</sup> To F.J. Furnivall, 3 December [1853], *Letters*, p. 256.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

places ‘conscience’ centre stage as Maurice quotes Swiss theologian Alexandre Vinet, the author of among others *Mémoire en Faveur de la Liberté des Cultes* (1826), *Essai sur la Conscience* (1829), and *Essai sur la Manifestation des Convictions Religieuses* (1842).<sup>22</sup> Vinet ‘pointed the way to a Christianity free from state domination.’<sup>23</sup> He was read by Protestants and Catholics alike and, based on his example, Free Churches were started in Scotland and the Netherlands. In his study of the French Huguenot preachers of the seventeenth century he reflected on ‘the legitimacy of a minority church’ while ‘question[ing] the authority of the state in matters of conscience.’<sup>24</sup> This focus on State Church versus Minority church, and freedom to follow one’s conscience, reappears in Gaskell’s works.

Maurice addressed the *Theological Essays* to the Poet Laureate Tennyson, who had taught him that ‘a Theology which does not correspond to the deepest thoughts and feelings of human beings cannot be a true Theology.’<sup>25</sup> The Preface concludes with a quote from Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, wishing for England’s churches to ‘Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be.’ In the preface to the second edition Maurice clarifies that he had wanted to show Unitarians and nominal Trinitarians ‘that God has laid a foundation for them and for [him] upon which [they] may stand together.’<sup>26</sup> In this he emphasizes the Universal church and Christian brotherhood. In his ‘Advertisement’, which follows the Preface, Maurice explains that he had been ‘solemnly’ requested by ‘a lady’ to write ‘some book especially addressed to Unitarians’.<sup>27</sup> He had immediately realized its controversial nature, but though anticipating that ‘such works [] do little else than harm to those who write, and to those who read them’ he felt compelled to undertake the task because it was ‘a great weight on my conscience’.<sup>28</sup> His struggle resembles the pursuit of truth and following one’s

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<sup>22</sup> Translated from the French the quotation reads, ‘Maybe it is possible that Christianity, at this moment in time which appears to us so advanced, has produced in humanity’s life and conscience all that it could, that it has said all it had to say, that it has spoken its last word. In one sense everything has been said from the start; in another sense, it still has a lot to say, and the world will come to an end only when Christianity will have said all.’

<sup>23</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Modern Age, 1789-1889*, 6 vols (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2007), VI, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Frederick D. Maurice, *Theological Essays*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1853), pp. v-vi.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

conscience the eighteenth-century Dissenters had advocated, and the internal conflict Gaskell experienced prior to the publication of *Ruth* (1853).<sup>29</sup>

Dissension between Christians of different denominations caused Maurice's lifelong pursuit to find ways for Christian co-operation. He probably grew up listening to his father's stories of when he as a radical Unitarian had personally encountered religious oppression.<sup>30</sup> A friend of Dr. Aikin, in 1792 Michael Maurice had co-pastored at the Gravel Pit Chapel in Hackney with Joseph Priestley, who, leaving Birmingham after the riots, ministered there from 1791 until 1794, the year he emigrated to America to escape persecution.<sup>31</sup> So, though Frederick Maurice became an Anglican, he was well-grounded in Unitarian beliefs. Perhaps because his family was split over religious ideas - his mother adhering to Calvinist ideas while one of his sisters became an Anglican and another a Baptist - Maurice realized the exigency for different denominations of the Christian faith to co-operate. Hence, throughout his life his many social initiatives aimed to promote 'brotherhood'. In Maurice's theology, 'mankind, constituted in the Son of God, is a family meant not for competition but for co-operation'.<sup>32</sup> Maurice did not distinguish between a 'visible' and 'invisible' church but believed in a 'universal Church', as 'unity subsisted, not underneath particular churches, but in them, where it was usually limited and distorted by history.'<sup>33</sup> By the careful study of history, he suggested, 'Christians could begin to rediscover the truly comprehensive identity of the Church, and in turn begin to [...] "make real" [...] the true unity of the Church.'<sup>34</sup> Though differing from the eighteenth-century Dissenters' historical revisionism which aimed to vindicate a marginalized religious group, Maurice's notion of the universal Church may be read as guiding principle to *North and South*.

Maurice did not believe that one church holds all Christian truth, arguing instead that '[t]he authentic history of the separated churches of Protestantism yielded Christian truth in many different Christian communities, but also an equal share of responsibility

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<sup>29</sup> Gaskell mentions how, before *Ruth* was published; she went to 'take[] leave of [her] 'respectable friends' up & down the country.' To Anne Robson, [before 27 January 1853], *Letters*, p. 221.

<sup>30</sup> David Young, *F.D. Maurice and Unitarianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 63.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Jeremy Morris, ed., *To Build Christ's Kingdom: an F.D. Maurice Reader* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2007), p. 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-04.

for conflict and division.’<sup>35</sup> The three non-fiction works similarly consider the ‘authentic history’ of Christian groups in Europe. Gaskell makes her sources clear, as in ‘Traits and Stories’ she records oral family history transmitted to her by descendants of Huguenot immigrants, while in ‘Modern Greek Songs’ and ‘An Accursed Race’ she relies on scholarly research. Hence, the works convey ‘truth’ about the universal church. Interestingly, Gaskell places history in a fictional setting in chapter four of *North and South* where she refers to an authentic person and historic events as she names ‘Mr Oldfield, minister of Carsington, in Derbyshire’ who discontinued his ministry for matters of conscience ‘a hundred and sixty years ago, or more’ (7, pp. 36-37). Gaskell’s aim throughout her writing career is to provide a clear picture of history for future generations, hence her experimenting with different genres to see which would best convey the past. Incorporating history in *North and South*’s fictional setting transforms the narrative, and induces readers to engage with England’s religious past.

Maurice’s aim to promote ‘moral and social regeneration’ through education resulted in his involvement in several exploits. In 1840, for example, he edited the short-lived *Educational Magazine* which provided a broad view and insightful articles on education at home and abroad.<sup>36</sup> To him education not only incorporated the teaching of religion and morals, but also served a civic purpose, as evident from the preface in which he expressed his desire that the magazine would prove ‘useful to the country and to the Church’.<sup>37</sup> Some years later, he aimed to provide a ‘serious liberal education for working men; a form of education previously only available to the wealthy’, in the Working Men’s College, which was inspired by a Bible Class at his house in 1848.<sup>38</sup> The college advocated ‘co-operation, Christian fellowship and a joining of social classes’, and as such it exemplified a ‘Social Democracy’.<sup>39</sup> Offering popular courses in art and history by acclaimed artists such as Ruskin and Rossetti, the Working Men’s College recognised ‘education as a life enhancing activity, rather than simply a means to a livelihood’.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Preface’, *The Educational Magazine*, NS 2 (1840).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Mervyn Romans, *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2005), p. 146. See also J.F.C. Harrison, *A History of the Working Men’s College: 1854 – 1954* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954). As with Gaskell, Maurice’s social work emanates from his religious beliefs.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Apart from making education available to the working classes, Maurice was a pioneer in women's education, one of his lectures providing the blueprint for Queen's College. This educational institution, established in 1848 for the education of young ladies generally and governesses especially, was the first college in England to teach accredited classes for women, and aimed to professionalize education by instructing would-be governesses in 'the Principles and method of Teaching'.<sup>41</sup> Its ground-breaking curriculum offered female students courses not just in the Arts, Humanities and Languages, but also in subjects hitherto considered the domain of men: Natural Philosophy, Theology, and Mathematics. Gaskell was sympathetic towards the college's aim and explored ways for her eldest daughter Marianne to audit lectures in Harmony and Vocal Music there.<sup>42</sup>

Almost from the outset Maurice and his colleagues at Queen's College had come under attack for being Liberal, especially following an article in the *Quarterly Review* entitled 'Queen's College London' (1850) which included some unfavourable comments on how the College was run. In Maurice's view, the writer had 'hinted' that examinations seemed 'to exalt intellectual above moral qualifications', a criticism he staunchly denied, and that the Bible was taught without reference to the Creed or Catechism.<sup>43</sup> Although Maurice published a letter of defence to the Bishop of London, distrust towards the college failed to die down.<sup>44</sup> Sadly, even the group of visiting ladies who helped control the quality of education and acted as chaperones, some of whom Gaskell knew personally, became concerned, fearing that if 'any suspicion of heterodoxy' became attached to the students, it would prove difficult to 'get them situations, & we must look after their interests.'<sup>45</sup> These occurrences, added to Queen's College's affiliation with King's College from which he had been dismissed, induced

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<sup>41</sup> Information on the kind of courses the College taught may be gleaned from F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, *Introductory Lectures, Delivered at Queen's College London* (London: Parker, 1849).

<sup>42</sup> To Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 12 December [1850], *Letters*, pp. 137-38.

<sup>43</sup> As mentioned in F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, *Introductory Lectures*, p. iv. The lectures had been given half a year before the article in the *Review* appeared, but in the Preface Maurice refers to the article. See also *Introductory Lectures delivered at Queen's College, The Quarterly Review*; 86:172 (1850), pp. 364-83 (p. 370).

<sup>44</sup> F. D. Maurice, *A Letter to the Right Hon. & Right Rev. The Lord Bishop of London in Reply to the Article in No. CLXXII of the Quarterly Review Entitled 'Queen's College London'* (London: Parker, 1850).

<sup>45</sup> To F.J. Furnivall, [6 December 1853], *Letters*, p. 255. Mrs Wedgwood was one of the visiting ladies, as evident from a missive to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 12 December [1850], *Letters*, p. 137.

Maurice to relinquish his job at the Women's College even though, ironically, it had been one of his lectures that 'laid down the plan upon which the college would be conducted', and his tireless efforts that had helped establish it.<sup>46</sup>

### **F.D. Maurice's Influence on Gaskell's Work**

The religious prejudice professors encountered at Queens' College echoes the treatment Huguenots had encountered centuries earlier: both situations raise the question whether parents have the right to choose how to educate their children. 'Traits and Stories' describes how Louis XIV had ordained that children from French Dissenters were to be forcefully taken and educated by Roman catholic monks or nuns, resembling the *Quarterly Review's* suggestion that public schools like Queen's College should teach the Anglican creed and catechism, in essence removing parents' choice of what principles to instil in their children. Gaskell seems to take the persecution of the French Dissenters quite personally as she describes how right up to her time during long winter evenings the Huguenots regaled each other with tales of their ancestors' sufferings and escapes. Judging from her choice of pseudonym for *Howitt's Journal* and her publication of narratives dealing with religious persecution it seems likely that Gaskell's own circle of enlightened Dissenters still preserved stories of discrimination like those of Joshua Oldfield and Joseph Priestley. Maurice's dismissal showed that religious discrimination had yet to be fully eradicated in England.

Using historical evidence, in 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' Gaskell highlights the dangers of a state church whose leaders hold secular power, and illustrates how having a state religion undermines ideas of Christian brotherhood and tolerance. Catholic priests, supposed spiritual shepherds and peace makers, are depicted as having 'recourse to physical torture' to help 'persuade [Huguenot prisoners] to renounce [their] obnoxious religion' (1, p. 270).<sup>47</sup> Conversely, the Huguenots' 'excited prejudices' were raised towards Catholics (1, p. 268), showcased in Mme Lefebvre's refractory belief that in England little Magdalen would be 'safe for heaven', whereas if she ended up being forcefully taken to a French convent, 'hell will be her portion' (1, pp. 268-69).<sup>48</sup> Gaskell's reminder of past prejudices that segregated Protestants and

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<sup>46</sup> F. D. Maurice, *A Letter to The Lord Bishop of London*, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Gaskell had shown some disadvantages of having a State church before, notably, in 'The Sexton's Hero', but her case was never as strong as here.

<sup>48</sup> This ironically hints at the reason Maurice was dismissed from his job at King's College - the alleged reason Gaskell wrote 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' - as he negated his



Catholics, people who professed to follow the same God, is timely, not only because of the Established Church officials' treatment of Maurice, but also because around 1854 the Crimean conflict was driving a wedge between Protestant and Catholic believers on the one hand and Russian and Greek Orthodox followers on the other.

Religious discrimination in England had been on Gaskell's mind when she left for Paris in January 1854, and it made her alive to religious discrimination abroad.<sup>49</sup> That month a Greek insurrection took place in Macedonia whereby Greek Orthodox Christians revolted against their Ottoman rulers. While in 1827 the Greeks - with help from England, France and Russia - had gained independence, many ethnic Greeks and other Christians still lived scattered throughout the vast Ottoman empire. Groups of these Greeks now rebelled. Having access to Fauriel's papers as their 'sole legatee', arguably, this news would have prompted Mohl to impart her early concern for the Greek cause and show Gaskell Fauriel's 'Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne'.<sup>50</sup> The revolt took place on 30 January and on 18 February 'Modern Greek Songs' appeared in *Household Words*. I suggest the two are connected.

Letters from Gaskell's acquaintance Richard Cobden MP reveal 'the whole mess' of the Eastern Question. In March 1854 he records that a debate 'about the Christians in Turkey [...] drew out several speakers who spoke against the war or against the Turk', while two weeks later he and fellow Liberal MP John Bright contemplated 'moving a peace amendment', but this notion was abandoned when they realized there was insufficient support.<sup>51</sup> Gaskell's friend Catherine Winkworth, herself a supporter of the

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believe in eternal damnation. Gaskell's works work on several different levels, and not all readers would have understood her nuances.

<sup>49</sup> Furnivall had just sent her a list with the request to obtain signatures for Maurice, to which Gaskell replied in the affirmative, though with the proviso that she will first be off to France for a fortnight. [c. 9 January 1854], *Letters*, p. 262.

<sup>50</sup> Kathleen O'Maera, *Madame Mohl: Her Salon and Her Friends: A Study of Social Life in Paris*, p. 97. Gaskell seems to have owned a copy. *The Manchester Literary Club* volume 21, 1895, p. 472 notes that Fauriel's 'Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne' 'is mentioned as received from Mrs Gaskell.' Koustinoudi remarks that Gaskell seemed unaware of Sheridan's translation, as 'all of her references are to the French original [...]'. Anna Koustinoudi and Charalampos Passalis, 'Gaskell the Ethnographer; The Case of "Modern Greek Songs"', in *Place and Progress in the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. by Lesa Scholl and Emily Morris (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 141.

<sup>51</sup> *Letters of Richard Cobden*, Volume III, [14 March 1854], p. 21; *Ibid.*, 29 March 1854, p. 22. Sabine Clemm describes how from appreciative in the summer of 1853 the British media turned against Christian Greeks at the beginning of 1854 after their insurrection against their Ottoman rulers, Britain's ally. See *Dickens, Journalism, and Nationhood: Mapping the World in Household Words* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 117-18. Gaskell's review was a dissenting voice, supporting the Greek Christians.

war, remarked that 'Cobden and Bright were thus the first liberal leaders [...] to discover that peace and democracy do not go hand in hand'.<sup>52</sup> With war seemingly inevitable, Cobden advocated that 'the best course was for Britain to impose conditions for its support of Turkey which would benefit Christians in the Ottoman Empire.'<sup>53</sup> 'Modern Greek Songs' seems intended to promote a similar cause of action.

Gaskell facilitates her readers' understanding about the Greeks' struggle for freedom by drawing connections between British folk heroes and Greek heroes. She compares Greek outlaws, the Klephts, who only took from the Turk 'what [they] thought was unjustly acquired, and unfairly held', to 'our Saxon ancestors' (1, p. 287) and their treatment of the Normans. Her concluding remark 'Robin Hood was an English Klepht' (Ibid.) cleverly persuades readers to side with the Greek rebels against the Turks. In this way, 'Modern Greek Songs' illustrates that people with different national identities are connected through a common humanity. Similarly, in 'Traits and Stories' Gaskell had linked the Scots and Huguenots, not only through customs, but through a history of persecution. Following an allusion to the battle of Culloden (1746), where 'the Highlands were, at the chieftain's call, alive with armed men [in] tartans' (1, p. 266), she succinctly notes, 'cruelties were perpetrated, which it is as well, for the honour of human nature, should be forgotten' (Ibid.). Within a treatise on past instances of persecution in France, Gaskell reminds her readers about shameful deeds that had taken place in Britain. It gives them pause for reflection.

In 'Modern Greek Songs' Gaskell implies that insurrections against oppressive regimes are acceptable, a point she would continue to press in *Sylvia's Lovers*. This was brave, as at that point ethnic Greeks sided against Turkey, Britain's ally. Well ahead of her time, in 'Traits and Stories' Gaskell had already hinted at a need for foreign government intervention on behalf of persecuted minority groups as she not only portrayed England as a haven for Huguenot refugees, but also as a country that had ignored them during Cardinal Richelieu's second siege of Rochelle when 'looked-for assistance from England' (1, p. 265) failed to materialize. Gaskell seems to radically imply that at times a country has a moral obligation to interfere on behalf of an oppressed minority group – even if those people are in fact subject to the government persecuting them. In 'Corsica', based on an account by Boswell in which he claims that

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<sup>52</sup> *Memorials of Two Sisters, Susanna and Catherine Winkworth*, ed. by Margaret Josephine Shaen (London: Longmans, 1908), pp. 36-37.

<sup>53</sup> *The Letters of Richard Cobden, Volume II 1848-1853*, p. 520.

without British help the Corsicans' liberty would vanish, Barbauld similarly appeals to the British for military intervention.<sup>54</sup> By the time her poem was published, the island was, however, already overrun by the French. Gaskell's short comment on the fall of Rochelle seems to echo Barbauld's comment that 'Cyrnus is no more' as 'Her generous sons [...] by numbers crush'd, Admir'd, unaided fell.'<sup>55</sup> 'Modern Greek Songs' may be read as an appeal for support of Greek Orthodox Christians as in December 1853 the insurrection had already started.

Greek Orthodox Christians may also have been on Gaskell's mind when writing 'An Accursed Race', which reminds readers of times when racial segregation divided church congregations. Gaskell's terse comment '[t]he Cagots stood afar off, near the door' (3, p. 299) paints a haunting picture, denoting how for centuries the French and Spanish Cagots were forbidden access to parts of the church assigned to 'the pure race'. Even in what Gaskell ironically dubs 'more tolerant' villages Cagot believers were discriminated against as priests offered them the bread 'on a long wooden fork' (Ibid.), seemingly fearing to defile themselves through close proximity. Gaskell is at her most ironic here as this of all places (church) and times (the celebration of Eucharist) is when believers should feel united. Instead, the Cagots, who 'were good Catholics' (3, p. 299), are cruelly dismissed.<sup>56</sup> Published during the Crimean War, 'An Accursed Race' is a tacit reminder not to allow racial issues to interfere with Christian brotherhood.

### ***North and South and the Problem of Religious Discrimination***

Though throughout the novel Margaret Hale is its heroine, when at the outset of the novel her father explains his religious concerns, her attitude is one of the strongest Anglican bigotry. She clearly believes in the visible and not the invisible church, for she fails to grasp that her father – as he in fact tells her – does continue to believe. To her doing so is impossible outside the Anglican church and, distraught, she believes that he will be 'for ever separate from me, from mamma' (7, p. 41). The commonly held belief,

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<sup>54</sup> See Robert Jones, 'What then Should Britons Feel? Anna Laetitia Barbauld and the Plight of the Corsicans', *Women's Writing*, 9:2 (2002), 285-304 (p. 295). To refer back to my earlier comment on Gaskell's comparison of Huguenots to the Scots and their revolt, in 'Corsica', Barbauld had similarly given 'a northern European [] cast to the Corsicans' character and to their appetite for liberty' by comparing them to the Scots and referring to the Jacobite uprising of 1715.

<sup>55</sup> William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, *Selected Poetry & Prose*, p. 65.

<sup>56</sup> Recchio notes that throughout their careers Dickens and Gaskell were concerned with portraying a society regulated by Christian morality, which included 'communion', 'brotherhood,' 'concord', and 'peace'. Thomas Recchio, *Cranford: A Publishing History*, p. 43.

as described in 'Traits and Stories', was that Christians belonging to other denominations would go to hell. Anderson and Satalino note that Mr Hale, despite his momentous decision to give up his living and follow his conscience, ultimately proves quite ineffective due to his passiveness. They argue that Gaskell wanted people to stand up for their perception of truth, as the ensuing 'productive conflict' would effect social change.<sup>57</sup> This is exemplified through Margaret's, Thornton's and Higgins's outspokenness, which serves as 'self-reformation' as upon reflection all three revise their opinions.<sup>58</sup> *North and South* highlights the importance of communication between believers of different creeds to bridge the religious divide.

When chapter four of *North and South* appeared in *Household Words* on 9 September 1854, Gaskell had already exchanged views on the plot with John Forster, Emily Shaen (née Winkworth) who was 'versed in German theology', and Charlotte Brontë. Readers of *Household Words* would not have expected, and likely have been put off by, a narrative which seemed to turn into a theological treatise. Indeed, as Easson has noted, Gaskell's specific references to the Reverend Joshua Oldfield, one of the early Unitarians, would have been understood by Unitarians but puzzled others. When finally Mr Hale's predicament is revealed - he feels unable 'to make a fresh declaration of conformity to the Liturgy' (7, p. 37) - the readers may have been appalled with the course the novel seemed to take.<sup>59</sup> *Household Words* being a weekly periodical they could not have foreseen that this matter would not be dragged out in following instalments. Gaskell, an experienced writer by then, would have appreciated such dangers. She took a risk, seemingly willing herself to follow her conscience no matter what the consequences.

I suggest that Gaskell had expected Dickens, who was touring Italy when the controversy involving Maurice erupted, to champion his cause on his homecoming. This may be deduced from Gaskell's comment to Furnivall that once Dickens returned she would apprise him 'of every circumstance relating to Mr Maurice's dismissal ..&c/, & I am sure he will feel hearty interest in it all.'<sup>60</sup> On 2 January 1854 Dickens acknowledged Gaskell's 'valuable aid to *Household Words*' while he was abroad,

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<sup>57</sup> Kathleen Anderson and Kelsey Satalino, 'An Honest up and down Fight': Confrontation and Social Change in *North and South*, *GJ*, 27 (2013), 108-25.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>59</sup> In fact, as Angus Easson argues, this chapter refers to 'Mr Hale's conversion to Unitarianism'. Angus Easson, 'Mr Hale's Doubts', p. 39.

<sup>60</sup> To F.J. Furnivall, 3 December 1853, *Letters*, p. 256.

mentioning that he had perused her contributions ‘with true interest and emotion; but [he] ha[d] felt the spirit that induced [her] to write it, even more.’<sup>61</sup> These works included ‘Morton Hall’ and ‘Traits and Stories’ which both centre around religious difficulties. However, Dickens proved unwilling to raise the religious bone of contention in *North and South*, instead ‘propos[ing] to cut the crucial dialogues which attempt to explain Mr Hale’s religious difficulties.’<sup>62</sup> Gaskell ignored his input and left the chapter untouched. Clearly, this altercation would have caused friction as Dickens resented Gaskell’s rejection of his advice, which left him to print a section he strongly disapproved of, while she felt let down in a matter close to her heart.

Gaskell not only ignored Dickens’s advice, but in the book version she adds another layer and enlarges her message with an epigraph. While in the serial version of *North and South* she focuses on Protestant Dissenters in England, in the novel she links it with another group of disenfranchised English nonconformists, the Catholics. She does this by adding an epigraph from William Habington’s *Castara*.<sup>63</sup> Habington’s father Thomas had been sentenced to death (but later pardoned) for concealing in his house ‘two Popish priests, who were concerned in the Gunpowder plot’, while his mother Mary had written ‘the celebrated warning letter which Lord Monteagle received, the day before the meeting of Parliament.’<sup>64</sup> Thus the epigraph recalls a period when England was torn apart by religious wars owing to the feud between Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I. Earlier, the Gunpowder plot and Lord Monteagle had appeared in ‘Morton Hall’ (19-26 November 1853), in which narrator Biddy’s stories reveal that a State religion pertains to politics rather than true devotion to God.

Besides referring to difficulties between Christians of different denominations, the chapter on Mr Hale’s difficulties also alludes to Muslims. In the stanza following the one Gaskell chose as epigraph, Habington mentions ‘Cymmerians’, an ancient indo-European ethnic group which is thought to have settled in Cappadocia, Turkey. Habington’s poem ends with the wish that these Cymmerian Muslims would come to know God, stating

Should the Cymmerians, whom no ray

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<sup>61</sup> *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Walter Dexter (London: Nonesuch Press, 1938), p. 531.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Sanders, ‘Serializing Gaskell’, p. 52.

<sup>63</sup> The stanza Gaskell uses is from the part entitled ‘The Holy Man’, which consists of devotional pieces.

<sup>64</sup> *Habington’s Castara, with a Preface and Notes*, ed. by Charles A. Elton (Bristol: Gutch, [1812?]), p. 3.

Doth ere enlight,  
But gaine thy grace, th' have lost their night:  
Not sinners at high noone, but they  
'Mong their blind cloudes have found the day.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly, Margaret's reaction on hearing of her father's doubts is that it was 'as terribly mysterious as if her father were about to turn Mahometan' (7, p. 36). This unexpected association of nonconformists with non-Christians serves as a historical reminder that eighteenth-century Dissenters were regarded as cut off from the church. Gaskell had earlier depicted the Muslims' persecution of Christians in 'Modern Greek Songs', which contrasts with Habington's desire for their salvation. This poses difficulties for the reader as to Gaskell's purpose for incorporating his poem. Though she asserts freedom of religion and conscience, this may reflect on Gaskell's own ambivalent feelings towards Muslims in general, and England's Muslim allies in particular.

Gaskell emphasizes the importance of freedom of religion, arguing that while persecution will not induce people to abandon their belief, it may make them decide to leave their nation. 'Modern Greek Songs' highlights that 'no Klepth was ever known to be a renegade. Whatever horrors awaited him if he refused to become a Mussulman, he remained true to his faith' (1, p. 290). Likewise, in 'Traits and Stories' Farmer Lefebvre would 'sacrifice anything – would be proud of martyrdom, if need be' (1, p. 268). Gaskell asserts that faith in God is at the heart of who people are; therefore, religion and freedom of conscience must not be tampered with. If necessary everything (health, wealth, country, life) is to be sacrificed for it. As the Huguenots were willing to relinquish 'affluence and refinement [...] for the sake of their religion' (1, p. 275), Mr Hale gives up his living and moves to a radically different world (Milton) in order to follow his conscience.

In summary, Gaskell teaches that substituting national religion for national identity is short-changing Christianity and God. Instead, she advocates keeping them separate, which would allow Christians to worship the way they consider right as well as support Christians elsewhere in the world, even when – on a national level – they would be considered enemies. These short works imply that Gaskell, like the eighteenth-century Dissenters, considered her British nationality subservient to her religious identity.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 370.

### Gaskell's Short Non-Fiction Works in Context

Gaskell's works fit in well with the content of *Household Words*, as during the Crimean War Dickens seemed especially eager for reform, repeatedly raising the question of national character. The incompetence of army commanders during the Crimean War coupled with his new acquaintanceship with Austen Henry Layard MP, who had been to the East, had induced Dickens to join 'a public political agitation, the Administrative Reform Association', resulting in 'a stream of articles in *Household Words* during the first half of 1855 attacking government incompetence and implicitly supporting radical reform.'<sup>66</sup> A letter from Dickens to Layard on 10 April 1855 expresses his concern about the condition of English citizens: 'there is nothing in the present time at once so galling and so alarming to me as the alienation of the people from their own public affairs.'<sup>67</sup> *Household Words* is Dickens' - and Gaskell's - way to use moral pressure in order to transform the nation, as he 'know[s] of nothing that can be done beyond keeping their wrongs continually before them.'<sup>68</sup> It weekly reported on conditions in foreign countries, encouraging its readers to draw comparisons with England.

Dickens had a clear agenda. During the Crimean War he only published one novel, *Little Dorrit*, which was released in monthly parts between December 1855 and June 1857, and was 'much more politically charged than the book version of the novel, because [the instalments] were juxtaposed against scathing and openly critical articles'.<sup>69</sup> According to Sally Ledger, 'Sometimes, as in the case of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, the issues addressed in Dickens's and Morley's political essays resonate and enter into dialogue with other contributions to the magazine.'<sup>70</sup> In fact, at times the entire content of an issue of *Household Words* built towards a specific social message. *Household Words* 'was not merely an expression of English national identity as it perceived it at the time, but took an active part in forming, as well as formulating, that identity.'<sup>71</sup> This was an underlying aim of the periodical. Sabine Clemm suggests that the periodical both questions the nature of the English national character, and tries to embody 'English' moralities as its 'sense of Englishness is not bound up with a

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<sup>66</sup> Dennis Walder, *Dickens and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 173.

<sup>67</sup> Georgina Hogarth and Mary Dickens, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, p. 366.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>69</sup> Anna Faktorovich, *Rebellion as Genre*, p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 191.

<sup>71</sup> Sabine Clemm, *Dickens, Journalism, and Nationhood*, p. 50.

political entity or nationality so much as with a code of behavior, a set of morals.’<sup>72</sup> Studying Gaskell’s work in context helps determine how and which social aspects Dickens strengthened.

The overall message of the issue of 10 December in which ‘Traits and Stories of the Huguenots’ appeared – religious troubles in Europe – is not communicated very effectively, arguably because it was assembled while Dickens was away, touring Italy. With ‘Near Christmas’, a sentimental love story, the number opens on a religious note, while Harriet Martineau’s tale about a reformer’s fruitless search for a nation that would accept his ideas to ‘annihilate [...] social evils’ adds little to Gaskell’s essay, but reflects on *Household Words*’ underlying aim of reform.<sup>73</sup> Gaskell’s description of religious difficulties in Western Europe ties in with ‘Protégés of the Czar’, an article on the religion, history and current events in Bulgaria.<sup>74</sup> It notes the influence of Russia and Turkey, which in turn connects it with an episode of Murray’s ‘The Roving Englishman’, set in Turkey and mentioning the Crimean Conflict.<sup>75</sup> The issue finishes with the final instalment of ‘A Child’s History of England’, which relates to the reign of Queen Victoria. Apart from the fact that this issue of *Household Words* provides information on European countries involved in the Crimea Crisis, the issue lacks a clear overarching theme.

The 25 February 1854 issue in which ‘Modern Greek Songs’ appeared contains a more coherent and radical message as it denounces Turkey, England’s projected ally, and seems to attempt to dampen patriotic ardour. During this time of impending war - England and France would officially declare war on Russia in March - messages of farewell and descriptions of customs like ‘substitut[ing] an effigy for the real corpse’ (1, p. 285) when someone dies abroad undoubtedly imparted a new and deeper significance. So did Gaskell’s description of the feats of the Klephts: their ‘power of making long marches’, their ‘capab[ility] of enduring extraordinary hunger’, their ‘endurance [...] in bearing torture’, and the references to ‘a sure hit from a bullet’, and men ‘slain in battle’(1, p. 289). Other articles strengthen this idea, such as Unitarian Henry Morley’s ‘Jack and the Union Jack’, which follows Gaskell’s contribution. Morley discusses two British government tracts that aim to recruit young men for the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> *Household Words*, Vol. 8, p. 339.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 343-44.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 343.



navy with promises of best quality clothes, no injustice, liberal provisions, an easy workload, compensation for loss or injury, a pension, and ways to educate oneself aboard. Seemingly informative, repeated references to the press gang reveal this to be a clever piece of government criticism. Morley's reminders of government-condoned injustice of the recent past effectively warn readers against trusting the current administration outright. 'Union Jack' strengthens the elements of battle in 'Modern Greek Songs', as does the poem 'Died in India' about someone who died in 'a strange alien land', 'pin[ing] in vain for loved ones far away'.<sup>76</sup> Finally, the travelogue 'A Lift in a Cart' conjures up images of soldiers on the march in its description of a group of men wandering on the continent who are reduced to sleeping on straw, walking long distances, and riding in carts. With the periodical's last page announcing the imminent publication of 'Hard Times', the issue effectively warns of an impending war, cautions readers not to take the British government at its word, and to expect hardship.

*Household Words* is au courant as according to Arthur Hugh Clough 'our literature at present is the War Column in the Newspaper'.<sup>77</sup> Markovits argues that 'Dickens's and Russell's prose intertwined to form the voice of authority in the war.'<sup>78</sup> Dickens' periodical published articles such as 'The Turk at Home' (4 March 1854) 'Education in Turkey' (11 March), 'Greek Seamen duped' (18 March) and 'Greek Fire (March 25), as well as Henry Morley's 'A Russian Cauldron in Full Boil', and George A. Sala's chip 'The Girl I left behind Me' (1 April) about soldiers bound for the Crimea. These stories resemble journalistic articles, commenting on the news of the day. 'Greek Songs', with its Eastern setting, particularly resembles one of war reporter William Howard Russell's newspaper articles for *The Times*. Russell's method was 'overwhelmingly novelistic', as instead of concentrating on the actual battles, he emphasized 'the details behind the fighting' which he considered indicative of a social problem.<sup>79</sup> Though 'Modern Greek Songs' delineates the effect of war and revolt, Gaskell's main focus is likewise to uncover historical and religious antecedents that induced current evils.

The *Household Words* edition of 25 August 1855, which incorporates 'An Accursed Race', raises questions of national character: what is an Englishman? What

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<sup>76</sup> *Household Words*, vol. 9, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Stefanie Markovits, 'North and South, East and West', 463-93 (p. 467).

<sup>78</sup> Stefanie Markovits, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 38.

<sup>79</sup> Stefanie Markovits, 'North and South, East and West', pp. 468-69.

does it mean to be British? <sup>80</sup> The periodical promotes inclusiveness instead of pigeonholing others according to race or culture. It further exemplifies Dickens' biting tone as he attacks England's bureaucracy, opening the number with 'The Worthy Magistrate', an ironic title for a report denouncing Chief Police Magistrate Mr Hall as unfit for his job since he typecast Englishmen as drunkards, and in which the Home Office is disparaged as being 'merely an ornamental institution supported out of the general pocket'. <sup>81</sup> The penultimate article in this issue, entitled 'Poor Angelica', reflects on the life and career of eighteenth-century painter Angelica Kauffmann, who is depicted as English since, writer George A. Sala contends, 'though undeniably a foreigner, she had as undeniable a right to be mentioned in the records of British painters as [...] other foreigners conciliated among us at the same epoch'. <sup>82</sup> He then lists famous foreign artists considered English. The article may be seen to promote an inclusive society through shared ideals and productiveness, and as such it links with 'An Accursed Race' which condemns racial stereotyping.

Gaskell's contribution, though set on the continent, is clearly written with England in mind. In her first story for *Howitt's Journal*, 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras', Gaskell had made fun of the Victorian habit of ending each story with a moral, asking her reader, 'Do you ever read the moral, concluding sentence of a story?' and informing her readers, 'I never do' (1, p. 69). Contrary to habit, in the conclusion of 'An Accursed Race' Gaskell draws attention to what she considers '[t]he moral of the history of the accursed race' (3, p. 309). She conveys this through the epitaph she once noticed in the churchyard of Stratford-on-Avon: 'What faults you saw in me, Pray strive to shun; And look at home: there's Something to be done' (Ibid.). England was to consider its own condition: which instances of social prejudice and unreasonable fears needed eradicating?

In January 1854 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' appeared anonymously as 'Stories of the Huguenots' in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. <sup>83</sup> The way the editors shortened Gaskell's work strengthens its civic message. *Harper's Monthly*, perhaps the

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<sup>80</sup> Sabine Clemm uses this number to illustrate ideas of national identity in *Household Words*.

<sup>81</sup> *Household Words*, Vol. 12, p.73.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 8, December 1853–May 1854, pp. 251-55. Gaskell's 'My French Master' which depicts the impact of the French Revolution on the lives of French and English citizens, appeared the following month (pp. 382-91).

world's most popular magazine, selling on average 110,000 copies per issue between 1850 and 1865, 'built a patriotic message' and trumpeted British realism as representing 'high culture', despite their stated aim to be 'a strictly national work' filled with 'patriotism'.<sup>84</sup> It aimed to provide educational reading material that was useful, intelligent, virtuous and patriotic, and would help promote national unity.<sup>85</sup> Apart from the recurring 'Monthly Record of Current Events' and 'Editor's Chair', the January issue contained Thackeray's serialized novel *The Newcomes* and G.P.R. James's 'The Italian Sisters', alongside multiple anonymous works set in England or providing information on the historical-political situation in Europe, such as 'Social Customs of Brittany', 'The Career of Talleyrand', and 'Dutch and English Intercourse with Japan'.<sup>86</sup> *Harper's Monthly* pirated numerous British articles, and as Dickens was the leading realist novelist, effectively their main source was *Household Words*. Though 'Traits and Stories' was geared towards making Gaskell's compatriots reflect on religious intolerance in England, across the Atlantic *Harper's* edited version instilled feelings of national pride by emphasising the admirable traits of its citizens' ancestors.

*Harper's Monthly's* editing of 'Stories of the Huguenots' makes it more American. The beginning, with its account of French history and anecdotal evidence Gaskell had 'heard and collected,' copies the English edition. However, near the end the editors delete references to European havens of refuge and to trials caused by pirates and the Spanish Inquisition. Though problems with Indians are mentioned once, the editors remove further references. 'Stories of the Huguenots' notes that several of the Presidents during the Revolutionary War were of Huguenot descent, but deletes Gaskell's concluding description of the condition of Huguenots' descendants in England. Hence *Harper's Monthly's* version leaves the reader with the impression of French Protestant immigrants who prospered in America, the 'land of hope'. In effect, the edited essay emphasises the rational Dissenters' conviction that the future lies in America, the birthplace of the ideals of the French Revolution, which explains why so

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<sup>84</sup> Jennifer Phegley, 'Literary Piracy, Nationalism, and Women Readers in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 1850-1855', *American Periodicals*, 14:1 (2004), 63-90 (pp. 64, 70, 71).

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Lilly, 'The National Archive: *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and the Civic Responsibilities of a Commercial Literary Periodical, 1850-1853', *American Periodicals*, 15:2 (2005), 142-62.

<sup>86</sup> *Household Words*' 'A Breton Wedding' (22 February 1851) appeared twice in *Harper's Monthly* - first as an unacknowledged reprint in June 1851, and then as a revised and expanded version entitled 'Social Customs in Brittany' in January 1854. Anne Lohrli, *Household Words, A Weekly Journal: 1850-1859*, p. 357.

many English Dissenters in the 1780s and 1790s emigrated there, as did Joseph Priestley.

The penultimate sentence lists the Huguenots' admirable qualities, traits such as 'untiring submission' to the government, being 'temperate, industrious, thoughtful', 'intelligent', and 'full of good principle and strength of character' – all hallmarks of good citizens. Similarly, Barbauld's *An Address to the Opposers of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790) based the Dissenters' demand 'to be considered children of the state, though [they were] not so of the church', on their position 'as men, [...] as citizens, [...] as good subjects'.<sup>87</sup> Importantly, in 'Stories of the Huguenots' the laudatory traits of the French Dissenters are explained by the fact that, 'they suffered and emigrated to secure the rights of conscience'. Though accurately copied from the *Household Words* version, as the essay's concluding comment it leaves a strong impression, whereas in the original it is rather obscured in the middle of the work.<sup>88</sup> 'Stories of the Huguenots' conveys that following one's conscience is not just linked with a person's Christian identity, but characterizes citizens who are independent thinkers, individuals with initiative who are able to weather adversity – in short, compatriots to be proud of. As it makes its way across the Atlantic, independent of Gaskell herself, 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' provides a new civic lesson specifically geared towards an American audience. While here an American magazine edits the European context of her work, in the following chapter, which explores Gaskell's notions of transatlantic citizenship, she edits an American work to make it more accessible for English readers.

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<sup>87</sup> William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, *Selected Poetry & Prose*, p. 266.

<sup>88</sup> *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January 1854, p. 255.

## Chapter 4: 1858-1860 Scrutinising the Dissenting Past

This chapter demonstrates how in 1858 and 1859 Gaskell goes back to her roots and explores political and religious attitudes towards her radical Dissenting past. This new look at her heritage was the result of renewed contact with a number of likeminded New England writers and artists. The overall theme of her stories during these years concerns leadership and the importance of moral guidance, and she connects this with events which should have highlighted the principles of radical Dissenters – democracy and freedom of conscience – but which resulted temporarily in the opposite. In *My Lady Ludlow* Gaskell examines why the appeal for more equality, liberty and brotherhood of the French Revolution descended into the havoc of the Terror, while in *Lois the Witch* she provides insight into why the New England Puritans, who had fled Europe in search of freedom, within one generation started infighting and killing members of their own community during the Salem Witch hunts. Instead of martyred heroes she depicts the Puritans as culpable aggressors. By focusing on New England Gaskell reflects on her Dissenting past, but also the future. Another work that will be examined in this chapter, ‘Curious, if True’ has an unusual format and reads like a fairy-tale, but I suggest that when placing it alongside the novellas, ideas about being trapped in the past and getting caught in myths of the past become apparent.

The three years following the publication of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) were of particular importance in Gaskell’s development as a writer. The stories under review differ in style and format and show how Gaskell was coming of age as a writer. The research and writing of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* added to her growth as author, while its tumultuous reception with accusations that she had misrepresented people and places (notably her description of the harsh treatment the Brontë sisters experienced at Cowan Bridge, the Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*) left her feeling unjustly attacked – a feature explored in, for example, *Lois the Witch*. Owing to the problems following the *Life* Gaskell determined to ‘publish[.] for the future in America’.<sup>1</sup> That the ongoing criticisms greatly distressed her is evident from a remark made by Meta in 1859 that ‘any allusion to [..] the Life of C.B. seems to open the old wound.’<sup>2</sup> Gaskell’s publishing format may be explained by Nicholas Higgins’s observation,

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<sup>1</sup> From Meta Gaskell for her Mother, to Charles Eliot Norton, 9 May 1859, *Further Letters*, p. 197; to Charles Eliot Norton, 9 March 1859, *Letters*, p. 535.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

‘Folk who sets up to doctor th’ world w’ their truth, mun suit different for different minds’ and be a bit tender in th’ way of giving it too, or th’ poor sick fools may spit it out i’ their faces.’ (7, p. 213)

In *My Lady Ludlow*, first serialized in *Household Words* between 19 June and 25 September 1858, Gaskell combines a quasi-historical account of the process of change on an English estate with a long narrative set in revolution-torn France. The subplot reinforces her message that the moral education of the lower classes is necessary to help England progress in a balanced way. Julia Sun-Joo Lee contends that *My Lady Ludlow* addresses civic problems in both England and America, for in it Gaskell ‘depicts turn of the century anxieties while evoking mid-century fears over American slave literacy and British working class reform.’<sup>3</sup> Moreover, she ‘invokes the racial hysteria of the antebellum American South in the class hysteria of Revolutionary France’.<sup>4</sup> Gaskell questions what makes a community, and addresses erroneous beliefs that a viable community is created through a common religion, as in *Lois the Witch*, nationality or politics, as in *My Lady Ludlow*. Earlier rational Dissenter Richard Price in his authoritative ‘A Discourse on the Love of Our Country’, which was discussed in the introduction, had likewise contended that nationality, politics and religion should not be the supreme aim, instead proposing universal benevolence, as modelled by Christ, and exemplified in the brotherhood of man.

Gaskell closely based *Lois the Witch*, first serialized in *All the Year Round* between 8 and 22 October 1859, on Charles Wentworth Upham’s *Lectures on Witchcraft* (1831) which drew on first-hand accounts such as church records, minutes of examinations and letters to which he, as the junior pastor of the first church in Salem, had access. She illustrates the Salem witch-hunt of 1692-93 through the eyes of the fictional character Lois. Louisa Jayne Foster notes that *Lois the Witch* is a highly unusual British account of an American historical event.<sup>5</sup> I suggest that Gaskell’s Dissenting heritage was similar to that of the New Englanders and that this explains her interest in and understanding of the event. Foster’s claim that witchcraft narratives provide American readers with an opportunity to revisit their Puritan roots and engage

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<sup>3</sup> Julia Sun-Joo Lee, *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Louisa Jayne Foster, ‘The Monstrous Transatlantic Witchcraft Narrative’, in *Transatlantic Mistranslations*, ed. by Robin Peel and Daniel Maudlin (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2003), pp. 63-83.

with their own history applies to Gaskell, who similarly revisits her own Dissenting history.<sup>6</sup>

In ‘Curious, if True’, published in the *Cornhill* in February 1860, Gaskell portrays a gathering of famous fairy-tale characters who have aged and suffer from the consequences of characteristics that used to be their strength. The tale is unusual since it inserts names of contemporary leaders and ground-breaking nineteenth-century events like the passing of the Great Reform Bill.<sup>7</sup> Shirley Foster sees ‘Curious, If True’ as a parody of gothic tales, and she makes clear that it is not easily understood: ‘[w]hile the tale seems to be making a satirical point about the failure to distinguish between fact and fiction, it may also be a wry self-referential commentary on the absurdities of Gothic melodrama’.<sup>8</sup> Peter Stiles links it with Gaskell’s religious faith, arguing that the tale depicts Joseph Priestley’s notion of Necessity (a form of moral determinism influential in English Unitarianism until the middle of the nineteenth century) through the way the fairy-tale characters are held accountable for their behaviour.<sup>9</sup> I concur with Foster that many interpretations are possible since the tale is ambiguous, while, like Stiles, I argue that Gaskell’s Dissenting heritage is an underlying but key point to interpret the fairy-tale.

On 8 November 1857 William Gaskell preached a sermon in Cross Street Chapel which spelled out the lessons his wife’s narratives show.<sup>10</sup> Keywords in his discourse occur repeatedly in his wife’s works, demonstrating how her ideas are rooted in the Unitarian tradition. In ‘A Sermon for Milton’s Death-Day’ William Gaskell elevates John Milton as a model, a public benefactor who used his powers to extend ‘the dominion of freedom, righteousness, and truth’, who ‘followed the call of duty’ and ‘abided by truth and conscience’.<sup>11</sup> All his faculties, Gaskell points out, were used as ‘pure benefaction to his race’ and ‘to the assistance of his country’.<sup>12</sup> Milton battled ‘against evils of moral and intellectual slavery’, desiring ‘that the people should think

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Gaskell had earlier placed historical facts in a fictional context in *North and South* (see chapter three).

<sup>8</sup> Jill Matus, *The Cambridge Companion*, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Stiles, ‘Calvin’s Encounter with Cinderella: Vital Antinomies in Elizabeth Gaskell’s “Curious, If True”’, *GJ*, 12 (1998), 14-20.

<sup>10</sup> William Gaskell, *A Sermon for Milton’s Death-Day Preached in Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1857* (London: Whitfield, 1857).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 7, and 16.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 5, 7.

for themselves' so that they 'should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice'.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, he notes the 'blessed [...] influence' parents can exert on their children, describing how becoming a good citizen is learned in the home, an idea earlier advocated in Barbauld's *Civic Sermons*. Like his wife, Gaskell underscores the need to think critically, to battle prejudice and live as an upright citizen, benefiting the human race and the nation. Despite having such laudable life goals, Gaskell's reference to 'our own despised and calumniated household of faith' seems to suggest the Unitarian Dissenters still considered themselves social outcasts.<sup>14</sup> For Gaskell to mention this in 1857 shows that his wife's stories, relating past instances of religious prejudice, were still felt to be current. It also highlights how encouraging interaction with likeminded New Englanders must have been to the Gaskells. As America lacked an Established Church these writers and philosophers could freely communicate faith-related matters. In this chapter the influence New England exerted on Gaskell's work will be considered.

I suggest that her editing of *Mabel Vaughan* (1857), a novel by New England Unitarian Maria Susanna Cummins, influenced Gaskell and that some cross-fertilization of ideas took place between the novelists. In this chapter I first analyse similarities between Gaskell's and Cummins's works and demonstrate how Gaskell's other publications with her new publishers Sampson Low and Harper addressed civic problems in England and America. I then consider why Gaskell was intent on writing for the *Atlantic Monthly*, and I argue that it inspired her to write *Lois the Witch*. After a close reading of 'Curious, if True', I explore Gaskell's ideas on leadership as portrayed in *My Lady Ludlow*, *Lois the Witch* and 'Curious, if True'. In the final section I consider how a combination of finding out more about Brontë's inner life and an exchange of letters with John Stuart Mill may have strengthened Gaskell's exploration of ideas concerning misrepresentation which appear in all three works.

### **Old and New England: Bridging the Gap with *Mabel Vaughan***

In February 1857 Gaskell wrote to Edward Everett Hale, Unitarian Minister in Boston, to thank him for sending her books. It would seem that Hale actively promoted Gaskell's immersion in and understanding of the American culture and customs by

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 15.



suggesting books (as by Unitarian clergyman Jacob Abbott) and offering to post reading material.<sup>15</sup> She informed him of her imminent departure for Italy where she anticipated meeting his relative, Harriet Beecher Stowe, an acquaintance since 1853.<sup>16</sup> It further transpired that Gaskell and her daughters Marianne and Meta had been invited to stay the first days of their two-month sojourn with American sculptor William Wetmore Story and his wife Emelyn. This is noteworthy since according to Joan Hedrick the Storys acted like a magnet to other Americans, notably those linked with the *Atlantic Monthly*, who likewise came to Italy for prolonged periods of time.<sup>17</sup> Few letters of Gaskell's extended stay in Italy survive, but evidently she became reacquainted with 'American scholar and man of letters' Charles Eliot Norton, and met Stowe over breakfast at the Storys.<sup>18</sup> The holiday in Rome is crucial to her development as a cosmopolitan writer for it introduced her to a greater circle of likeminded Americans and opened new doors for publishing original works across the Atlantic.

Following her return from Italy Gaskell became involved with Sampson Low, the representative of Maria S. Cummins and Harriet Beecher Stowe. These New England authors had previously dealt with Boston firm John P. Jewett & Co who had issued both *Uncle Tom's Cabin; Or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852) and Cummins' first novel, *The Lamplighter* (1854). Through his acumen for advertising their novels became the two bestselling novels in America.<sup>19</sup> *The Lamplighter* is a Bildungsroman which describes how abandoned and abused orphan Gerty is changed through her interaction with lamplighter Trueman Flint and Christian gentlewoman Miss Emily. 'Uncle True' adopts Gerty but after he dies when she is still young, she moves in with Miss Emily and her father, who give her a thorough education. Most of the novel depicts how Miss Gertrude's moral example enlightens and changes the lives of her acquaintances. She is

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<sup>15</sup> Gaskell mentions that she likes Abbott's books, but does not specify titles she has read. In the Introduction and chapter 5 of this thesis Gaskell's interest in and reference to Barbauld's educational children's stories is noted. The 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry for Abbott mentions that his best known writings, the 'Rollo Books' 'did for one or two generations of young American readers a service not unlike that' of Aikin and Barbauld's *Evenings at Home*.

<sup>16</sup> Hale's wife Emily Baldwin Perkins was Harriet Beecher Stowe's niece.

<sup>17</sup> Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 270.

<sup>18</sup> By Marianne Gaskell for her mother, to Charles Eliot Norton, 30 October 1857, *Further Letters*, p. 179, n. 1.

<sup>19</sup> By 1863 *The Lamplighter* had sold 93,000 copies and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* 310,000 copies; only Washington Irving's combined works surpassed this (800,000 copies). Susan S. Williams, "'Promoting an Extensive Sale': The Production and Reception of *The Lamplighter*", *New England Quarterly*, 69 (1996), 179-200 (p. 195).

in effect a spiritual lamplighter. Reviews exalted the ‘purity’ of Cummins’ novel, and Susan Williams notes that ‘the plot “elevates” its readers by giving them a model of virtuous behavior’.<sup>20</sup> Jewett declared bankruptcy in 1857, following which Stowe and Cummins became involved with Sampson Low, the London representative of Harper’s publishing house.<sup>21</sup> Gaskell’s relationship with Low was ambivalent from the first as she called him ‘a tricky man’ and mistrusted him for having done some “*dodgy*” things’.<sup>22</sup> Why then did she choose to collaborate with him? A letter to Anne Robson in which Gaskell mentions that her new publisher is ‘Sampson Low, who publishes Mrs Stowe’s books’ may shed light on this.<sup>23</sup> I suggest that Gaskell opted to join forces with a publisher she considered ‘rascally’ because of his antecedents as the current publisher of the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and that she is positioning herself to Stowe (and Cummins), perhaps with a view to writing something comparable. Her choice of publisher is indicative of how Gaskell sees herself as a reform-minded author.

Gaskell’s interest in *Mabel Vaughan* was its overarching theme of Christian leadership coupled with moral guidance. Cummins’s novel depicts how Mr and Mrs Vaughan’s lack of moral instruction negatively impacts their children and grandchildren. Fortunately, however, following a life-changing encounter with a selfless handicapped girl their daughter Mabel is able to undo the curse on her family. Earlier, Dickens had complained about Gaskell’s tendency to kill off her characters; in *Mabel Vaughan* Cummins uses the same method to eliminate characters with bad moral influences, preparing the way for the moral rebirth of the Vaughans. The novel has two outspoken Christian heroes from different spheres of life: invalid shopkeeper’s daughter Rosy Hope and gentleman Bayard Percival who model truth and neighbourly love. Rosy teaches English and Bible stories to poor German immigrant children, while Percival’s stance against injustice and inequality results in his election as the people’s Representative to Washington. In her novels Cummins parades a range of model Christians who are also model citizens.

In the preface to *Mabel Vaughan* Gaskell defines her task as editor as having to ‘render certain expressions clear for English readers’ (1, p. 313), and Easson notes that she changed some American expressions like ‘that’s real mean’ into ‘that’s very

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.191.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.194.

<sup>22</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, [7] December [1857], *Letters*, p. 488; To Charles Eliot Norton, 30 October 1857, *Further Letters*, p. 178.

<sup>23</sup> To Anne Robson, [February 1859], *Letters*, p. 531.

shabby'.<sup>24</sup> She also made some small deletions, mainly concerning the republic's growth and future. Whereas Cummins states,

'Remember, my dear, that your counsels may rule in many generations of hearts, and if the thought will add sanctity to your office, cherish the belief that the principles you instil, may help to mould the future fortunes of this free republic.'

Gaskell deletes the part after 'generations of hearts'.<sup>25</sup> I agree with Easson that '[n]o adverse reflection seems intended on the United States', and argue that she wanted English readers to apply the civic and moral lessons of *Mabel Vaughan*, which might have been lost through Cummins' foreign worldview and flowery language.<sup>26</sup> By cropping the sentence Gaskell strengthened the message. The most notable addition she made is 'An Incident at Niagara Falls', a short tale about a young American's rescue of two poor immigrants. By adding the 'Incident' to chapter thirty Gaskell is clearly going past her remit. The question is why she does this and what she is trying to achieve.

Easson considers the 'Incident' 'light relief and [...] not unsimilar in [...] form and function to' Sally's reminiscence about her sole offer of marriage in *Ruth*.<sup>27</sup> I argue that with 'Incident' Gaskell adds a civic message for Cummins' English readers. The scene in *Mary Barton* in which Jem Wilson faces a gulf of fire and crosses it at his own peril in order to rescue two mill workers who are trapped, resembles 'An Incident at Niagara Falls' where Gaskell depicts another young working class man who braves the raging waters of the Falls in a daring rescue of two trapped Irishmen. Gaskell's incorporated tale provides *Mabel Vaughan* with a working class hero who carries the same high Christian principles as Percival and Rosy. In a period when consideration was being given to the right of representation in Parliament for all classes of citizens, and the more thoughtful operatives were educated at places like the Working Men's College (a Manchester branch of which opened in January 1858 with William Gaskell on the Board of Management and teaching English and literature), Gaskell teaches Cummins's English readers that working people can be heroes and good Christians at that. 'Incident at Niagara Falls' 'by Mrs Gaskell' was republished in *Harper's New Monthly*

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<sup>24</sup> Angus Easson, 'Elizabeth Gaskell, "An Incident at Niagara Falls", and the Editing of *Mabel Vaughan*', *English Language Notes*, 17 (1980), 273–77 (p. 275).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

*Magazine* (who obtained it through Low) in June 1858. However, without context the story lacks the civic impact it has in the edited novel.

In her Preface to *Mabel Vaughan* Gaskell comments that the ‘cousinly connexion with the Americans dates from common ancestors, of whom we are both proud’ (1, p. 313). She mentions that the interchange of novels ‘strengthens our power of understanding [readers on the other side of the Atlantic], and consequently to increase our sympathy with them’ (1, p. 314). She concludes the short Preface with a quotation from Wordsworth’s ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’, ‘All of us [have] one human heart’ (Ibid.), which she had earlier used in *The Moorland Cottage*, as discussed in the introduction. Easson points out that though by politicians the Beggar is deemed useless, he has a distinct part to play since the poor can show him kindness and as such he ‘helps keep alive those feelings that should bring us together in our common humanity’.<sup>28</sup> *Mabel Vaughan* depicts how people from all walks of life, whether rich or poor, in good health or disabled, can make a difference to society. Following her work on Cummins’ novel Gaskell continues to explore this idea, but she juxtaposes it with attitudes which keep people apart, such as pride, jealousy, egotism and greed.

While Theresa Flowers argues that Cummins’ style in *The Lamplighter* resembles the style of Dickens and the Brontë sisters, I suggest that *Mabel Vaughan*, in its basic structure, shows similarities with *North and South*.<sup>29</sup> Just as the Hale family move from the aristocratic south to England’s industrial north, Cummins describes the prosperous Vaughan family’s change from the civilized East (New York) to the pioneering West. In New York there is a distinct difference in ranks, which is reminiscent of English class society, while the West offers opportunities for self-made men to thrive. Like Margaret, Mabel becomes acquainted with a working class single-parent-family - the widow Hope and her children - of whom one daughter eventually dies. Both Margaret and Mabel have a close relationship with their brother, who in their view is unjustly treated by the military. Significantly, like *North and South*, *Mabel Vaughan* features a scene in which the hero misunderstands and falsely interprets the heroine’s character owing to her concern for her brother. It is true that whereas Percival is depicted as a model Christian and political leader, Gaskell’s counterpart Thornton

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<sup>28</sup> Angus Easson, “‘We Have All Of Us One Human Heart’: Elizabeth Gaskell and William Wordsworth”, *GJ*, 24 (2010), 18-29 (p. 18).

<sup>29</sup> Theresa J. Flowers, ‘Maria Susanna Cummins (1827-1866)’, in *Writers of the American Renaissance: An A-to-Z Guide*, ed. by Denise D. Knight (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), pp. 77-80 (p. 78).

develops as leader but lacks overtly Christian virtues. It may be observed, though, that following her editing of Cummins' novel Gaskell explores Christian leadership in times of transition: she depicts a leader who falls short (Cotton Mather) as well as a model Christian (Mr Gray). Like Cummins' hero, both are civic and religious leaders.

### **History's Lessons: Revolt versus Moral Enlightenment**

*My Lady Ludlow* was first published in *Household Words* but a few months afterwards Gaskell was informed that Harper had 'pirate[d]' it in America.<sup>30</sup> 'My Lady Ludlow. A Novel by Mrs Gaskell' appeared in Harper's Library of Select Novels. I argue that Harper was keen to publish the novella with its description of the Terror because of a surge in interest in the French revolution in America in 1858 and 1859. Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History*, François Guizot's *The History of Civilization: From the Fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution*, and Thiers' *History of the French Revolution* had originally appeared in the 1820s and 1830s but as America was moving toward civil war several publishers in Boston and New York republished these authoritative accounts of an insurrection on behalf of a downtrodden people. Gaskell's work fitted in with this public debate, as did Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (originally published in *All the Year Round*, 30 April - 26 November 1859). Dickens had invited Carlyle, whose *French Revolution* he considered the ultimate authority on the subject, to proofread and comment on his novel. The novel's style and content differs from Dickens' previous work which, I suggest, was to add his voice to the momentous questions on reform that were being raised in America and England. Dickens ensured that *A Tale of Two Cities* would appear in America when on 7 April 1859 he signed a contract with Harper Brothers in which he sold its American publishing rights;<sup>31</sup> moreover, he made a deal with New York publisher J.M. Emerson to print the American editions of *All the Year Round*.<sup>32</sup> As for addressing the situation in England, Sally Ledger remarks that Dickens's depiction of the vicious mob in France resembles the unruly crowd outside the Old Bailey, and that through repeated protests against the 'unspeakable suffering' and 'intolerable oppression' of the French people,

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<sup>30</sup> To Edward Thurstan Holland, [?]19 January 1859, *Letters*, p. 524.

<sup>31</sup> *The Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 37-38, 1863, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Schlicke, *The Oxford Companion to Charles Dickens: Anniversary Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 10. He notes the difficulty Dickens went through to ship stereotype plates across the Atlantic so that the American edition could be published simultaneously with the British.

Dickens indicates that ‘British culture could produce its own Terror if the sufferings of the poor were not addressed.’<sup>33</sup>

Mary Howitt’s *A Popular History of the United States of America, from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Present Time* also encourages debate in England and America. As discussed in chapter one, Gaskell had served her apprenticeship with the Howitts, who used historical accounts to promote civic ideas. The *History* finishes in the present time (1858), using the timeline structure which – as described in chapter one – Gaskell had learned from them. Mary Howitt, who had instigated Gaskell’s first foray onto the American periodical market, continued to be a prolific writer, many of whose works appeared in the American market. The two volume *History*, which borrowed heavily from earlier American history textbook writers, was first published by Longman (London) in 1859 and then by Harper Brothers the following year. As Barry Joyce demonstrates, Howitt’s work stands apart in its focus on ‘key events in the history of slavery’.<sup>34</sup> She encouraged the American readers’ reflection on the founding principles and future of the nation, while giving English readers ideas for reform. Howitt reiterates her lifelong conviction of the importance of education to enlighten a nation by concluding the Longman edition with the observation that ‘a system of school education is universally established [in the New World], which makes moral and intellectual enlightenment common to all, irrespective of creeds and parties.’<sup>35</sup>

The book’s civic strength is undermined in the American edition where the final chapter ‘Later Events in American History’ becomes ‘Statistical Review of the United States’. In the original work Howitt had remarked how *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* ‘rouse[d] a spirit of sympathy with the negro slave, unparalleled since the first revelation of the horrors of the middle passage’, envisioning that Stowe’s novel would hasten the day when ‘slavery shall no longer be the shame of America.’<sup>36</sup> Harper’s version omits both this and a list of entries that illustrate how ‘the evil genius of slavery’ brings about

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<sup>33</sup> Sally Ledger, ‘From the Old Bailey to Revolutionary France: The Trials of Charles Darnay’, in *Charles Dickens, ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ and the French Revolution*, ed. by C. Jones, J. McDonagh and Jon Mee (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 75-86 (pp. 77-78).

<sup>34</sup> Barry Joyce, *The First U.S. History Textbooks: Constructing and Disseminating the American Tale in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. 244-45.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Howitt, *A Popular History of the United States of America: From the Discovery of the American Continent to the Present Time*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), II, p. 405.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 392-93.

events ‘disgraceful to a civilised country’, such as the assault on senator Charles Sumner by another member of the House after he gave a speech attacking slavery.<sup>37</sup> Instead of concluding with a note on how universal education promotes equality and justice, Harper’s *History* ends with a report on the Industry of the United States in 1850 – providing facts and figures about its railroads, the electric telegraph and other ‘Commercial advantages of the American States’.<sup>38</sup> Despite Harper’s alterations to Howitt’s text, *De Bow’s Review* harshly criticized both Howitt and her publishers for ‘hav[ing] done a wrong to the south by the publication of this work, without correcting its false teachings on the subject of slavery.’<sup>39</sup>

In Gaskell’s depiction of the French revolution the importance of teaching morals and critical thinking is explicit in some scenes, but is also interwoven in the plot. Lady Ludlow’s emotion-led and illogical response towards education is based on her belief that when a boy is taught to read and write ‘his duties become complicated, and his temptations much greater, while at the same time he has no hereditary principles and honourable training to serve as safeguards’ (3, p. 182). She fails to grasp the basic need for her tenants to develop critical thinking skills and morals in order to become good citizens. While in America the debate on the slavery issue was raging, in England Lord Derby had submitted a new Reform Bill. This, however, was contested by Lord John Russell (1792-1878), one of the principal instigators of the-1832 Reform Act, and Corn Law reformer John Bright (1811-1889) who did not think it went far enough and tried to get an improved Reform of Representation Bill through Parliament.<sup>40</sup> The Bill failed for, as one MP remarked,

was this the precise moment, when, although we had peace to-day, we might have war tomorrow, to transfer political power from the middle classes to a wider area not up to the mark of education required to make the majesty of the intellect of England confront with effect foreign powers?<sup>41</sup>

Education for the working classes was a current topic of debate, and it pervades *My Lady Ludlow* where Mr Gray’s repeated concerns finally awaken Miss Galindo to the moral wrong and danger that Hanbury estate tenants ‘could never tell what was right

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 405; Mary Howitt (1860), p. 377.

<sup>39</sup> Barry Joyce, *The First U.S. History Textbooks*, p. 245.

<sup>41</sup> *Annual Register or A View of the History and Politics of the Year 1859* (London: Longman, 1860), p. 67.

if they had to think for themselves' (3, p. 254). The interpolated story which is set in Paris during the Terror reaffirms this point. It depicts French revolutionaries without any sense of moral or reason, but describes Pierre, a young Parisian boy, as having 'misty morals' (3, p. 208) owing to the fact that a liberal-thinking aristocrat had given him a rudimentary education. This progressive aristocrat is, however, guillotined, and his daughter Virginie 'was imprisoned by the license of the mob, whose rights she was always advocating' (3, p.193). Gaskell shows that radicalism is diffused through the teaching of morals and application of reason, but as the mob had not been taught common sense and critical thinking it is not held accountable for its actions.

In 1859 Gaskell wrote to her sister-in-law Anne Robson, 'You will be seeing a book of mine advertised; but don't be diddled about it; it is only a REpublication of H W Stories'.<sup>42</sup> Still, in a full-page long advertisement in *The Publishers' Circular* of 15 March 1859 announcing new works, Sampson Low had placed Mrs Gaskell's *Round the Sofa*, 'comprising My Lady Ludlow and other Tales' at its head, followed by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*.<sup>43</sup> Owing to the fact that she had chosen Sampson Low as her publisher, Gaskell's name featured on the same page as Stowe's, and she got pride of place.

In *Round the Sofa* Gaskell links works through a frame-story, in which guests visiting an Edinburgh salonnière entertain each other with 'true' stories. Their narratives depict social factors which divide people, but which the narrators themselves have overcome. As Julian Wolfreys notes, the narrators form a community despite being as diverse in gender, religion, nationality and social status as an Italian refugee, Westmorland statesman, Edinburgh physician, and a single Welsh woman who acts as companion.<sup>44</sup> By connecting the stories Gaskell emphasizes her message of tolerance. *Round the Sofa* was published by Sampson Low, but did not appear in America. This may be because except for 'The Poor Clare' and 'The Half-Brothers', all stories had already appeared there. 'An Accursed Race' about the discrimination of the Cagot race

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<sup>42</sup> To Anne Robson, [February 1859], *Letters*, p. 531.

<sup>43</sup> *The Publishers' Circular and General Record of British and Foreign Literature Containing a Complete Alphabetical List of All New Works Published in Great Britain and Every Work of Interest Published Abroad*. Advertisements Connected with Literature and the Fine Arts to which is annexed a Complete Alphabetical Catalogue of the new Books and New Editions (Including Pamphlets, single Sermons, &c., with the sizes-prices-dates of publication-and publishers' names) published in the United Kingdom and Imported from America during the Year 1859 (London: Sampson Low, 1859), XXII, p. 137.

<sup>44</sup> Julian Wolfreys, *Being English; Narratives, Idioms, and Performances of National Identity from Coleridge to Trollope* (New York: State University of New York, 1993), pp. 81-102.



was printed in *Littell's Living Age* (13 October 1855) while 'Half a Lifetime Ago', about a woman whose decision to become her mentally challenged brother's carer led to her social isolation, had first appeared in *Littell's Living Age* (24 November 1855) and then in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (January 1856).<sup>45</sup> 'The Doom of the Griffiths', which describes the downfall of a Welsh aristocratic family due to a family curse, was 'Written exclusively for Harper's' and appeared on 16 January 1858.

'The Half Brothers', a tale about an abused orphan who sacrifices his life to save his half-brother, ultimately also made it across the Atlantic where it was first published in *Harper's Weekly* (29 April 1859) and then in *The Home Monthly* (November 1859), a short-lived periodical edited and published by Harriet E.G. Arey and Abbey Buchanan Longstreet.<sup>46</sup> In their 'Introductory' to the first number of *The Home Monthly* (January 1859) the editors state their aim as wishing to 'open the eyes of children from the beginning to cheerful and wholesome views of life, and an earnest and exact performance of its duties.'<sup>47</sup> Moreover, they emphasised that 'the practical, every-day working of our theories of virtue [...] must lie at the foundation of private or public rectitude.'<sup>48</sup> The periodical's aim to publish stories that teach children civic and moral duties resembles those of Aikin-Barbault in *Evenings at Home*, its title highlighting the importance of the home environment as the breeding ground for civic life. The editors recognised Gaskell's fiction as having similar objectives.

### **Sins of the Fathers: Gaskell's Civic Lessons for America**

Gaskell's next collection of works, *Right at Last, and Other Tales* (1860) was published by Sampson Low as well as Harper and Brothers. In a short foreword in both editions Gaskell explains that the works, which had earlier appeared in *Household Words* and *All the year Round*, were 'reprinted, at the instance of the Publishers, who offered satisfactory reasons for such a course.' Although the publishers thought the book would fulfil a need, Gaskell sounds doubtful as she hopes the sales 'will find a sufficient number of friends to prove that [the publishers] were not altogether mistaken.' *Right at*

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<sup>45</sup> It was a rewriting of 'Martha Preston', Gaskell's early contribution of 6 February 1850 to *Sartain's Union Magazine*.

<sup>46</sup> *The Home Monthly*, 2:5 (1859), pp. 230-36. See also F.L. Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1850-1865* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> *The Home Monthly*, 1:1 (1859), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

*Last, and Other Tales* comprises 'Right at Last' (27 Nov. 1858), 'The Manchester Marriage' (7 Dec. 1858), 'The Crooked Branch' (originally entitled 'the Ghost in the Garden Room', Dec. 1859) and *Lois the Witch*.

The original title of 'Right at Last', 'The Sin of a Father', captures the underlying problem in this collection of stories: an ancestor's sinful action and the consequences for his descendants. The idea of the moral consequences of actions which Peter Stiles argues to be part of Gaskell's Unitarian beliefs and which he notes in 'Curious, if True', are also evident in these stories. 'Right at Last' describes how society shuns the relatives of a convicted forger, while 'The Manchester Marriage' hints at possible consequences of a bigamous marriage on children.<sup>49</sup> In 'The Crooked Branch' the situation is reversed: the father is a good man and seems to have no 'sin' that explains his son's criminal behaviour. However, spoiling a child and failing to provide moral guidance is just as harmful. In the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) Gaskell had described Branwell Brontë as very talented and full of noble impulses but 'not accustomed to resist temptation' and she notes that the family had expected him in time to 'right himself' (8, p. 117). Branwell, like Benjamin Huntroyd in 'The Crooked Branch', is 'allowed to grow up self-indulgent' (8, p. 118) but both go from bad to worse. In light of the theme of this collection of stories, with *Lois the Witch* Gaskell may be hinting that the Puritan immigrants had been contaminated by the 'sin' of religious persecution in their fatherland England, and communicated it to their children, the first generation Americans.

The instigators of the witch-hunt eventually sign a declaration of regret in which they blame their transgression on a lack of moral enlightenment, which implies that the 'sin of the father' (4, p. 71) in *Lois the Witch* is a lack of moral guidance and education. It is also significant that Judge Sewall requests prayer to obliterate his sins, so that 'his past conduct might not bring down the displeasure of the Most High upon his country, his family, or himself' (4, p. 72). It is on this note that *Right at Last, and Other Tales* ends. The message of the consequences of the sins of fathers underpinned the abolitionist cause, and it was – as Gaskell's publishers had realized – a fitting message for 1859 America.

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<sup>49</sup> Here Gaskell revisits her early exploration of social problems surrounding illegitimate children in a new way.

Gaskell's letters to Charles Eliot Norton show that she had meant *Lois the Witch* for the *Atlantic Monthly*. The periodical had been founded in 1857 in Boston, which was then the literary centre of the country, by a group of eminent writers from the New England area including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and James Russell Lowell. Charles Eliot Norton wrote articles for it, and had from the start been involved in getting contributions for the new magazine.<sup>50</sup> Gaskell was eager to contribute. The *Atlantic*'s purpose statement that it would rank itself 'with that body of men which is in favor of Freedom, National Progress, and Honor', as well as its focus on truth and morality and promoting intellectual debate appealed to her.<sup>51</sup> She supported these ideas to such a degree, in fact, that in an advertisement in *The Christian Examiner* of November 1857 introducing the *Atlantic* and its aims, her name features as one of a list of mainly American authors 'interested in this enterprise', giving practical meaning to her idea of being 'a citizen of the world'.<sup>52</sup>

The *Atlantic Monthly* was a distinctly New England Literary magazine, as evident from the cover, which was austere, with only a small picture of John Winthrop, the Puritan lawyer who in 1630 had led a group of migrants to New England. He later served as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In his sermon 'A Model of Christian Charity' (1630) Winthrop expounded his vision as to how the Puritan community was to function, exhorting the New Englanders 'to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God'. He warns:

'For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.'<sup>53</sup>

With *Lois the Witch* Gaskell writes the story about the Puritans failing their high calling, and how their shame indeed became universally known. Shirley Foster notes that the Gaskells borrowed the *Life of John Winthrop* from the Portico Library, so she knew Winthrop's ideas.<sup>54</sup> With *Lois the Witch* Gaskell goes back to the

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<sup>50</sup> M.A. De Wolfe Howe, *The Atlantic Monthly and its Makers* (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Express, 1919), p. 33.

<sup>51</sup> *The Christian Examiner Advertiser*, November 1857, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Other writers listed included Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mrs. Caroline M. Kirkland, whose relationship with Gaskell has been touched on in chapter one.

<sup>53</sup> *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, ed. by R. S. Dunn, J. Savage and L. Yeandle (Harvard: Harvard College, 1996), p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> Shirley Foster, *Elizabeth Gaskell and America*, a lecture given to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society (9 October 2002). Reprinted from the Society's *Memoirs* (2002).

Dissenting roots she and readers in the New England area had in common, and explores society one generation after Winthrop had left England to found the ‘city upon a hill’.

Some correspondence with subeditor Francis Henry Underwood about ‘the difficulties which arise from a difference in manners culture & institutions’ made Gaskell decide to ‘decline to write’ for the periodical.<sup>55</sup> In January 1859 an altercation with *Household Words* again made her decide to publish in America only. When Henry Morley wrote a chip called ‘Character-Murder’ which alludes to ‘Disappearances’, a story Gaskell published in 1851, and attacked the author of the piece for writing an untruth, Gaskell was ‘extremely annoyed and hurt.’<sup>56</sup> However, when she wrote to ‘the manager’ of *Household Words*, William Henry Wills, to make him realize ‘how little I had said, in comparison with what I was there made to say by implication,’ he was unwilling to retract, and presumably failed to grasp that Gaskell had ‘particular reasons for shrinking from any accusation of Character Murder.’<sup>57</sup> Hence Gaskell informed Norton that ‘[she] should much *much* prefer [*Lois the Witch*] being published in America, either as a whole or by the Atlantic.’<sup>58</sup> However, by October Gaskell had heard that the *Atlantic* had failed.<sup>59</sup> As she still had an outstanding debt with Dickens she had little recourse but to send it to him, so in the end it appeared in Dickens’ newly established *All the Year Round* in three parts, from 8 to 22 October 1859.<sup>60</sup> It partly overlapped with *A Tale of Two Cities*, together creating issues which considered injustice and revolt.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, 10 [and 14] May [1858], *Letters*, p. 503.

<sup>56</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, 9 March [1859], *Letters*, p. 534.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>59</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, 25 [and 30] October [1859], *Letters*, p. 581. Moses Phillips and his partner Sampson, who had been its printers from the outset, both died in 1859. Shortly afterwards *The Atlantic Monthly* was purchased by the firm Ticknor and Fields, whereupon Underwood’s editorial connection with the magazine ceased. See M.A. De Wolfe Howe, *The Atlantic Monthly and Its Makers*, p. 33.

<sup>60</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, 9 March [1859], *Letters*, p. 534. In October 1858 Gaskell visited Heidelberg. In order to grant her daughters’ wish to visit Dresden, Gaskell wrote two stories for *Household Words* and ‘asked for immediate payment’. They sent her enough money for three stories, and left it up to her to decide when to send them a third story. This is how she came to be indebted to them.

<sup>61</sup> Though the plates for *All the Year Round* were already halfway across the Atlantic by the time abolitionist insurgent John Brown and his men attacked Harper’s Ferry on 16 October, the revolt shows the topicality of both Dickens’ and Gaskell’s message. Gaskell would later refer to Brown in ‘Robert Gould Shaw’.

*Lois the Witch* did make it onto the American market and was reprinted several times during the pre-Civil War years. It appeared in the American edition of *All the Year Round*, and immediately following that in *Harper's Weekly Magazine* (22 October–12 November 1859). Later it was published as a Dime Novel in *Beadle's Library of Choice Fiction*, which contained tales that gave 'fairly accurate pictures of the struggles, hardships, and daily lives of the American pioneers [...and] were intensely nationalistic.'<sup>62</sup> The story was printed anonymously. It had its title changed to *The Maiden Martyr: A Tale of New England Witchcraft*, a title which highlights the novella's civic message of following one's conscience no matter the consequences, and as such seems superior to the original one.<sup>63</sup> It also emphasises the setting, New England, where – as the *Atlantic Monthly* philosophers argued – the American democracy had started. Gaskell's novella calls for a contemplation of the roots of American civilization and its original intent.

Though Gaskell may have taken *Lois the Witch* as a personal account as she herself felt unjustly attacked following the reception of the *Life*, she may also have intended it as a warning. One of the causes of the witch-trials was, in Upham's view, the fact that '[the citizens of Salem] were surrounded by alarming indications of change, and their ears were constantly assailed by rumors of war.'<sup>64</sup> War and change also sum up conditions in 1859 for as Gaskell observes in February, 'no one speaks of anything here but war & the chances of war.'<sup>65</sup> In Salem people considered religion under attack whenever they were confronted with new ideas, and they reacted by clamping down on them, causing society to become polarized and break down. *Lois the Witch* serves as a warning how not to meet the social, political, and intellectual changes taking place. Gaskell desired an inclusive society, where people are accepting of each other and open-minded - as she had shown, for example, in *North and South* where 'Margaret the Churchwoman, her father the Dissenter, Higgins the Infidel, knelt down together. It did

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.ulib.niu.edu/badndp/chap1.html> [accessed on 23 March 2015]. It was originally released on 22 March 1864.

<sup>63</sup> This may be because Gaskell was a well-known English writer whereas requirements for potential contributors were that 'Authors must be familiar with characters and places which they introduce and not attempt to write in fields of which they have no intimate knowledge.' (Ibid.) Of course, since *Lois* is firmly based on Upham's factual account, this rather removes the argument against Gaskell. Perhaps the publishers felt that the readers' knowledge that Gaskell was the author would detract from the truth of the tale.

<sup>64</sup> C.W. Upham, *Lectures on Witchcraft* (Boston: Carter & Hendee, 1831), p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> To George Smith, 14 February 1859, *Letters*, p. 528.

them no harm' (7, p. 216). By 1859 this message of tolerance had become increasingly more personal to her.

The beacon of light that New England was to be in John Winthrop's vision had within one generation degenerated into a place of darkness, where superstition, evil and ignorance reigned. Louisa Jayne Foster points out that 'Gaskell replicates the radicalized rhetoric of Cotton Mather in his diatribes concerning devilry in the new colonies.'<sup>66</sup> This is evident in the part where Gaskell depicts Nattee, 'the old Indian crone' telling 'wild stories' about 'wizards of her race', 'sitting on her haunches by the bright red wood embers which sent up no flame, but a lurid light reversing the shadows of all the faces around' (4, p.21). In this scene Gaskell indeed re-paints Mather's picture from *On Witchcraft*. However, she then modifies her tone and reveals the true Nattee: 'a poor old creature', 'shuddering' because she - in her ignorance and superstition - believes her own tale. More disturbingly, she is an outcast, surrounded by offspring of 'the oppressing race' (Ibid.), Lois's cousins. Mather had warned that the Puritans had entered 'the Devil's territory', but as the plot unfolds the evil does not emanate from Indians, but from seemingly innocent children. In *Lois the Witch* Gaskell turns the tables and labels the formerly persecuted Puritans as aggressors who 'had brought [Indians] down into a state little differing from slavery' (Ibid.). She also exposes Cotton Mather as an unreliable witness and a fanatical and unjust leader, who was adroit in 'ensnaring an accused individual' (4, p. 96). English Unitarians tended to see the Puritans as their martyred forbears but here Gaskell may be warning herself and fellow Dissenters not to become self-righteous.<sup>67</sup>

### **'Curious, if True': Releasing the Past to Herald in the Future**

'Curious, if True' was published in the second instalment of the new *Cornhill Magazine* (Feb. 1860), and was reprinted in *The Grey Woman and Other Tales* (1865) by Smith and Elder, the publishers of the *Cornhill*. Prior to its publication Gaskell specifically asked George Smith 'need my name be put on' the work? She was hoping the *Cornhill* would adopt *Household Words* policy where 'No one knew that it was I that was saying

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<sup>66</sup> Louisa Jayne Foster, 'The Monstrous Transatlantic Witchcraft Narrative', p. 71.

<sup>67</sup> In *Ruth* Gaskell had also alluded to this in the election process sub-plot. After his member Mr Donne had been elected, Mr Bradshaw, who had 'more than tacitly sanctioned bribery' felt his character had been blemished as there were whispers 'that the hands of the scrupulous Dissenters were not clean' (6, p. 229). It is an early warning.

this or that, so I felt to have free swing.’<sup>68</sup> On 23 December 1859 Gaskell informed George Smith of ‘a story of perhaps 40 (of my pages) long. Begun & I *think* good’.<sup>69</sup> It pleased her so much, in fact, that she ‘want[ed] to make it as good as I can, & so only to write at it in my best moments’.<sup>70</sup> However, in newspaper reviews ‘Curious if True’ is at best described as ‘a preposterous and amusing sketch’ and at worst, as ‘trash’; one reviewer remarking, ‘the editor must have been out of town and permitted some very incompetent person to take his place when such a contribution as this was suffered to make its appearance in the Cornhill’.<sup>71</sup> The tale was signed E.C.G, but no critic seems to have connected those initials with respected social commentator ‘Mrs Gaskell’. As Gaskell herself considered it ‘good’ the reviewers seemingly overlooked the tale’s hidden values. I would like to argue that those hidden values are in fact messages about the way people view history and heritage, questions already raised in *Lois the Witch* and *My Lady Ludlow* but here revisited in a rather unusual fairytale format.

Around July 1859 Gaskell and Meta stayed in the village of Auchencairn, which likely inspired ‘Curious, if True’.<sup>72</sup> Auchencairn, which was twenty-two miles from Dumfries, boasted a nearby castle (potatoes had to be sent for from Castle Douglas, nine miles off), and the visit included an invitation to meet a prince (Gaskell and Meta were invited to join the Prince of Wales’ incognito party at the Trossachs, but they declined).<sup>73</sup> The Gaskells stayed for a month in this, ‘the Covenanter’s country’.<sup>74</sup> Narrator Whittingham’s perplexity as to where he is resembles what the Gaskells experienced for themselves in Auchencairn: ‘we are uncertain what King or Queen reigns in England, [...] we are far away from [...] any sign of the world’.<sup>75</sup> Such unusual circumstances need little embellishment and poetic license to change into a story which

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<sup>68</sup> To George Smith, [?1 October 1859], *Letters*, p. 577.

<sup>69</sup> To George Smith, 23 December [1859], *Letters*, p. 595.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Literary Notices. *The Caledonian Mercury and Daily Express*, 11 February 1860; *The Dublin Review*, May 1862, p. 286.

<sup>72</sup> To George Eliot Norton, 25 [and 30] October [1859], *Letters*, p. 581.

<sup>73</sup> To George Smith, 4 August [1859], *Letters*, p. 567.

<sup>74</sup> *Letters*, p. 581. The Auchencairn visit reminded Gaskell of yet another group of seventeenth century persecuted Christians. Some of the Covenanters, Scots Dissenters who refused to acknowledge King Charles as head of the Church, ended up being tortured and killed, while others were sold as slaves to America. See Dane Love, *Scottish Covenanter Stories: Tales from the Killing Times* (Glasgow: Neil Wilson Publishing, 2011). The setting of ‘Curious, if True’ is Calvin’s native country, France, where he – like the Covenanters and English Nonconformists in their homeland – faced persecution.

<sup>75</sup> To George Smith, 29 June [1859], *Letters*, p. 562.

seems as far removed from Gaskell's usual realistic writing as, indeed, Manchester is from Auchencairn.

'Curious, if True' is, as its title warns, confusing. Strange things occur and obscure explanations are given. Gaskell at times puzzles, provokes and amuses her readers. In 'Curious, if True' class, inequality, reform, and even the French Revolution are hinted at, but because Gaskell uses fictional characters who take their own fairytale seriously and are therefore unreliable witnesses, she takes away the seriousness. However, the absurdity of what is going on and the thin line between fiction and reality provoke the reader into contemplating its meaning. Gaskell does not force the readers into a direction, but she allows them to make up their own mind.

The tale purports to be an extract of a letter by Richard Whittingham, an Englishman researching archives and registers in France to discover more about his ancestry. The narrator's pride in his descent from a sister of John Calvin is mentioned in several ways. He not only visits the continent for the sole purpose of researching archives to explore his genealogy, but when he knocks on the door of a chateau in a lonely forest to ask for shelter and is immediately led into the salon upon telling the porter his name, he explains this welcome as having possibly 'stumbled on a nest of relations on John Calvin's side' (4, p. 113). Clearly, he has lost touch with reality. The fact that he thinks the absurd gathering are his relations mocks his pride in his lineage, as was the case with Lady Ludlow who was similarly caught up with her family. Whittingham's search for his antecedents is a reminder of the road to self-examination and the hunt for more insight into her Dissenting identity that Gaskell had been making.

Reputations and notoriety are achieved through word-of-mouth and literature, but these sources are habitually unreliable. Gaskell demonstrates this in a humorous way through Bluebeard's widow's account of his death. Whittingham makes the acquaintance of Mme de Retz who laments 'the best of husbands' and shows him a picture of Bluebeard. The portrait reminds Whittingham of 'an engraving from an historical picture' of him 'holding a lady by her hair,' and 'two cavaliers' who arrive 'only just in time to save her life' (4, p.122). Surprisingly, however, Bluebeard's widow blames her brothers 'who interfered so cruelly' and claims that this passage in her life 'has often been represented in a false light' (Ibid.). She backs up the truth of her story and the untruth of the universally accepted account by asserting that the portrait of Bluebeard is not an accurate depiction of him, proving with a lock of his hair that the painter used the wrong colouring and 'did not do it justice' (Ibid.). The fact that the



Mme de Retz Whittingham encounters is a strong, domineering woman might further indicate that the myth of Bluebeard is just that: an embellished story.

Though no conclusive interpretation of the tale can be given, I suggest that the title may hold a clue. Despite the confusing setting and characters, ‘Curious, if True’ has truth at its core. Whittingham tries to make sense out of everything by linking what he observes around him to his own mid-nineteenth-century British perspective. His world contains heroes like Lord John Russell and John Bright, life-changing events like the railways, and more rights due to the reform bill.<sup>76</sup> These things are true and tangible for the readers, whereas the chateau with its mingling aristocrats seems distant and unreal. Gaskell may be implying that there is no need to desire a Utopia, nor is fairytale magic necessary since society has progressed enough for every Englishman to experience some magic. ‘[T]he new fashion of railroads’ (4, p. 118) affords mobility for all. Consequently, the old fairy-tales now appear rather lacklustre: it was only Poucet who could travel great distances in his seven-league boots, only Beauty and Cinderella who could move up from their original stations through advantageous marriages. Essentially, ‘Curious, if True’ reiterates the idea Gaskell earlier explored in *My Lady Ludlow*, that England is advancing towards more equality and democracy. The tale does hint, however, that there is still plenty of room for improvement.

‘Curious, if True’ is quite comical, but when comparing it to *My Lady Ludlow* some more serious connotations become apparent, for example about social class. Poucet, famous for his attempts to outwit others, draws Whittingham’s attention to the Sleeping Beauty. Whittingham then realizes that the butlers are prevented from offering guests a glass of *eau sucré* because Sleeping Beauty is fast asleep and official protocol requires that she and her husband should drink first. This causes the derisive remark of social climber Poucet, ‘note the ridiculous position into which their superstitious reverence for rank and title puts all these people’ (4, p.117). Similarly, in *My Lady Ludlow* the rank-based system depending on primogeniture is addressed when Miss Galindo’s father rises to the baronetcy after the demise of his brother – only to lose it again shortly afterwards (leaving him heavily indebted) after it materializes that his

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<sup>76</sup> Apart from his involvement in bringing about the Great Reform Act, Russell had put forward the motion to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts (1828). In his speech he stated that ‘every man [...] should be at liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience’. Dickens also invoked the elderly statesman in his writing of this period. *A Tale of Two Cities* was ‘inscribed to the Lord John Russell, in remembrance of many public services and private kindnesses.’

brother was married and has a son. Fame and fortune can be obtained and lost as if by magic in a class society, and Gaskell follows the rational Dissenters' quest for equality as she suggests that to revere people who have been lucky in their ancestry or marriage is a strange and outdated way to govern a country.

### **Christian Leadership Defined**

A key theme that emerges in 1858 and 1859 is Christian leadership. Several of Gaskell's leaders have lost touch with the world, for Cotton Mather almost destroys the Puritan community with his superstitious beliefs, and Lady Ludlow's memories of the French Revolution impair her judgment on current affairs. Both are unacquainted with the people – Mather just appears when his presence is requested, while Lady Ludlow drives past her tenants in her carriage, and has a glazed pew installed in church, enabling her to close a window to expel any sound. Also, Margaret Dawson notes that '[m]y lady shut her eyes, and seemed to go to sleep' (3, p. 153) whenever a disagreeable subject is broached. Similarly, 'Curious, if True' mentions leaders who are asleep and ignorant of the wider world, like Sleeping Beauty and King Arthur who, as Gaskell had earlier reminded Mary Howitt, with 'his knights lie sleeping [...] till the day when England's peril shall summon them to her rescue.'<sup>77</sup> Both Sleeping Beauty and Lady Ludlow dislike change. But while Mr Gray forces the latter to wake up to her duties as a leader, Sleeping Beauty's husband is unsuccessful in rousing her (he apparently has forgotten that a kiss will do the trick). Gaskell seems to indicate that England's leaders need to wake up to the pressures of the time and adjust their ideas and actions accordingly.

The hero of *My Lady Ludlow* is Mr Gray, the epitome of a religious-cum-social leader who may have been modelled on Rev. William Gaskell, who combined his pastoral duties with educational and charitable causes. Mr Gray disregards social class and opposes Lady Ludlow since he considers it his 'duty to speak to [his] parishioners on many subjects on which they do not agree with me' (3, p. 162). He not only apprises Lady Ludlow of the depraved spiritual and moral state of her tenants - and asks permission to open a Sunday school to remedy this - but also points out the injustice of the magistrates towards Job Gregson. It is because he reminds Lady Ludlow of her Christian duty to right a wrong that she steps in on Gregson's behalf. To Gaskell

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<sup>77</sup> [18 August 1838], *Letters*, p. 32.

Christian leaders speak out whenever they notice injustice; moreover, they combine social guidance with moral guidance.

Gaskell stresses the importance of following one's conscience, whatever the consequences. In *Lois the Witch* the Puritan leaders discuss torturing Lois to make her confess, but she 'choose[s] death with a quiet conscience, rather than life to be gained by a lie' (4, p. 66). The weight on Gaskell's shoulders to do her duty and follow her conscience by taking the side of the social outcasts can be gauged from her idea that, 'Heaven [...] is, a place where we shan't have any consciences.'<sup>78</sup> Gaskell considered following one's conscience a civic duty. In *Lois the Witch* standing up against injustice is implied, but a parallel could be drawn with *Sylvia's Lovers* where it is very explicit.

Gaskell got the inspiration for *Sylvia's Lovers*, a historical novel which would be completed in January 1863, during a visit to Whitby in November 1859. The novel is set during the Napoleonic wars when the English government encouraged the press gang's kidnapping of able-bodied men to serve in the navy. After having endured much hardship, the people eventually rise against the press gang. The citizens of Monkshaven initially do not realize their vantage point: 'we was two hunder, [...]; an' t' gang has niver numbered above twelve' 'yet we'd none of us 't wit to see if we might ha' saved yon poor chaps' (9, p. 197). It is only when a desperate woman appeals to the assembled crowd, 'imploring immediate action' because the gang had 'carried off her "man" - the father, the bread-winner' (9, p. 198), that they surge into action. Proud of having helped free the kidnapped men, Robson, the man who leads the attack, states, 'it's a great thing for folk to have a chap to' lead 'em wi' a head on his shouthers' (9, p. 201). Robson, like Lois, is hanged by a specially appointed court of justice. *My Lady Ludlow*, *Lois the Witch* and *Sylvia's Lovers* demonstrate that whatever the consequences, people have a responsibility, even a duty, for the welfare of others and society. They should follow their conscience, stand up for truth, and – as Winthrop had advocated, 'to do justly, to love mercy'. In 1859 this was a radical message – a message formed by the pressures of her time and the Dissenting heritage in which Gaskell firmly stood.

### **Misinterpreting the Past: Personal Lessons Learned**

Gaskell's stories are rife with misunderstanding. Cotton Mather, for example, is revered

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<sup>78</sup> To Eliza Fox, [? April 1850], *Letters*, p. 110.

by the Puritans for his great knowledge and wisdom while in fact he is superstitious and exacerbates an already volatile situation. Lady Ludlow deprecates peacemaker and social reformer Mr Gray for being a troublemaker when he points out that her supposedly exemplary tenants are ignorant wretches. In *Lois the Witch* innocent Lois and Nattee are denounced as witches because their culturally-influenced ideas are misunderstood. Similarly, 'Curious, if true' contains elements of misrepresentation, notably in the scene with Bluebeard's widow, and when, due to language problems, Whittingham speculates that Jean de Geanquilleur (Jack the Giant Killer) is Russell or Bright. In Gaskell's stories misrepresentation and the subsequent prejudice towards a person occur when someone is caught in myths of the past and is unwilling to amend outdated ideas. I suggest that Gaskell's insistence on this theme sprang from difficulties relating to Brontë's biography which showed that her own actions could be misinterpreted.

Critics like Marion Shaw, Christine L. Krueger and Linda H. Peterson have commented on Gaskell's writing of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and how she set out to write a biography that would 'honour the woman as much as they have admired the writer'.<sup>79</sup> She wished to depict Brontë as a dutiful daughter, loving sister and faithful friend in order to contradict the notion that the author of *Jane Eyre* was an immoral woman.<sup>80</sup> Peterson has demonstrated how Gaskell created the Brontë myth. Gaskell had been unaware of Brontë's passionate but unrequited love for M. Heger, a married man, when she began assembling materials for the biography. So, when she unearthed evidence of this, she had to decide whether to wilfully hide some truths in order to protect her late friend's reputation. Although she wrote to Ellen Nussey:

I *did* so try to tell the truth, & I believe now I hit as near the truth as anyone *could* do. And I weighed every line with all my whole power & heart [...].<sup>81</sup>

Gaskell was aware that the truth she had told was incomplete and that the Brontë myth resulted from her having written only part of her friend's life story. I would suggest that the experience of being Brontë's biographer led to Gaskell's strengthened exploration of truth and 'misrepresentation'.

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<sup>79</sup> To George Smith, 31 May [1855], *Letters*, p. 345.

<sup>80</sup> Linda H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, pp. 131-50.

<sup>81</sup> 16 June [1857], *Letters*, p. 454.

Chapter ten in the second volume of the *Life* lists '[Brontë's] comments on Mr. J.S. Mill's article on the Emancipation of Women' (8, p. 197). In this section Gaskell quotes extensively from Brontë's letter concerning an article in the *Westminster Review* of July 1851 entitled 'Enfranchisement of Women' which she wrongly assumed to be Mill's. It was in fact by his wife Harriet Taylor. Judging by the contents page, it would seem that Gaskell herself was unaware of the true author. Gaskell quotes Brontë's observation that on first reading the article she considered it 'the work of a powerful-minded, clear-headed woman, who had a hard, jealous heart, muscles of iron, and nerves of bent leather; [...] a woman who longed for power, and had never felt affection' (8, p. 318).<sup>82</sup> Supposing the article to be Mill's she concludes, 'In short, J. S. Mill's head is, I dare say, very good, but I feel disposed to scorn his heart' (Ibid.).<sup>83</sup> Mill responded angrily, accusing Gaskell of having failed in a biographer's duty to protect the moral reputation of individuals. At first Gaskell chose to ignore the letter because she considered it 'impertinent unjust, and inexcusable.'<sup>84</sup> She had a change of heart after reading the Dedication to Mill's essay *On Liberty* (1859) which, as she explained to him on 14 July 1859, helped her understand 'how any word that was derogatory to your wife would wound you most deeply.'<sup>85</sup> The Dedication portrays Taylor as a woman with 'great thoughts and noble feelings' 'whose exalted sense of truth and right was [Mill's] strongest incitement'.<sup>86</sup>

Gaskell's conciliatory words failed to appease Mill, who replied that no 'unreasonable sensitiveness' had caused him to react - instead, it was 'a sense of truth & Justice'.<sup>87</sup> As truth and justice were Gaskell's watchwords, his criticism must have been deeply disturbing. Mill reasoned that Brontë was entitled to privately express any 'foolish impression', but '[i]t is the Editor who publishes what may give just offence who is alone to blame.'<sup>88</sup> Following this letter, Gaskell made one 'final attempt' to appease him, feebly remarking, 'you do me injustice', but eventually she acknowledged

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<sup>82</sup> Margaret Smith, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, pp. 695-96. Charlotte Brontë to Gaskell, 20 September 1851.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 696.

<sup>84</sup> To John Stuart Mill, 14 July 1859, *Letters*, p. 563.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> John S. Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Parker, 1859), pp. 5-6.

<sup>87</sup> Online Library of Liberty, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XV, Later Letters 1849-1873, part 2*, letter 402. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/mill-the-collected-works-of-john-stuart-mill-volume-xv-the-later-letters-1849-1873-part-ii> [accessed on 3 June 2016].

See also Elizabeth Haldane, *Mrs. Gaskell and Her Friends*, p. 269.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

to have ‘failed in [her] duty’ of protecting his moral reputation.<sup>89</sup> Mill’s accusations caused considerable soul-searching, for Gaskell admits that ‘your letters, & the sense of having given pain, has awakened my conscience.’<sup>90</sup> She concludes, ‘if [the *Life*] were to be re{written} \edited/ now, I should *certainly* omit the final paragraph relating to yourself.’<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, on 30 November 1859 ‘the orange Charlotte Brontë’ unexpectedly arrived at Plymouth Grove, and as Gaskell had been unaware of Smith’s intention to republish, this edition retained the offensive remarks.<sup>92</sup> In order not ‘to lose the small scrap that I may have gained in his good opinion by my partial apology’, Gaskell appealed to Smith to explain the situation to Mill.<sup>93</sup>

Her introspection and self-questioning resulted in a strengthened belief in tolerance, noting in April 1859 that she had become ‘more and more convinced that [...] all one can do is to *judge* for oneself and take especial care *not* to judge other[s] or for others.’<sup>94</sup> Gaskell’s reaction to the acrid correspondence with Mill and others in the aftermath of *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, together with intensive contact with likeminded New England writers, directed her towards an investigation of civic duty for common people, but also for Christian leaders. In America her work began to be used for abolitionist purposes, but a few years later, in the year of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Gaskell began to specifically address this evil. The following chapter illustrates the various styles she employed to raise her compatriots’ awareness of their duties as emancipated citizens towards the downtrodden in the world.

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<sup>89</sup> To John Stuart Mill, 11 August 1859, *Letters*, p. 569.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 568.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> To George Smith, 30 November [1859], *Letters*, p. 593. Its cover stated ‘a new edition’, which was in fact the fourth edition, printed by Smith, Elder in 1859 though the title page says 1860.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> To Elizabeth Holland, [? Early April 1859], *Letters*, p. 548.

## Chapter 5: 1863 Fashion Versus Emancipation

This chapter demonstrates how Sylvia's *Lovers* and shorter works of 1863 work together and build on each other's civic ideas. I suggest that Gaskell's message for 1863 becomes clear when one takes *Sylvia's Lovers*' fight against injustice as the basic premise, then chronologically reads 'Shams' (February), 'The Cage at Cranford' (10 and 28 November) and 'Robert Gould Shaw' (December). The novel can help appreciate what the shorter works do, their complexity, and what is special about them. These works picture institutionalized injustice and the vain pursuit of status and fashion with a view to waking up readers to the need to fight for the abolition of slavery. In 'Shams', a type of witty eighteenth-century essay that was pioneered by Addison and Steele in the *Spectator*, Gaskell links two very diverse topics, the American Civil War and fashionable society. These themes are revisited in 'the Cage at Cranford', a short story revolving around Cranfordian Miss Pole, Mary Smith and a crinoline, and 'Robert Gould Shaw', an obituary of the first white commander of a coloured regiment in the Union Army. 1863 is the culmination of a long debate about civic issues and, I argue, we may read 'Robert Gould Shaw' as tying all strands together. These little reviewed short works, though dissimilar in theme and format, express what 'made [Gaskell's] heart burn' in contemporary society.<sup>1</sup>

Gaskell's works in 1863 illustrate her shifting reactions to events unfolding in England and America as she rejoiced about Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, but then seemingly became disillusioned with contemporary England. This is understandable since '[t]he British press had great difficulty with emancipation', with some pamphleteers even 'regard[ing] slavery as beneficial for the Negro'.<sup>2</sup> The underlying motive for this cold reaction towards Lincoln's declaration was, as Alfred Grant has argued, that 'the British press reported [...] what their readership demanded. The conflict in America became the rallying call for all Englishmen fearing an extended franchise, and the resulting democracy.'<sup>3</sup> This callousness towards the suffering and the

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<sup>1</sup> In 'Robert Gould Shaw' she uses this expression denoting her reaction when she reads false statements put out by English papers (1, p. 354).

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Grant, *The American Civil War and the British Press* (London: McFarland, 2000), pp. 29, 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

moral and civic rights of both coloured people and cotton mill hands in England deeply troubled Gaskell and may be seen to underlie her work in 1863. Over half a century earlier rational Dissenter Anna Barbauld had expressed her dismay and anger at Britain's complacency towards slaves in 'Epistle to Wilberforce Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade' (1791). Now Gaskell, using earlier formats and references, urges her compatriots into action against slavery. The earlier period sparked new ideas for 1863.

This chapter first considers the impact of the Cotton Distress in Manchester, an immediate result of the Civil War, and Gaskell's involvement to aid the stricken, showing how during this time of crisis the Gaskells fell back on their religious ideas and worked as a family to relieve suffering. It then explores Gaskell's long-term involvement with abolition and provides arguments why *Sylvia's Lovers* may be read as an abolitionist work. This is followed by an analysis of 'Shams', an essay brimming with references to public discourses of the past and present, and 'The Cage at Cranford'. Though different in style, and at times puzzling to the reader, these witty works provide links to eighteenth-century social critic and reformer Joseph Addison and address problems relating to emancipation. 'Robert Gould Shaw' lacks any dissimulation, as Gaskell forthrightly calls for Christian heroes who will help liberate the enslaved Negroes across the Atlantic. Other works of 1863 show the same principles at work, but these will be integrated into the larger discussion.

### **The Distress in Southern Lancashire, the American Civil War and Abolitionism**

In 1862 and 1863 the Gaskells helped fight the effects of the American Civil War which had brought to a halt the extensive trade between the southern cotton plantation owners and the Manchester mill owners, reducing the Manchester operatives to dire need. *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons* record the foreign and colonial subscriptions for the Cotton Districts Fund that came in from Australia, Cape of Good Hope, Brazil, China and other countries where British subjects lived.<sup>4</sup> Also, 'more than one vessel laden with provisions, the spontaneous gift of the American citizens for the relief of the suffering workpeople in Lancashire, landed her stores at Liverpool.'<sup>5</sup> The *Daily News* of 16 October 1862, which incorporated what Gaskell described as 'a most

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<sup>4</sup> Vol. xlix, 8 February-10 August 1870, p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> *The Annual Register; A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad, for the Year 1864* (London: Rivingtons, 1864), p. 147.



accurate account of the state of things in South Lancashire', reported that 'gifts of material [are] now flowing into the Central Executive Committee in Manchester.'<sup>6</sup> The newspaper further requested funds to help two hundred and fifty able-bodied men with carpentry skills who could not support themselves to emigrate.<sup>7</sup> A few months later, in February 1863, the Gaskells themselves were busily engaged in helping a Mrs Regan and her child emigrate to Sydney.<sup>8</sup> They paid the passage, helped make all necessary arrangements, supplied the outfits, painted her boxes with her name, and did the 'packing up, & unpacking, & repacking'.<sup>9</sup>

Raising funds and acknowledging donations gradually sapped Gaskell's energy. She conscientiously acknowledged receipt of donations, and sent personalized letters of thanks. For instance, she promised a Miss James to give her mother 'full particulars' of what had been done with her counterpane, so that she 'may not feel that it has gone "vaguely" into an indiscriminate quick-sand of distress' but may know to what 'kind of people and household' her contribution 'will give warmth and comfort'.<sup>10</sup> A series of letters to Christian Socialist Vernon Lushington shows Gaskell turning to him for financial aid, and his 'untiring goodness & helpfulness'.<sup>11</sup> Her letters show that she made every penny count.

Gaskell helped provide not only basic needs, but also a sense of self-worth, as when she helped women find paid employment in sewing and nursing, a scheme close to her heart as chapter two has illustrated. When Florence Nightingale requested her help in finding 'women who would make suitable nurses', probably for the Nightingale Training School for Nurses at St Thomas's Hospital which had opened on 24 June 1860, Gaskell gratefully complied, for 'there is very great dearth of employment for women of every trade, as all are more or less affected by the cotton-crisis'.<sup>12</sup> She promised to 'mention [Nightingale's] plan of training nurses to any of [her] friends' and offered help with the 'wider publication of it'.<sup>13</sup> She also devised a nursing scheme with which she would 'pay one woman [...] to nurse another \who is/ sick'.<sup>14</sup> By January 1863 she was

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<sup>6</sup> To Lord Lansdowne, 16 October 1862, *Further Letters*, p. 247.

<sup>7</sup> *The Daily News*, 'The Distress in South Lancashire', 16 October 1862, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> To Unknown, 7 February [1863], *Letters*, p. 699. Chapple and Pollard indicate that the name may be 'Ryan'.

<sup>9</sup> To Vernon Lushington, 4 February [sc. 8 February 1863], *Further Letters*, p. 250.

<sup>10</sup> 28 January [1863], *Further Letters*, p. 249.

<sup>11</sup> *Further Letters*, p. 250.

<sup>12</sup> 25 April 1862, *Further Letters*, p. 240.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

<sup>14</sup> To Vernon Lushington, [c. 9 April 1862], *Further Letters*, p. 235.

busily involved in the management and teaching at the Sewing Schools established by William Birch, regularly staying there from 9 AM to 7:30 PM.<sup>15</sup> All this work was, as Meta informed Charles Eliot Norton, ‘not *instead* of, but over and above our ordinary occupations, which we have always hitherto considered “sufficient for the day”’.<sup>16</sup> No wonder Gaskell felt they might all be killed with ‘Poor on the Brain’ before the winter was over.<sup>17</sup>

‘Lancashire’s Lesson’ (1865), which appeared in *The Reader: A Review of Current Literature*, reveals how Gaskell retrospectively valued the relief measures set up around the end of 1862.<sup>18</sup> Gaskell’s review of W.T. MacCullagh Torrens’s *Lancashire’s Lesson; or The Need of a Settled Policy in Times of Exceptional Distress* (1864) has not received critical attention, but is significant in illustrating how her charitable activities in 1862-1863 helped develop her civic consciousness.<sup>19</sup> Torrens singles out the work of socially conscious people like the Gaskells, praising the Lancashire middle class, a group of people ‘unsurpassed in moral worth and intelligence by any in Christendom’, who had ‘without waiting for official promptings or external aid formed themselves into Local Committees and Associations’.<sup>20</sup> He also notes that numerous families received donations from individuals living at a distance ‘through the intervention of ministers of religion’.<sup>21</sup> The impression of a highly organized body differs from Gaskell’s own assessment that ‘Men rushed to the rescue as those run with buckets, pails, cans of water, whatever comes readiest to hand, to stop a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid; To Anon, 7 January [?1863], *Further Letters*, p. 249; to Charles Bosanquet, 10 October [1863], *Letters*, p. 715. In a letter to Lord Lansdowne she explains how in June 1862 the first sewing school was set up by Mr Birch, ‘a young man in a warehouse’, near Manchester, how factory girls thronged to get in, and how soon seventeen sewing-schools were established. Chapple and Pollard note how ‘by February 1863 over 40,000 women were involved’. (*Further Letters*, pp. 246-47). See also J. Johnson, *Willing Hearts and Ready Hands or The Labours and Triumphs of Earnest Women* (London: Nelson, 1869), p. 287.

<sup>16</sup> *Letters of Mrs Gaskell’s Daughters, 1856-1914*, ed. by Irene Wiltshire, Humanities E-book, LLP (Tirril, 2012), p.77.

<sup>17</sup> To George Smith, [?late September 1862], *Letters*, p. 698.

<sup>18</sup> Shattock dates Gaskell’s contribution to the *Reader: A Review of Current Literature* to the spring of 1865 (1, p. 411).

<sup>19</sup> Torrens proposed to bring before Parliament a permanent measure for the giving of public employment to those who had lost ‘their customary work by exceptional causes’ (1, p. 418). The Public Works Bill, which saved unemployed Lancashire cotton operatives from the workhouse, became law in June 1863.

<sup>20</sup> W.T. MacCullagh Torrens, *Lancashire’s Lesson; or The Need of a Settled Policy in Times of Exceptional Distress. A Letter addressed to Charles Pelham Villiers, M.P., President of the Poor Law Board* (London: Trübner, 1864), pp. 123-24.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

raging fire' while the fire engines have not yet arrived (1, p. 415). She did, however, consider the activities valuable since they gave the desperate 'a sense of the recognition of a common brotherhood' (Ibid.).<sup>22</sup>

Apart from her charitable, literary and social work Gaskell set herself up as a defender of the Northern cause. As Meta assured Norton in one of her letters, 'mama and I are staunch Northerners, and fight for you in words whenever we hear Southern sympathy expressed.'<sup>23</sup> This was quite brave since, as Gaskell explained to Norton in June 1861, 'I live in S. Lancashire where all personal & commercial intimacies are with the South'.<sup>24</sup> She asked him repeatedly for 'facts' - not assertions - in order to be able to refute the speeches based on 'the wicked mistatements [sic] of the "Times"', whose position on the Civil War she considered to be prejudiced in favour of the Southern states and simply 'Panorama painting'.<sup>25</sup> As her in-laws William and Anne Robson were ardent abolitionists, Gaskell received first-hand information on the cause, together with repeated requests to accommodate visiting anti-slavery campaigners. So 84 Plymouth Grove was not only the nerve centre from which the Gaskells battled the cotton distress and acted as defenders of the Northern cause, it was the home that hosted abolitionists like Maria Weston Chapman and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

As early as 1849 Gaskell busily contacted influential members of the public, including 'MPs whose hearts are made of penetrable stuff' concerning the 'treatment of captive negroes taken by [British] ships to St. Helena.' She undertook this on behalf of arctic explorer Sir John Richardson who tried to bring it before Parliament.<sup>26</sup> Shortly afterwards, as discussed in chapter one, she composed *The Moorland Cottage*, which contains Maggie's memorable remark on wanting to transmigrate into an American slave-owner. As suggested in chapter four, *My Lady Ludlow* (1858) was amongst a number of publications dealing with the French Revolution which helped promote the abolitionist debate in America. The novella also briefly touches on the plight of the negroes through the actions of Mr Gray, who makes the residents of Hamley estate 'feel

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter three demonstrated the importance Gaskell and the rational Dissenters attached to Christian principle of brotherhood.

<sup>23</sup> 21 October [1862], *Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters*, p. 76.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters*, p. 656.

<sup>25</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, 4 July 1864, *Letters*, p. 734; To Charles Eliot Norton, 28 August 1861, *Letters*, p. 665. According to Gaskell *The Times* held great public sway, being considered by many as 'the week-day bible'.

<sup>26</sup> To John Foster, [26 November 1849], *Letters*, pp. 92-93. As in her review of Torrens's letter to Mr Villiers MP which argues for a change in the Poor law, this is another instance where Gaskell is lobbying MPs.

pitiful for the black slaves [because he] leaves little pictures of negroes about, with the question printed below, “Am I not a man and a brother?”” (3, p. 240). Julia Sun-Joo Lee argues for another – more veiled – link with abolitionism, in Gaskell’s references to slave narratives. She compares *My Lady Ludlow*’s Harry Gregson with slave-girl Topsy in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, who are both educated against their masters’ will. Another example Lee gives is the cross-dressing plot in ‘The Grey Woman’ (1861) in which the maid Amante, dressed up as a tailor, accompanies Anna on her flight from her murderous husband Mr. de la Tourelle. She relates this to the audacious scheme of slaves Ellen and William Craft who escaped disguised as white master (Mrs Craft) and black slave, as described in William Craft’s *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, or The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*.<sup>27</sup> The Crafts’ arrival in England caused quite a stir, for Mrs Craft was as fair as an English woman.<sup>28</sup> White slavery became a topic at abolitionist meetings and Gaskell may be seen to embroider on it in ‘Shams’ and ‘The Cage at Cranford’.

Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation caused the Gaskells to reconsider the level of their involvement in the anti-slavery cause. Though hospitable, they did not indiscriminately support the work, as Gaskell’s letter to Anne Robson concerning American abolitionist Miss Remond illustrates. In 1859, when Remond expressed her intent to tour England for abolitionist meetings, the Gaskells disapproved and refused to host her, arguing that the only outcome of such a campaign would be to have ‘feelings stirred up without the natural & right outlet of stirred up feelings, the power of simple & energetic *action*’.<sup>29</sup> Gaskell makes it clear that she ‘[does not] call the use of words *action*: unless there is some definite, distinct, practical *course of action* logically proposed by those words’.<sup>30</sup> Significantly, commenting on an impromptu abolitionist meeting that had taken place in her sitting-room in 1855, Gaskell mentions that her visitors sighed over her apathy.<sup>31</sup> The reason for her seemingly passive attitude becomes clear when relating it to her remarks about Miss Remond’s fine speeches:

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<sup>27</sup> Julia Sun-Joo Lee, *The American Slave Narrative*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>28</sup> William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, or The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (London: William Tweedie, 1860).

<sup>29</sup> To Anne Robson, [February 1859], *Letters*, p. 530. On arrival in England in January 1859 Sarah Remond ended up staying with the Robsons. She had met William Robson in Boston the previous year. *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. by Edward T. James, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 136.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> To Mary Green, [?15 October 1855], *Further Letters*, p. 142.

Gaskell desired practical action. Owing to Lincoln's Proclamation, things dramatically changed in 1863. Whereas earlier she had defined abolitionism merely as 'measures adopted [...] far away across the Atlantic', now there was scope for legal, political and practical action – in England as well as in America.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Sylvia's Lovers and the Rights of Man***

*Sylvia's Lovers* was published in three volumes by Smith, Elder and Co and dedicated to her husband. A few months later Harper and Brothers published a one-volume edition, which clearly demonstrates the connection between the American Civil War and *Sylvia's Lovers* as it was 'dedicated to all my Northern friends, with the truest sympathy of an English Woman; and in an especial manner to my dear friend Charles Eliot Norton' and his wife. This dedication proclaimed to the world that Gaskell's support lay with the North. Importantly, Gaskell's decision not to publish *Sylvia's Lovers* in installments strengthened its social message, as it could be read without interruptions. The novel's title page incorporates a few lines from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850), the poem written after his friend Arthur Hallam's unexpected death, which raises questions about the significance of man's existence. It defines the novel, which has a dark, brooding atmosphere and depicts an unrelenting chain of events that show the frailty of human life. This, coupled with the fact that Sylvia 'has little but her beauty to recommend her', while 'Philip Hepburn is vulgar and tiresome', may explain why *The Morning Post* branded *Sylvia's Lovers* a 'tiresome book to get through', while the *Saturday Review* called it 'tedious reading'.<sup>33</sup> Deemed a major flaw, its reviewer noted that readers 'never can be brought to care much about' Sylvia, hence concluding that '[w]hen the book which narrates her history is closed we remember nothing very distinctly except her beauty and her trials'.<sup>34</sup> As clearly Gaskell was adept at drawing realistic, likeable characters like Ruth Hilton and Margaret Hale, I suggest that she made a conscious decision to keep the protagonists of *Sylvia's Lovers* rather nondescript in character. As Jane Spencer notes, Gaskell 'emphasises throughout how fundamentally the obscure lives of her characters are determined by political decisions

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *The Morning Post*, 26 March 1863, p. 3; *Saturday Review*, 4 April 1863, p. 446.

<sup>34</sup> *Saturday Review*, pp. 446-47. See also *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Angus Easson (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 446-49. Easson has summarized or omitted certain sections from the original review.

they know practically nothing about.’<sup>35</sup> Arguably, the result is that readers were less taken up with the love story, but recalled the bleak picture of domestic and (inter)national troubles caused by the press gang, and the government that condoned it.

The theme and plot of *Sylvia's Lovers*, its message inspired during a visit to Whitby in November 1859, may be led back to abolitionist insurgent John Brown and his men's attack on Harper's Ferry on 16 October of that year.<sup>36</sup> John Brown, who Gaskell refers to as a martyr in 'Robert Gould Shaw', was captured by a detachment of US marines and sentenced to death. His hanging took place on 2 December 1860. This incident, in which government forces opposed a group of men whose objective was the freeing of unjustly (though not illegally) captured human beings, resembles Gaskell's historic narrative about a similar conflict that took place in Whitby in 1793. *Sylvia's Lovers*, written between the Harper's Ferry attack and Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration, endeavours to wake up Americans to the need to reform the unjust legal system which condoned and supported the Slave system.<sup>37</sup> The *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* of 4 April 1863 explicitly links the Civil War and slavery issue in their review of *Sylvia's Lovers*. About the press gang they note, 'we feel an irrepressible satisfaction, when thinking of present foreign grievances and oppressions, that such a system should have so completely passed away as to make its former existence almost incredible to this generation.'<sup>38</sup> Perhaps to clarify what foreign oppressions they meant, they note Gaskell's observation that '[t]he terrors of the

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<sup>35</sup> Jane Spencer, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 96. Critics have attributed this to Gaskell's problems at home and the fact that they almost overwhelmed her. I agree that this may have caused her to contemplate the meaning of life more deeply, but suggest that her writing style was a conscious decision.

<sup>36</sup> 25 [and 30] October Gaskell informed Norton of her intended trip to Whitby (*Letters*, p. 582). She, Julia and Meta stayed there from 4 to 12 November (To Miss Maria Martineau, 4 November [1859], *Letters*, p. 904). By 23 December she informed George Smith that one of the works she had started, called 'The Specksioneer', was 'not far on, but very clear in [her] head' (*Letters*, p. 595), while in 1863 she acknowledged that Whitby was the model for Monkshaven (*Letters*, p. 757).

<sup>37</sup> Gaskell revisits the theme of institutionalized violence in 'An Italian Institution', published on 21 March 1863 in *All the Year Round*, which describes the Camorra, a government-condoned Italian secret society. Jenny Uglow (*A Habit of Stories*, p. 535) highlights the similarities between the Camorra's tactics and the institutionalised violence used by the press gang in *Sylvia's Lovers*.

<sup>38</sup> Angus Easson, *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 447-48. In a footnote to this section (p. 449) Easson argues that this is '[m]ost likely referring to the 1862-3 political unrest and Russian repressions in Poland.'

pressgang had a different effect on the southern and northern populations.’<sup>39</sup>

Clare Pettitt comments on Gaskell’s ‘silent engagement with America’ and posits that the novel’s main social problem, impressment, ‘had been reinstated by the Union in 1861’ and that ‘Gaskell underscores its violence’.<sup>40</sup> It seems unlikely that this Act caused much civil unrest since ‘free’ citizens were not subject to impressment and ‘the Union army implemented impressment in only a few counties and never approached the 6,000 slaves authorized’.<sup>41</sup> In this respect a reference Gaskell makes to conscription is also noteworthy. On 28 July 1863 she comments to Norton on the ‘violent resistance to the conscription in New York’, seeming disappointed and genuinely surprised that this ‘very serious demonstration of the popular feeling [...] against the continuation of the war’ is happening ‘in the very moment of success in the Mississippi’.<sup>42</sup> Though both impressment and conscription are government condoned, to Gaskell they are diametrically opposed: the former, as described in *Sylvia’s Lovers* is erratic, brings fear and instability, and is a clear instance of injustice. Conscription, especially during the Civil War, is a means to eradicate injustice – and as such Gaskell wholeheartedly approves.

*Sylvia’s Lovers* raises the question of human rights, as several critics have noted. Deirdre d’Albertis points out that with the impressment plot Gaskell addresses ‘the question of male political identity’ and ‘the rights of the male individual’.<sup>43</sup> She posits that through the association with the eighteenth century, the period culminating in the French Revolution, Gaskell ‘scrutinize[s] the consequences of an extension of rights or citizenship in her own lifetime to non-subject individuals, such as workers or women.’<sup>44</sup> Sun-Joo Lee argues that in the novel Gaskell endeavours to promote a kind of internationalism, a brotherhood that stands up for a just cause, so that the English people would get involved in the transatlantic fight.<sup>45</sup> I agree and will demonstrate how shorter works with a variety of styles combine to work towards this goal. Jane Spencer

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<sup>39</sup> *Saturday Review*, p. 446. This observation immediately follows the sentence about instances of foreign oppression. The allusion to North and South again connects Gaskell’s novel with the American Civil War. This section is omitted in *The Critical Heritage*.

<sup>40</sup> Clare Pettitt, ‘Time Lag and Elizabeth Gaskell’s Transatlantic Imagination’, *Victorian Studies*, 54:4 (2012), 599-623 (p. 616).

<sup>41</sup> *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation*, ed. by Ira Berlin, Series II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 191.

<sup>42</sup> *Letters*, p. 709.

<sup>43</sup> Deirdre d’Albertis, *Dissembling Fictions*, p.105.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Julia Sun-Joo Lee, *The American Slave Narrative*, pp. 75-96.

observes that the historical narrative form ensured that Gaskell ‘could express more rebellion and that she would not be read as rebellious.’<sup>46</sup> She notes that in *Sylvia’s Lovers* Gaskell ‘support[s] resistance to the government and [...] accept[s] the rebels’ violence as regrettable but inevitable.’<sup>47</sup> As touched on in chapter three, Gaskell’s shorter works also demonstrate that she does not shirk from promoting armed revolt against injustice.

It is intriguing to consider how the novel would have been critically reviewed if Lincoln had not issued the Emancipation Declaration in January 1863 for doubtless abolitionists would have appreciated Gaskell’s underlying message of rebellion against a government that allows its citizens to be forcefully taken and enslaved. After writing condition-of-England novels which addressed the industrial, social and religious scene, this anti-slavery work might have been considered her most seditious. Whereas in *North and South* Frederick Hale’s mutiny only played on the fringes, here rebellion is at the heart of the novel.

### **‘Shams’ and ‘The Cage at Cranford’: The Shackles of Queen Fashion**

Apart from ‘Shams’ and ‘The Cage at Cranford’, Gaskell’s criticism of fashion-focused society may be read into *A Dark Night’s Work* and ‘Crowley Castle’, which both appeared in *All the Year Round*. *A Dark Night’s Work*, published between 24 January and 21 March 1863, describes how the snobbish local gentry’s disparagement of lawyer Mr Wilkins fuels his pursuit of status, which leads to an excessive use of alcohol, bankruptcy and the death of an innocent man. ‘Crowley Castle’, which appeared in the Extra Christmas number, describes how the glitter of Parisian fashionable society mesmerizes Theresa Crowley, resulting in her marriage to a dissolute gambling French aristocrat, a move which is at the root of the downfall of the Crowley family.<sup>48</sup>

Ostensibly, moving from *Sylvia’s Lovers* to ‘Shams’ means replacing abolitionist ideas with card parties. ‘Shams’ and ‘The Cage at Cranford’ are puzzling, as they appear witty and superficial, whereas, I argue, there is civic engagement in connection with the abolitionist cause. I suggest that the underlying meaning may be distilled by reading the essay and story in their 1863 context. These playful works on

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<sup>46</sup> Jane Spencer, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Dickens would begin assembling stories from the various contributors of the Christmas Number well ahead of time, so Gaskell likely wrote ‘How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle’ earlier in the year.



the mores of fashionable society seemingly stand in stark contrast to the serious 'Robert Gould Shaw', which provides an example of a prosperous, cosmopolitan family of Puritan descent, whose time and resources are aimed towards erasing the blot of slavery. However, the works contain comparable civic messages about the importance of emancipation and may be seen to build on each other.

In February 1863 Gaskell contributed 'Shams' to *Fraser's Magazine*, with whose editor James Anthony Froude (1818-1894) she had been acquainted since the late 1840s when he was resident tutor at her friends the Dukinfield Darbishires. The reading public of the monthly *Fraser's Magazine of Town and Country*, which had been founded in 1830, consisted of middle and upper class people. The magazine had already gone through several transformations by 1861, when Froude became the editor, as under William Maginn it had enjoyed a reputation as 'rebellious *Fraser's*', whereas under John W. Parker, who took over in 1847, it became orthodox, appealing to a middle class readership.<sup>49</sup> In order not to lose readers to new monthlies like *Macmillan's Magazine* and the *Cornhill*, Froude strove for articles in *Fraser's* to be balanced and neutral, providing readers with enough information to draw a well-balanced conclusion.<sup>50</sup> Froude himself was pro-Confederacy, but as Ciaran Brady notes, he published articles describing both strong Northern and pro-Southern views.<sup>51</sup> *Fraser's* offered a diverse range of writings, including thought-provoking travelogues, poems, biographies and witty articles that provided mental stimulation. 'Shams' directs Gaskell's essay writing, which commenced in *Household Words*, at a new, more sophisticated readership.

With 'Shams' Gaskell seems to aspire to emulate Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, the great essay writers of the eighteenth century, who targeted middle class readers to provide society with new social rules that replaced selfishness with virtue, truth, honesty, brotherhood and doing one's duty. Their essays appeared in the *Tatler* (1709-1711) and the *Spectator* (1711-1714), and employed wit to picture the excesses of the age. A century later Barbauld's *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian and Freeholder* (1804) revived interest in their discourses. In her preliminary essay the

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<sup>49</sup> Ciaran Brady, *James Anthony Froude: An Intellectual Biography of a Victorian Prophet* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 238.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid: Waldo Hilary Dunn, *James Anthony Froude, a Biography*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), II, p. 332.

<sup>51</sup> *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, vol. 2, ed. by Walter E. Houghton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 313; Ciaran Brady, *James Anthony Froude*, p. 241.

editor explained how Steele and Addison's work had filled a void during an era when the party spirit was 'high and bitter', and 'rant and grossness, which offended the sober and excluded the strict' abounded.<sup>52</sup> Addison, whose work breathes 'sentiments of rational and liberal devotion', appealed to Barbauld as, like her, his interests are manifold, incorporating moral and religious subjects, fancy pieces, and essays that exhibit character, life and manners.<sup>53</sup> In this time of crisis Gaskell builds on Barbauld's work.

There are many ambiguities about 'Shams', which copies Addison's style, as he would 'work[] up a hint', or create a 'fancy-piece from a neglected fragment, a slight outline, or an obscure tradition', but its message becomes clear when one links it with transatlantic issues.<sup>54</sup> In fact, Gaskell signals the link with America in the opening paragraph of 'Shams' where the narrator mentions American ways of speaking, while the concluding paragraph invokes the civil war and its consequences for the Lancashire Mills through a mention of 'American squabbles [that] produce a scarcity in the cotton market' (1, p. 338). By depicting a society whose members denigrate and belittle each other Gaskell put up a mirror and tried to give readers a proper perspective of life, as elsewhere people were struggling for survival or losing their lives in the fight for emancipation.

'Shams' sheds light on how Gaskell exploits inconsistencies to promote both critical and self-reflection. For example, though she signs her initials under the essay, she does not use her own narrative voice. Also, the narrator's perspective is inconsistent for although 'Mr Shams', a man of leisure who frequents balls and card-parties, has come to realize that 'sham is too often lurking in the background', and wonders 'who would have the moral courage to confess the sad fact[?]' (1, p. 338), he himself seems unwilling to do so for fear of being shunned. Nevertheless, he does in fact list multiple social deceptions, which are again part of the puzzle, since these seemingly offhand criticisms may evoke an article in a periodical which had come under public scrutiny. It is a reminder of how Addison's pamphlets and articles had caused lively debates in coffeehouses, which had resulted in significant cultural change, and illustrates Gaskell's innovative way of incorporating current debate into her work. Here the narrator scoffs at

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<sup>52</sup> *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder: with a Preliminary Essay by Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, 3 vols (London: Johnson, 1804), I, p. vii.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvi. Readers of an Addisonian essay had to espy slight nuances to arrive at its underlying meaning.

paper collars which replace linen ones to save high washing costs (1, p. 334), women who flaunt meters of expensive fabric on their crinolines while ignoring (unseen) basics (1, p. 333), and working class parents who desire their daughters to learn accomplishments (1, p. 335).<sup>55</sup>

The narrator also criticizes 'Belgravian mothers' who sell their daughters to the highest bidder (1, p. 332). Gaskell probably refers to a letter to the editor of *The Times* dubbed 'The Belgravian Lament', which was ostensibly written by seven desperate Belgravian mothers whose twenty-four daughters had already been out for seven seasons but were still unattached. The mothers blame courtesans ('pretty horsebreakers') for the unwillingness of gentlemen to tie the knot. Their account describes girls being paraded anywhere they might meet eligible bachelors: at balls, breakfasts, concerts and Ascot. The mothers' actions are not motivated by love, but fear that their daughters would 'be given away at last as wives to people of limited means and no position.' The letter illustrates England's version of white slavery and the all-encompassing pursuit of status.<sup>56</sup> Though Mr Shams denounces excesses, they preoccupy him to such an extent that he is ignorant of the wider world. Worldly thoughts rule his life. The overarching impression is of a society where individualism and self-absorption are rife.

Gaskell combines the eighteenth-century essay format with references to social commentators of the same era to hint how to read the essay. Dr Johnson (1709-1784) is quoted as having maintained that 'some persons would acquire more knowledge in the Hampstead stage than others by taking the grand tour' (1, p. 329). However, the narrator wrongly attributes this quotation to Johnson, since it actually concerns a direct reference to 'Eyes and No Eyes', John Aikin and Anna Barbauld's children's story.<sup>57</sup> 'Eyes and No Eyes', written in the form of a dialogue between a teacher and two young boys

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<sup>55</sup> Here Gaskell seems to hint at a job advertisement in *Punch* that read: 'A young lady wanted, in a farmhouse, to instruct four children in music, singing, French, drawing, and dancing.' *Punch* comments that for future farmer's wives 'it would be well, besides accomplishments, to teach them their domestic duties[...]' *Punch or The London Charivari*, 'Soft Hands and Hard Labour', 25 October 1862, p. 175.

<sup>56</sup> 'A Belgravian Lament', Letter to the Editor of *The Times*, 27 June 1861, p. 6. Rachel Buurma demonstrates that the letter and all subsequent correspondence based on this topic were in fact not written 'by concerned citizens, but rather by the collaborative efforts of an indeterminate number of anonymous newspaper writers.' Gaskell rekindles the debate. See Rachel Sagner Buurma, 'Anonyma's Authors', *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900*, 48:4 (2008), 839-48 (p. 844).

<sup>57</sup> 'Eyes and No Eyes; or The Art of Seeing', in John Aikin and Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Evenings at Home: or The Juvenile Budget Opened*, 6 vols (London: Johnson, 1791), IV.

during a walk, shows that what may be instructive for one person may prove meaningless to another, who does not understand what he is seeing. Subsequently, Aikin and Barbauld apply this lesson to gentlemen taking the Grand tour of Europe, remarking that ‘while many a vacant, thoughtless youth is whirled throughout Europe without gaining a single idea worth crossing a street for, the observing eye and inquiring mind find matter of improvement and delight in every ramble in town or country.’<sup>58</sup> Further hints to this particular story are the narrator’s insistence that he is ‘making good use of my eyes’, and ‘I make the most of what passes before my eyes day by day and every day’ (Ibid.). ‘Eyes and No Eyes’ appeared in Aikin-Barbauld’s *Evenings at Home*, the collection of civic lessons William McCarthy describes as ‘amount[ing] to a campaign for enlightened, ethical citizenship’, and which according to the authors’ niece Lucy Aikin ‘forms the mind to discrimination, while it engages the [...] feelings in the cause of truth, of freedom, and of virtue.’<sup>59</sup> The allusion to ‘Eyes and No Eyes’, with its message of paying attention to unfolding events, is the pivot through which the remaining allusions in ‘Shams’ are shaped.

Gaskell’s intent is for readers to inquire into what is happening in Lancashire and across the Atlantic, but encouraging readers to ‘see’ might also provoke some to inquire into the mistake of attribution. Having cited Barbauld’s *Evenings at Home* in *The Moorland Cottage*, Gaskell was obviously well acquainted with the stories, so presumably this was a purposeful error. In fact, ‘Mr Shams’ was not the first to misattribute the quotation, for in his 1859 bestseller *Self-Help* Samuel Smiles mistakenly credited Johnson with the remark that ‘some men will learn more in the Hampstead stage than others in the tour of Europe’.<sup>60</sup> *Self-Help* focused on educating oneself, and taught people to make their own moral and civic decisions. To that end they needed to carefully observe society. The conclusion Smiles drew from Johnson’s saying was,

It is the mind that sees as well as the eye. Where unthinking gazers observe nothing, men of intelligent vision penetrate into the very fibre of

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<sup>58</sup> John Aikin and Anna Barbauld, *Evenings at Home*, p. 350.

<sup>59</sup> William McCarthy, *Voice of the Enlightenment*, p. 309.

<sup>60</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London: Murray, 1859), p. 72.

the phenomena presented to them, attentively noting differences, making comparisons, and detecting their underlying idea.<sup>61</sup>

With his credo ‘be and do’, Smiles emphasized the need for personal self-culture combined with active service to the community in order to fulfil the responsibilities of citizenship.<sup>62</sup> Gaskell’s purpose is similar. Still, one wonders whether Gaskell totally agreed with Smiles.

Gaskell is a much more complex writer than Smiles: while he puts out a blueprint, she encourages and calls for an active process of reading. ‘Mr Shams’ is an unreliable narrator whose comments cannot be taken at face value, but why does he repeat the mistake Smiles had earlier made? Is Gaskell implying that Smiles’s examples are not trustworthy? No further reference to Smiles is made but, as Julian Wolfreys and Kathryn Powell have suggested, *Cousin Phillis*, another work which appeared in 1863, seems to comment on *Self-Help*.<sup>63</sup> Wolfreys considers Holdsworth an advocate of the ‘Smilesian ideology’, who Gaskell rids England of because he is ‘the wrong type of Englishman’.<sup>64</sup> Gaskell does not approve of ‘right-wing selfhood but [...] seeks to reform the old England [...] around notions of care and community’, a persistent idea in her early work.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, *Self-Help* was commonly perceived as promoting selfishness for, filled with personal success-stories, it endorsed ways to outshine others, a criticism Smiles addressed specifically in the second edition, published in 1866.<sup>66</sup> He focused on success stories, while conversely, Gaskell tended to highlight the trials of the outcasts.

‘Shams’ uses current debate to illustrate the decline of social values and a community spirit in England. It refers, for instance, to Dr Andrew Wynter, who had demonstrated that shopkeepers adulterated commodities, wherefore ‘the old-fashioned notion that “an Englishman’s word is his bond,” no longer holds good’ (1, p. 338).<sup>67</sup> This undermines Smiles’ argument on the title page of *Self-Help*, in which he quotes Shakespeare that ‘to thine own self be true [...] thou canst not then be false to any

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Anne B. Rodrick, *Self Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 212.

<sup>63</sup> Julian Wolfreys, *Being English; Narratives, Idioms, and Performances of National Identity from Coleridge to Trollope* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Kathryn Powell, ‘Engineering Heroes: Revising the *Self-Help* Narrative in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cousin Phillis*’, 29 (2015), 79-96.

<sup>64</sup> Julian Wolfreys, *Being English*, p. 94.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 93-94.

<sup>66</sup> Kathryn Powell, ‘Engineering Heroes’, p. 80.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew Wynter, *Curiosities of Civilization* (London: Hardwicke, 1860), pp. 53-92. Originally published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1855.

man'. Clearly, people could and would 'be false'. The narrator notes the changes in society, and observes that now 'the spirit of the times is all for liberty and equality' (1, p. 335). Though this would be true across the Atlantic, ironically, the narrator is proven wrong when it comes to England where, as 'Shams' illustrates, English citizens do everything in their power *not* to be equal or to emancipate themselves. They willingly place themselves under the yoke of 'Queen Fashion' and Status. The Self-Help principle, extreme individualism and a pursuit of material gain, seems to result in moral and civic laxity, as 'every man's hand is seen in his neighbour's dish' (1, p. 338). Gaskell, the spokeswoman for an England where co-operation, brotherhood and equality would reign supreme, is distraught.

At times the narrator's voice fades and Gaskell's voice seems to take over. In this way she sharply contrasts false and selfish attitudes with truthful remarks. For example, commenting on a 'smart wedding' which some fashionable ladies labelled 'a shabby turn-out', the narrator reasons, 'when there is hardly wherewithal to buy bread and butter and bring up a family, why begin married life with lace veils, carriages, and breakfasts?' (1, p. 336). This commonsense observation sharply contrasts with the essay's concluding paragraph in which 'Mr Shams' professes ignorance of and insensitivity towards the human toll of war and the suffering in Lancashire. He selfishly desires the squabbles in America to produce a demand for 'pure' goods such as wool and linen as opposed to cotton. It is his unexpected callousness to the trials of slaves and Lancashire cotton operatives which haunts the reader. It is a wake-up call to be alert to unfolding events and to denounce the selfish pursuit of status. 'Shams', though seemingly a lighthearted piece, carries a solemn social message. In fact, as seen in chapter one and two, this connection between humour and social criticism had earlier been used in 'The Last Generation' and the 'Cranford' stories. On 28 November 1863 Gaskell unexpectedly rekindled memories of the Cranfordian Amazons. Like 'Shams', 'The Cage at Cranford' uses wit to denounce the anti-emancipation spirit prevailing in England. It satirizes crinolines and suggests this type of fashion impedes the liberation of women. Like 'Shams' it uses Addison's work to critically comment on the present.

'The Cage at Cranford' describes Miss Pole and Mary's confusion when a 'cage' which lacks both a bottom and a top arrives from Paris. Presuming the item to be a birdcage, Miss Pole orders her maid to suspend it before the front window, in full view of the street, a scene evoking Addison's 'The Trial of the Petticoat' (1709), a satirical

essay denouncing the hoop petticoat, which similarly puts it on public display.<sup>68</sup> In a playful style, Addison employs the presiding judge of the trial as narrator. The judge describes how the petticoat was placed on ‘an Engine of several Legs, that could contract or open itself like the Top of an Umbrello [sic]’ in order that all might ‘take a leisurely Survey of it, as it should appear in its proper Dimensions.’<sup>69</sup> After hearing arguments for and against the hoop-skirt he finally rules against it, owing to ‘the great and additional Expence [sic] which such Fashions would bring upon Fathers and Husbands’.<sup>70</sup> This ending resembles that of ‘The Cage at Cranford’ where Mary remarks that ‘foolish ambition has brought people to ruin before now’ (2, p. 310). She also comes to realize that ‘there *is* such a thing’ as clothes being ‘too fashionable’ (2, p. 305).

In *Selections from the Spectator and Rambler* (1804) Barbauld edited Addison and Steele’s works for the ‘instruction and edification of young women’.<sup>71</sup> Both ‘Trial of the Hoop Petticoat’ and ‘The Commonwealth of Amazons’, themes which may have inspired the Cranford stories, appear in *Selections*. Arguably, Barbauld used Addison and Steele’s work to reiterate and strengthen her own civic messages like, for example, her satirical letter ‘Fashion, A Vision’ (1797) – which in turn spells out the underlying thought in ‘The Cage at Cranford’ and ‘Shams’.<sup>72</sup> Barbauld derides fashion’s dictates at the Court of Queen Fashion:

to break the shackles of oppression, and assert the native rights of man, is esteemed by many among the noblest efforts of heroic virtue; but vain is the possession of political liberty if there exists a tyrant of our own creation, who, without law or reason, or even external force, exercises over us the most despotic authority; whose jurisdiction is extended over every part of private and domestic life; controls our pleasures, fashions our garb, cramps our motions, fills our lives with vain cares and restless anxiety. The worst slavery is that which we voluntarily impose upon ourselves.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *The Commerce Of Everyday Life: Selections From The Tatler And The Spectator*, ed. by Erin Skye Mackie (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 482-85. See also *Selections of the Spectator, Tatler and Guardian*, vol. 1, pp. 60-64.

<sup>69</sup> Erin Mackie, *The Commerce of Everyday Life*, p. 483.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 484.

<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, *Littell’s Living Age* of 10 August 1844, republishing an article from the *Quarterly Review*, listed it as a children’s book (p. 10).

<sup>72</sup> *The Monthly Magazine*, April 1797, pp. 254-56. The letter was, Barbauld informs the editor, sent to a young lady about five or six years earlier.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Even Cranfordian Miss Pole, who sets herself up as a liberated woman, is eventually shown to be under Queen Fashion's sway. 'The Cage at Cranford' incorporates some thought-provoking dialogues as when Miss Pole's servant Fanny correctly assumes the cage to be an 'iron petticoat[] all made of hoops', but her mistress scoffs at this notion as surely 'ladies [do not] need wire guards like fires to surround them' (2, p. 312).<sup>74</sup> Gaskell does not need to go into great detail to denounce this fashion fad, as Miss Pole's succinct statement would immediately have conjured up the incessant stream of newspaper articles reporting incidents where crinolines ignited, instantaneously enveloping their wearers in flames.<sup>75</sup> Many died. Similarly, 'Shams'' description of women who are 'cribbed, cabined and confined' in their steel or wooden hoops (1, p. 334) tersely puts down crinolines as impeding women's freedom. Small wonder, therefore, that women's lib champion Miss Pole resolves to cut up the crinoline.

While Miss Pole's plan to remodel the fashionable cage into 'two good comfortable English calashes' (2, p. 313) inserts some gentle humour into the piece, it also carries a darker undertone. Miss Pole is revealed to be a product of her time, as she unthinkingly follows its fashion dictates. Indeed, the calash bonnet was anything but English, and had been invented in the 1760s to shield the extravagant towered and powdered wigs worn by the French aristocracy. This pre-Revolution fashion fad showcased the egocentric lifestyle of the French upper classes, whose sole focus in life was to outshine others with excessive costumes and eccentric behaviour. While the aristocrats were reveling in the artificial splendour of fashionable society, commoners' rights were trampled on, and their suffering ignored. 'The Cage at Cranford' is 'Shams' in a nutshell. In a unique and jokey way, Gaskell calls for people to withstand the excesses of the time, make their own moral decisions and become truly emancipated. Only then can they help liberate others.

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<sup>74</sup> The seriousness is clear from the great number of articles mentioning this problem. The *Building News and Architectural Review* of 5 September 1862 states, 'The quantity of wire used in the manufacture of fire-guards for the prevention of those accidents from the use of crinoline, which, nevertheless, are of too frequent occurrence, is immense' (p. 184).

<sup>75</sup> Gaskell knew several ladies who had met with this kind of accident. Mrs Longfellow died from a domestic fire for, while sealing up locks of hair of her little girls in packets, her dress caught fire. To Charles Eliot Norton, 28 August 1861, *Letters*, p. 664; August 1861, *Letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton*, pp. 88-89. Also, under the entry 'February 16, 1863' in *French Life*, Gaskell mentions the death of Madame de Circourt owing to the fact that 'her dress caught fire, she was fearfully burnt' (1, p. 385).



By using recent newspaper articles that sparked public debate Gaskell holds up a mirror. She wants her compatriots to utilise their liberty and assets to help emancipate coloured Americans, for such are the social responsibilities of citizens of the world. She reiterates this message in ‘Robert Gould Shaw’, her most straightforward and outspoken example of a lesson in citizenship and social responsibility.

### **‘Robert Gould Shaw’: Liberating the Outcast**

The obituary of Robert Gould Shaw was published in December 1863 in *Macmillan’s Magazine* which had been set up by Macmillan, Masson, Ludlow and Thomas Hughes. Its first edition appeared in November 1859. Though not intended as the organ for Christian Socialism, the publication ‘was somewhat imbued with their ethos of service and plain-speaking in matters of social concern.’<sup>76</sup> Its editor was David Masson, a former lecturer in English and Literature at University College London. On 19 September 1859 Gaskell mentions that ‘Mr Masson [...] has written to ask for things for a Mag or something Macmillan is going to set up’.<sup>77</sup> Though Gaskell was invited to contribute she declined, having already promised an article for the *Cornhill* and the Christmas number of *All the Year Round*. Finally at the end of 1863 she had a contribution fit for *Macmillan’s*. The choice of media explains Gaskell’s outspoken Christian message and shows the continuation of her connections with the Christian Socialists. Articles were signed, and contributors included Charles Kingsley, F.D. Maurice, Matthew Arnold and Christina Rossetti.

Gaskell had become acquainted with Robert Gould Shaw’s mother during a visit to Paris in 1855, and they had kept up the contact by letter. The Shaws had a cosmopolitan outlook, spending ‘nearly five years in Europe, travelling in Italy and Egypt’, and their only son Robert studied in Germany for a while (1, p. 351). Another characteristic of the family which appealed to Gaskell was their firm stand for what they believed in, no matter the consequences. This had commenced centuries ago as Mr

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<sup>76</sup> Spenser Eddy describes how in March 1858 Macmillan, projecting a quarterly, had turned to Hughes as a prospective editor. He notes that Hughes and his supporters, Kingsley, Maurice and Spencer wished to write for ‘the small, influential policy-making audience in England’. Though nothing came of this discussion, shortly afterwards *Macmillan’s Magazine* was established. In 1859 George Smith tried to persuade Hughes to become the editor of the *Cornhill*, but he decided to remain with *Macmillan*. Conceivably, Hughes declined Smith’s highly lucrative offer because he expected to have a great(er) social impact with *Macmillan’s*. Spenser L. Eddy, *The Founding of “The Cornhill Magazine”* (Muncie: Ball State University Press, 1970), pp. 9-10.

<sup>77</sup> To George Smith, 19 September [1859], *Letters*, pp. 573-74.

Shaw was ‘the true and faithful descendant of one of the Pilgrim Fathers who had left everything for conscience’ sake’ (Ibid.).<sup>78</sup> It still continued in her time, as Robert chose to leave his ‘crack regiment into which all the young men of the “upper ten thousand” entered’ in order that he might go ‘live with, and train and teach, the poor forlorn coloured people [...] who were going to fight for the freedom of their brothers in the South’ (1, p. 352). In July 1863 Colonel Robert Gould Shaw died leading the 54<sup>th</sup> coloured Massachusetts regiment in an attack on Fort Wagner. Subsequently, Gaskell wrote Mrs Shaw a heartfelt letter of condolence in which she lauded him as a ‘noble hero, true Christian’ who ‘died nobly doing his duty, “laying down his life for others,” and thus showing the greatest love possible [...]’<sup>79</sup> This idea resurfaces as the key message of the obituary. Gaskell was looking for a similar kind of Christian hero in England.

‘Robert Gould Shaw’ first describes Shaw’s family background, while the second part contains extracts from American newspapers concerning his life and work.<sup>80</sup> Gaskell styles the obituary into a human interest story, depicting Robert’s close-knit happy family, their home and the moral values they adhere to.<sup>81</sup> The contrast with ‘Shams’ could not be greater. While the world of ‘Shams’ revolved around keeping up appearances, Mr and Mrs Shaw realized that the well-to-do might easily ‘be tainted by [...] worldliness and the love of dress’ (1, p. 351) and tried to guard their children against this. They were therefore ‘educating their children *not* after the usual manner of wealthy people’ (Ibid.). The trap that, as ‘Shams’ depicts, many English people are caught in, is recognized by Mr and Mrs Shaw, who ‘feared the adoption of riches as a comparative standard of worth’ (Ibid.). ‘Shams’ pictures a society where wealth is the standard to value commodities and individuals by and, as the Shaws had anticipated, this ‘produced a self-indulgent character’ (Ibid.). These prosperous people, Gaskell is eager to point

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<sup>78</sup> In *Lois the Witch*, discussed in chapter four, Gaskell had questioned some aspects of the Puritan heritage; here she celebrates some other aspects.

<sup>79</sup> 29 August [1863], *Letters*, p.710.

<sup>80</sup> Gaskell did not name the sources used, but *Memorial R.G.S.* (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1864), which contains letters and other important publications concerning the life, mission and death of Colonel Shaw, reveals the origin of her quotations. It incorporates Gaskell’s letter of condolence to Mrs Shaw though not her obituary.

<sup>81</sup> Markovits argues that in her ‘journalistic’ novel *North and South* Gaskell actually invented the ‘human interest’ story as it became known in the twentieth century, i.e. ‘a story that melds reportorial fact with Romantic emotion’ (p. 470). She bases this on the statement that ‘Milton became a brighter place to Margaret [...] It was that in it she had found a human interest’. ‘North and South, East and West’, pp. 469-70.

out, consider it morally damaging to flaunt their riches. Here - as in 'Shams' - Gaskell offers a moral message which links the dictates of modish society with the abolitionist message.

Gaskell describes the Shaws as thoughtful and conscientious people who considered slavery 'a great national sin, in which they themselves were, to a certain degree, implicated' (1, p. 352). This notion of being implicated by an injustice because one fails to oppose it may have taken some readers aback and explains Gaskell's prolific output, as through her writing she aimed to right evils. Gaskell remarks that the Shaws 'were not merely willing, but desirous, to make their own personal sacrifices' (Ibid.) for, as Mrs Shaw believed, her son's death would help the country to get 'purified from our curse of slavery [following which] our descendents [sic] will reap the reward of our suffering' (1, p. 354). Gaskell's interrogation of the effect of ancestral sins on the state of the nation was earlier touched on in *Lois the Witch*. The novella concludes with a 'declaration of regret' signed by the jurors of the Salem witch trials, and, as discussed in chapter four, justice Sewall's plea for forgiveness that the missteps of the past would not bring God's wrath on him, his family or the nation. The obituary builds on this theme in a new way.

The second part of 'Robert Gould Shaw' begins with a description of John Brown being led from jail towards his execution, giving 'a dying blessing of the martyr' on a coloured child (1, p. 355). The extract originated from the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and is indicative of how Gaskell perceives Shaw: he follows in Brown's footsteps.<sup>82</sup> The poem 'Together', which serves as the obituary's conclusion, had earlier appeared in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*.<sup>83</sup> Gaskell's use of these papers again discloses how closely she is engaging with transatlantic sources.<sup>84</sup> Importantly, as she had done with *Mabel Vaughan*, she uses and frames American sources and transcribes the information for an English audience in order to give a specific message.

The obituary not only refutes negative comments that had appeared in *The Times*, but also expresses Gaskell's belief that taking part in the fight is a Christian duty. She is indignant at the 'false statements' in some English papers which criticize 'the

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<sup>82</sup> *Memorial R.G.S.*, p. 71.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> 29 August [1863], *Letters*, p. 710. Gaskell informs Mrs Shaw that an unknown correspondent who signed him/herself 'E.S., Boston' had sent 'the lines on Colonel Shaw'. As mentioned in chapter four, she also regularly received written materials from friends like Norton and Hale.

higher classes of Northerners [for] shirk[ing] their part of sacrifice and suffering', and testifies to knowing 'three only sons, of rich parents' who have left all [...] to follow Christ' and 'set the captive free' (1, p. 354). Gaskell encourages women, themselves not yet fully liberated, to participate in the fight for emancipation, describing how a bereaved mother among her acquaintances is liberally donating money 'to procure comforts, and even luxuries for the Confederate prisoners' (Ibid.). Clearly, wealthy Northerners are doing their God-given duty to love their enemies. On the contrary, the English as portrayed in 'Shams' do not acknowledge any civic or Christian duty. Their life is a treadmill of vanity and egotism. With 'Robert Gould Shaw' Gaskell lauds the hero, but chastises her self-absorbed status-conscious compatriots. Civic messages mentioned earlier in her fiction are exemplified through a real life. The obituary encourages readers to get involved: to actively oppose injustice, follow one's conscience regardless of the cost, and fight for the emancipation of all human beings.

### **Civic Lessons: The Culmination**

*Sylvia's Lovers*, 'Shams', 'The Cage at Cranford' and 'Robert Gould Shaw' are all part of the same narrative which encompasses the struggle for truth and justice in America and England and combines this with a denunciation of the egocentric way of life of those slavishly following Queen Fashion, and perhaps, Smiles' Self-Help doctrine. In 1863 Gaskell combines themes she had addressed over the years - women's rights, (Christian) brotherhood, the rights of racial minorities, her Unitarian beliefs of standing up against injustice, the use of historical sources, having an eye for the world - and brings it to a fitting crescendo. Following up from Barbauld's 'Eyes and No Eyes' Gaskell wants to shake her readers out of their complacency. She incites the news of the day: the Emancipation Declaration, the Civil War, and hardship in the northern cotton mill areas. With 'Shams' Gaskell uses a witty style to nudge her middle and upper class reading public, those with the power to make a difference in Parliament, to wake up to the battle raging across the Atlantic. They are to consult their conscience concerning the Emancipation of negro slaves. Several months later this message is repeated in stronger language in 'Robert Gould Shaw', when she personally addresses readers in England and across the Atlantic to do their duty and help eradicate the 'curse of slavery' (1, p. 354).

## Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates how Gaskell stood in the tradition of the eighteenth-century rational Dissenters in both word and deed. In practical ways she helped alleviate suffering brought about by an unjust industrial and social system, using the insight she gained through these charitable activities to inform her work. Like the rational Dissenters Gaskell was intent on disseminating knowledge and imparting truth, developing a notion of citizenship by which the nation would be transformed into a just and inclusive society. Her work shows her definition of a good citizen to be someone who opposes injustice, follows his conscience no matter the consequences, assumes social responsibility, is of good moral character, and desirous to support the outcasts and those in need at home as well as abroad. She set an example of this herself, acting as a citizen of the world in the tradition of Richard Price and his contemporaries, who put Christian brotherhood ahead of nationalism. Gaskell's short work, more clearly than the novels, reveals her cosmopolitan outlook.

The thesis has established literary and philosophical connections between rational Dissenter Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Gaskell. Gaskell ignored the Victorian interpretation of the domesticated Barbauld, as portrayed in Lucy Aikin's *Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld* (1825), but focused instead on the woman writer who has recently been uncovered by William McCarthy and others. Gaskell alludes to radical civic ideas from *Evenings at Home* and almost literally copies a passage from *Civic Sermons* – a work not incorporated in Aikin's *Works*. Gaskell's emulation of Barbauld's more radical political works demonstrates her own mind-set. Like Barbauld Gaskell addressed multiple social evils, discussing not only the woman question and industrial relations, which have received much critical attention, but also attacking religious and racial discrimination. Standing in Barbauld's tradition, she even hints at the quite revolutionary idea of humanitarian and military intervention in another country to safeguard a persecuted minority group.

Gaskell's written work, regardless of genre or it being fiction or nonfiction, encourage the discussion of civic problems and build on each other. Her short works, the direct result of her social vigilance, could be penned immediately, and as less focus on plot and character development was needed, they contain clearer civic lessons and may help elucidate underlying social themes in the novels. To distil their meaning

works written during a certain period may be read together, their commonalities compared and discussed in light of public or personal events in Gaskell's life or that of her friends. This explains the broad range of topics Gaskell addressed, as, for example, in 1853 the problems F.D. Maurice experienced generated reflections on religious discrimination, whereas in 1863 Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation led to a consideration of the ins and outs of Emancipation. Gaskell alternates her tone, going from subtlety to being straightforward, serious, brooding, and then again witty, sometimes within the span of a short work. The shorter works to some degree reflect her letters, offering glimpses of her thoughts and mood as she inserts humorous observations, critical comments, and astute remarks – even within the scope of a historical treatise, or dealing with a serious topic like discrimination. Her irony is revealed in its full force in these works, and has as yet not been given much critical attention.

Gaskell's references, allusions and epigraphs offer deeper insight into her civic ideas. Several critics have touched on this subject. As early as 1950 Rubenius incorporated an extensive appendix listing Gaskell's literary allusions in the works that were ascribed to her at that time, while more recently Joanne Wilkes and Jon Singleton have discussed Biblical allusions in *Mary Barton*.<sup>1</sup> Though restricted to the novel, their observations touch on conclusions drawn in this thesis, which demonstrates how throughout her oeuvre Gaskell purposefully uses ambiguity and veiled allusions to current articles and speeches, while subtly altering historic and current texts to suit her own ends. These stylistic features meant that Gaskell's underlying messages might not have been readily understood by all, but depended on the readers' level of education, literary and social interests, and the kind of newspapers, pamphlets and periodicals they read. Using multiple ways to keep her readers contemplating and discussing evils, Gaskell transformed her narratives into civic 'lessons' for readers, practically illustrating the import she attached to education.

One of the aims of this thesis was to show the broad spectrum of her works, and the many novel ways Gaskell addressed evils. She never stopped experimenting with

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<sup>1</sup> Aina Rubenius, *The Woman Question*; Joanne Wilkes, "'Have at the Masters'?: Literary Allusions in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*", *Studies in the Novel*, 39:2 (2007), 147-60; Jon Singleton, 'The Dissonant Bible Quotation: Political and Narrative Dissension in Gaskell's *Mary Barton*', *ELH*, 78:4 (2011), 917-41.

styles – in fact, over the years she seemed to become increasingly more creative and experimental. Using multifarious ways to engage her readers, she always kept her audience in mind. Therefore, ‘Libbie Marsh’s Three Eras’, published in *Howitt’s Journal of Popular Progress*, is distinctly different from ‘Shams’, which addressed the more sophisticated audience of *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*. The educational philosophy which was brought to bear on Gaskell’s civic lessons resembles that applied to the lives of her four daughters. Paying close attention to each girl’s specific talents, interests, strengths and weaknesses of character, Gaskell carefully assessed what style of education and subjects she would benefit from, following which she searched for a school that met these requirements.<sup>2</sup>

Arguably, Gaskell’s audience awareness restricted her radical impulses, since the civic lessons were aimed at mainstream readers. Indeed, she meant to challenge her readers into reflecting on evils using reasonable arguments. Being too radical would have defeated her purpose with readers either not understanding, ignoring, or being too offended to pay attention to her message (as actually happened with *Ruth*). Gaskell provides civic education for different stages: the stories can be enjoyed on a superficial level, but through reflection and discussion deeper civic meanings unfold. The Cranford tales are a case in point. Gaskell tended to use a reasonable step-by-step approach towards change, which may explain why she did not fully approve of the revolutionary methods of Barbara Leigh Smith, ‘a strong fighter against the established opinions of the world’, despite ‘admiring her noble bravery’.<sup>3</sup>

While this thesis demonstrates that Gaskell is a much more creative, innovative and versatile writer than commonly regarded, it also shows that basing Gaskell’s legacy solely on her literary output is doing her a disservice. She was, in fact, a fully engaged human rights activist. Her letters reveal the importance she attached to philanthropic activity as a means to civic engagement, and her wariness of people who were unwilling to sacrifice time and energy but just donated money for charitable causes, or campaigners who roused an audience while there was no outlet for practical action. Writing was Gaskell’s campaigning tool, used for educational, networking and

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<sup>2</sup> Gaskell had begun her close observation of her firstborn daughter Marianne’s development of moral character and intellect when she was a baby. J.A.V. Chapple and Anita Wilson, eds, *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 22-23; Robin Colby, ‘Elizabeth Gaskell: A Model of Motherhood’, *GJ*, 11 (1997), 55-67.

<sup>3</sup> To Charles Eliot Norton, 5 April [1860], *Letters*, p. 607.

fundraising purposes. Though telling stories was her ‘one talent’, it took second place to imparting civic lessons.<sup>4</sup> To this end she was willing to curtail her artistic impulses, as, for example, with *Sylvia’s Lovers*, in which she refrains from fully developing her protagonists so as to draw her readers’ attention to the cause of their problems: institutionalized injustice.

Gaskell’s works led their own life once they left Britain, making their way across the Atlantic and the Channel, where they addressed different social evils, but kept emitting civic messages. Annette Hopkins in ‘Mrs Gaskell and France’ describes in detail how Gaskell’s works were critically received in France, revealing that for forty years she was widely read there, which may partly be explained because ‘conservative intellectuals in French society [endeavoured] to elevate the taste of the reading public’, and to ‘foster morality’ and hence promoted her work.<sup>5</sup> Many of her narratives were translated, and several appeared as serials. For future research it would be interesting to look at the French publications in context and see how these might have influenced the work – as I have done with some of her American works. *Mary Barton*, for example, appeared in serial format in *Le Correspondant*, but in an abridged version. As the editors of *Harper’s Magazine* had edited ‘Traits and Stories of the Huguenots’, rendering it more American by deleting sections, it would be interesting to see which parts the French editor chose to cut, and how it affects the reading. Gaskell’s works’ cosmopolitan aspects, reach and reception outside Britain would make a fertile area of future research.

Gaskell’s literary debut immediately established her as a condition-of-England writer, while with *Ruth* she consolidated this reputation and added being a spokeswoman for fallen women to her accolade as being an industrial writer. That is only the tip of the iceberg. Gaskell’s short works reveal that she championed *all* who faced discrimination or prejudice, while trying to instil a sense of empathy and charity in her readers.

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<sup>4</sup> To Edward E. Hale, 22 April [1861], *Further Letters*, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> Annette Hopkins, ‘Mrs. Gaskell in France 1849-1890’, *MLA*, 53:2 (1938), 545-74 (p. 571).



## Publication Details of Short Works Used in this Thesis

'Cheshire Customs' appeared in William Howitt, *Rural Life in England*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1838), pp. 589-90.

### Works published in the 1840s:

'Clopton Hall' appeared in William Howitt, *Visits to Remarkable Places: Old Halls, Battle Fields and Scenes Illustrative of Striking Passages in English History and Poetry* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1840), pp. 135-39.

5, 12 and 19 June 1847: 'Life in Manchester: Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' (*Howitts' Journal of Popular Progress*, 1:23, pp. 310-13; 1:24, pp. 334-36; 1:25, pp. 345-47)

4 September 1847: 'The Sexton's Hero' (*Howitts' Journal of Popular Progress*, 2:36, pp. 149-52)

1 January 1848: 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' (*Howitts' Journal of Popular Progress*, 3:53, pp. 4-7)

### Works published in the 1850s:

1850 *The Moorland Cottage* (Christmas Book, London: Chapman & Hall)

30 March, 6 and 13 April 1850: 'Lizzie Leigh' (*Household Words*, 1:1, pp. 2-6; 1:2, pp. 32-35 and 1:3, pp. 60-65)

16 and 23 November 1850: 'The Well of Penmorfa' (*Household Words*, 2:34, pp. 182-86 and 2:35, pp. 205-10)

28 December 1850: 'The Heart of John Middleton' (*Household Words*, 2:40, pp. 325-34)

13 December 1851: 'Our Society at Cranford' (*Household Words*, 4:90, pp. 265-74)

13 March 1852: 'Memory at Cranford' (*Household Words*, 4:103, pp. 588-97)

19 and 26 November 1853: 'Morton Hall' (*Household Words*, 8:191, pp. 265-72 and 8:192, pp. 293-302)

10 December 1853: 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' (*Household Words*, 8:194, pp. 348-54)

17 and 24 December 1853: 'My French Master' (*Household Words*, 8:195, pp. 361-65 and 8:196, pp. 388-93)

25 February 1854: 'Modern Greeks Songs' (*Household Words*, 9:205, pp. 25-32)

22 May 1854: 'Company Manners' (*Household Words*, 9:217, pp. 323-31)

25 August 1855: 'An Accursed Race' (*Household Words*, 12:283, pp. 73-80)

13, 20, and 27 December 1856: 'The Poor Clare' (*Household Words*, 14:351, pp. 510-15; 14:352, pp. 532-44; 14:353, pp. 559-65).

19 June to 25 September 1858: *My Lady Ludlow* (*Household Words*, 18:430, pp. 1-7; 18:431, pp. 29-34; 18:432, pp. 51-56; 18:433, pp. 85-89; 18:434, pp. 99-104; 18:435, pp. 123-28; 18:436, pp. 148-53; 18:437, pp. 175-81; 18:438, pp. 205-11; 18:440, pp. 247-52; 18:441, pp. 277-82; 18:442, pp. 299-305; 18:443, pp. 327-32; 18:444, pp. 341-46)

27 November 1858: 'The Sin of a Father', later entitled 'Right at Last' (*Household Words*, 18:453, pp. 553-61)

7 December 1858: 'The Manchester Marriage' (*Household Words*, Vol. 18, Extra Christmas Number *A House to Let*, pp. 6-17)

8, 15 and 22 October 1859: *Lois the Witch* (*All the Year Round* 1:24, pp. 564-71; 1:25, pp. 587-97; 1:26, pp. 609-24)

13 December 1859: 'The Ghost in the Garden Room', later entitled 'The Crooked Branch' (*All the Year Round*, Vol. 2, Extra Christmas Number *The Haunted House*, pp. 31-48)

### **Works published in the 1860s:**

February 1860: 'Curious, if True' (*The Cornhill Magazine*, 1:2, pp. 208-19)

1 February 1862 and 8 March 1862: 'Select Committee on French Songs' (*All the Year Round*, 6:145, pp. 448-54 and 6:150, pp. 561-68)

24 January to 21 March 1863: *A Dark Night's Work* (*All the Year Round*, 8:196, pp. 457-65; 8:197, pp. 481-85; 8:198, pp. 505-10; 8:199, pp. 529-33; 8:200, pp. 553-62; 9:201, pp. 1-7; 9:202, pp. 25-32; 9:203, pp. 49-57; 9:204, pp. 73-84)

February 1863: 'Shams' (*Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 67, pp. 265-272)

21 March 1863: 'An Italian institution' (*All the Year Round*, 9:204, pp. 93-96)

28 November 1863: 'The Cage at Cranford' (*All the Year Round*, 10:240, pp. 332-36)

December 1863: 'Robert Gould Shaw' (*Macmillan's Magazine*, 9, pp. 113-17)

3 December 1863: 'Crowley Castle' originally entitled 'How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle' (*All the Year Round*, Vol. 10, Extra Christmas Number *Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings*, pp. 12-25)

Spring 1865: 'Lancashire's Lesson' (*The Reader: A Review of Current Literature*)

### **Short works that appeared in American journals:**

July 1849: 'The Last Generation in England' (*Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, 5:1, pp. 45-48)

January 1854: 'Stories of the Huguenots' (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 8:44, pp. 251-55)

13 October 1855: 'An Accursed Race' (*Littell's Living Age*, 47, pp. 90-96)

24 November 1855: 'Half a Lifetime Ago' (*Littell's Living Age*, 47, pp. 478-96)

January 1856: 'Half a Lifetime Ago' (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 12:68, pp. 185-202)

January 1858: 'The Doom of the Griffiths' (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 16:92, pp. 220-234)

23 April 1859: 'The Half Brothers' (*Harper's Weekly Magazine*, 3:121, p. 267)

November 1859: 'The Half Brothers' (*The Home Monthly*, 1:1, pp. 230-36)

22 October, 5 and 12 November 1859: *Lois the Witch* (*Harper's Weekly Magazine*, 3:147, pp. 682-83; 3:149, pp. 714-16; 3:150, pp. 730-32)

22 March 1864, *Lois the Witch* was republished as *The Maiden Martyr: A Tale of New England Witchcraft* and appeared in *Beadle's Library of Choice Fiction*, number 3.

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22 October 1853: 'Bran' (*Household Words*, 8:187, pp. 179-81)

December 1853: 'The Scholar's Story' (*Household Words*, Vol. 8, Extra Christmas Number *Another Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire*, pp. 32-34)

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*Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*

*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*

*Household Words*

*Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress*

*Littell's Living Age*

*Macmillan's Magazine*

*Publishers Circular and Booksellers Record of British and Foreign Literature*

*Punch or The London Charivari*

*Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art*

*Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*

*Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*

*The Building News and Architectural Review*

*The Caledonian Mercury and Daily Express*

*The Christian Examiner Advertiser*

*The Christian Reformer' or, Unitarian Magazine and Review*

*The Cornhill Magazine*

*The Country Gentleman*

*The Daily News*

*The Educational Magazine*

*The Gentleman's Magazine*

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Miscellaneous Articles*

*The Lancet, A Journal of British and Foreign Medicine, Physiology, Surgery,  
Chemistry, Criticism, Literature, and News*

*The London and Westminster Review*

*The Manchester Literary Club*  
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