CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Overview on *Cranford*

Victorian literature is the literature produced during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and corresponds to the Victorian era. It forms a link and transition between the writers of the romantic period and the very different literature of the 20th century.

The works by pre-Victorian writers such as Jane Austen and Walter Scott had perfected both closely-observed social satire and adventure stories. Popular works opened a market for the novel amongst a reading public. The nineteenth century is often regarded as a high point in British literature as well as in other countries such as France, the United States of America and Russia. Books, and novels in particular, became ubiquitous, and the "Victorian novelist" created legacy works with continuing appeal.

Significant Victorian novelists and poets include: Matthew Arnold, the Brontë sisters, Christina Rossetti, Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Thackeray, G.M. Hopkins, Oscar Wilde etc. Gaskell is remembered today for her novel *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848). This book depicts the hardship of the Manchester working classes in the mid-nineteenth century, and for her artistic achievements in the English classics *Wives and Daughters: An Everyday Story* (1866) and *Cranford* (1850s). In *Cranford,* Gaskell united her powers of observation with genial humor and gentle pathos to create a portrait of early nineteenth-century provincial life in England. Set in the imaginary town of Cranford in the early nineteenth century, the work originally appeared in Charles Dickens's monthly periodical *Household Words* in

December of 1851 as a stand-alone piece entitled “Our Society at Cranford.” At her prompting, however, Gaskell produced eight more episodes, which were later collected into the novel. Portraying Gaskell's wit and delight in the details of everyday life, as well as her lucid prose style and balance of satire and sentiment, *Cranford* is considered by Tim Dolin, a critic of 21st century, to be among the finest novels in English.

Perhaps, Gaskell originally merely intended to tell her audience some interesting individual stories, but later on it was developed as a novel which makes the first half of the book rather loose and episodic. It is not until the latter half of the book that a story begins to be told that continues from chapter to chapter, so in fact the “novel” is really a collection of interconnected short stories and a novella. To the original has been added one extra story, and an essay by Gaskell that fits in well with the rest of the book’s material.

Cranford, written between 1851 and 1853, is a fantasy of the social, political and cultural empowerment of women alone. In this novel, Gaskell has marginalized men to underpin the capability of women. All the major characters in the novel are females. Further, Cranford is a woman territory with unique way of life. The book was first published as a serial in a magazine in 1851-2, but in 1853 it was gathered together in one volume and published as a novel. Its wit is gentle yet sophisticated, and it provides an unsurpassed portrait of small-town life in England in 19th century. At the same time it is a caricature of everyday life in Victorian England, devoted to the filling-in of time. Moreover, it is a utopia of the superfluous. *Cranford* stands in a state of perfect preservation, like a tourist destination. The novel does not depict a sentimental pre-industrial existence, a golden age.

"The Last Generation in England," Gaskell's suggestive title for the first sketch of the novel which appeared in Philadelphia's *Sartain's Union Magazine* in July 1849, pulls together the varying definitions Cranford takes on in the course of its story. With her interest in dialect, Gaskell may have used "generation" in its obsolete sense of "family, breed, race; class, kind, or 'set' of persons," whose last appearance is dated 1727 in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Such an obsolete and rarefied social meaning is at one with the ladies' sense of themselves as the last-well bred gasp in the face of vulgarity, machinery, and men.

The initial episode of the novel features an incursion into the quiet, provincial village of Cranford by Captain Brown, a man initially repugnant to Miss Deborah Jenkyns—the town's tacit social matriarch, a woman nearly obsessed with decorum and the rules of gentility. Brown soon reveals his thoroughgoing congeniality, allowing Miss Jenkyns and the town's all-female social elite to accept him and his two daughters. Following Brown's demise while attempting to save a child from an oncoming train, the aging Miss Jenkyns offers to look after his daughters. The younger of the two, Miss Jessie, decides to forgo marriage to her lover so that she may care for her elder sister, an invalid. All of this changes when the sister dies and Jessie finds herself free to pursue her engagement. In the following episode, Miss Deborah Jenkyns has also died and the focus of the story turns to her sister, the lovable spinster Miss Matty. Matty has come to replace Deborah as the exemplar of morals and values in Cranford.

An adjustment in opinions toward men is already apparent as Matty meets her former suitor, Mr. Holbrook. When she sees Holbrook, Miss Matty discovers that she still loves him, and remembers rejecting him long ago because of her father and sister's objections to his social inferiority. But Gaskell shows that their chance at happiness together has long since passed, and Mr. Holbrook dies soon after the two meet. Meanwhile, Matty decides to allow her maid, Martha, to carry on a romantic relationship with a man—something unheard of while Deborah was alive. The scene shifts again and this time Signor Brunoni, a magician, visits the town and performs his conjuring act. Shortly thereafter, news of a series of robberies spreads, causing a panic, and the Cranford ladies begin to suspect that the mysterious Brunoni may be the one responsible for the crimes. Later, Brunoni's innocence becomes apparent and Miss Matty steps forward to assuage everyone's fears and end the hysteria. Later on, Matty suffers a near total financial loss as the Town and County Bank—in which she became a shareholder on the advice of her sister Deborah and against that of her father—goes bankrupt. Confronted with "poverty," Matty alights upon the idea of putting some old furniture up for sale, and later of selling tea to supplement her vastly reduced income.

> Death was as true and as common as poverty; yet people never spoke about that, loud out in the streets. It was a word not to be mentioned to ears polite. We had tacitly agreed to ignore that any with whom we associated on terms of visiting equality could ever be prevented by poverty from doing anything that they wished. If we walked to or from a party, it was because the night was *so* fine, or the air *so* refreshing, not because sedan-chairs were expensive. (3)

The community also comes to her aid as a secret meeting is called to discuss ways of helping the old woman. Towards the end of the novel, Matty's brother Peter, who had disappeared years ago, returns from India to live with her. Soon Brunoni performs again to the delight of his audience, and things seem to have returned to normal in Cranford. The novel's narrator closes the story by paying homage to its heroine, observing, “We all love Miss Matty, and I somehow think we are all of us better when she is near us” (*Cranford* 119).

Literary realism most often refers to the trend, beginning with certain works of nineteenth-century French literature and extending to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century authors in various countries, towards depictions of contemporary life and society "as they were." In the spirit of general "realism," realist authors opted for depictions of everyday and banal activities and experiences, instead of a romanticized or similarly stylized presentation. Solidly based in the tradition of realist fiction, *Cranford* is thought to represent Gaskell's fictionalization of the small Cheshire village of Knutsford, where she was raised by her maternal aunt following her mother's death. The author describes Cranford as being in the possession of women, and the town itself displays the ideals of a feminine community run according to the principles of custom, “gentility, and propriety” (*Cranford* 2). In sharp contrast to Cranford, Gaskell gives her readers the nearby commercial world of Drumble (Manchester), where hectic materialism threatens to erode the tranquil stability and traditional moral order of the outlying provincial town. Cranford's virtues are said to be personified in the figure of Miss Matty, who in cultivating a powerful sense of community is central to the novel's themes of fulfillment through generosity, love, and acceptance of change. Sex and gender themes also permeate in the work, with the story frequently interpreted as a series of symbolic male invasions into the otherwise serene, feminine village. Likewise, notions of lingering guilt, repressed female sexuality, and love thwarted by class figure prominently in the novel, particularly in regard to Matty, whose failure to declare her feelings for Mr. Holbrook invokes all of these themes. Additionally, while Miss Matty is generally viewed as the central, heroic character of the work, *Cranford* is occasionally read as “a satire of habitual middle-class behavior and thoughtless conformity to custom” (*Elizabeth Gaskell: Her Life and Work* 45), a minority opinion that frequently corresponds with an interpretation of Miss Matty as a figure evocative of pathos rather than admiration.

1.2 Criticisms on *Cranford*

Often dismissed by early critics like Edgar Wright, Patricia A. Wolfe, many of whom saw it as merely a collection of charming, nostalgic vignettes from provincial life, *Cranford* has since come to be regarded as Gaskell's most significant and representative novel. Indeed, most modern critics have insisted on that the realistic novel additionally contains an ironic, almost subversive element, and that Gaskell does not simply idealize life in a simpler, quieter time and place. Some commentators have also appreciated Gaskell's skillful unification of the plot, even though the novel was originally intended only as a short story. George Payne in his book *Mrs. Gaskell and Knutsford* has faulted the work for its “ostensible lack of structure” (*Mrs. Gaskell and Knutsford* 134), a flaw that was dismissed by Winifred Gerin, seen the story as “thematically unified and essentially character-driven” (*Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography* 102). A good deal of contemporary critical attention has also been focused on the narrative technique of *Cranford,* and particularly on its narrator, Mary Smith, who develops from a rather unobtrusive presence into an important interpretive figure in the novel. In more recent years, feminist critics of *Cranford* have endeavored to rectify Gaskell's earlier reputation as a minor novelist, and have recognized in the work themes associated with feminine desire and repression in a male-dominated culture.

In his book *Essays on Criticism* Martin Dodsworth interprets *Cranford* as a plot-driven novel. He further states:

> *Cranford* is most aptly expressed in the delicate—not to say charming—illustrations [...]. The world of *Cranford* is faded, full of small snobbery and great kindness; it is a feminine novel, not only as all the important characters are women, but as pre-eminently the work of a woman, ever held by the details of a room's arrangement or a bonnet's trimming. This familiar view is usually accompanied by a subsidiary judgement: that the book has no structure. (136)

The lengthened form of a story, *Cranford* does not have a clear-cut structure. So, it does not feel easy to study and understand its plotline. Albeit, the delicacy of the novel hints us that this is a work crafted by a woman writer.

Elizabeth Gaskell had the experience of terrible effects of industrialization on workers. *North and South* is the burning instance of her industrial novel. Gaskell herself worked among the poor and knew at first hand the misery of the industrial areas. During this period many people moved from country to live in the cities. But the condition of the workers there was very pitiable. Mrs. Gaskell was actively concerned with creating better condition for workers, many of whom worked in factories. Much of her writing reflects those concerns and several of her major novels describe confrontation between workers and employers. The novel *Cranford* significantly focuses on the social reformation and reconciliation of class and at the same time it depicts the mannerism and social codes and conduct from the humanitarian ground.

Regarding the concept of transformation of society, Borislav Knezevic, comparing this novel *Cranford* with Walter Scott's *Waverly* opines:

> Both Scott and Gaskell seek to understand the demise of older social form whose passing still reverberates in the present. But *Cranford* in contrast to Scott's wide political panorama dwells not on dramatic events in political history, but on changes in the history of civil society in a small town. The novel thereby attends to the complex redefinitions of economic and political life going on in the industrializing north of England and increasing cultural and institutional ascendancy of London and south overall of British social life. (405)
>
> Nineteenth century is the age of material prosperity. Many writers of the time (like Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy) wrote about this change, Gaskell is not also untouched of this revolutionary dimension of the era. Her minute observation of changes in "neighbouring commercial town of Drumble, distant only twenty miles on a railroad" (1) vividly reflected in the very beginning of the novel *Cranford*.

George Payne, have argued that Cranford has lacked formal unity. However, Tim Dolin asserts that the novel does have a particular structure though it is "organized like a collection of anecdotes, printed on cards and bundled together" (*Victorian Studies* 193).

Noticing the predominance of the rituals of gentility as one of the novel's main themes, a number of critics have regarded the novel as defiant of conventions and handbook alike. Hilary Schor, for instance, suggests that *Cranford* ridicules the rigid "codification of experience" (*The Sunday Times* 296) associated with handbooks. He further adds "*Cranford* is a novel and not simply a handbook to extent that the rules for social behaviour are constantly on the verge of being broken. For suspense, a novelistic device depends upon an element of unpredictability" (298). While the novel is intently focused on the rituals of Cranford life, it also contains a series of unique social scenarios, or singulative narratives, that challenge the women's adherence to routine. Similarly regarding the narrative technology of the novel, Natalie Kapetanios Meir in *Studies in the Novel* writes:

> By engaging with concepts from narratology, I situate Gaskell's narrative techniques with respect to those that tend to recur in social instruction handbooks of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. In doing so, I suggest that although novels may provide similar content as handbooks, they both mimic and implicitly raise questions about handbooks' methodology. (23)

Gaskell tests the limits of the principles that the women of Cranford have tacitly agreed upon through singulative examples. Throughout this novel, Gaskell implies that the process of maintaining social conventions requires a routine of collective dissembling through shared language and interpretation.

Another woman critic Nina Auerbach in *Modern Language Quarterly* criticizes the novel's "self depreciating, whimsy feature seems the enemy of its strength; yet this tucked away community does belong to the embattled England of Gaskell's other works (276). Hopkins notes in his book *Elizabeth Gaskell: Her Life and Work* that "*Cranford* has fallen into the hands of textbook makers and been forced to stagger under a corpus of notes and study aids for the edification of American school children" (103).

Cranford was considered to be a classic of English and American literature during the first decade of the twentieth century and it was regularly chose by the American text book industry for school use. To underpin this fact Thomas Recchio views, "A book that even at the time of its first publication in England was considered peculiarly and provincially English *Cranford* seems an odd selection as a classic in the American teaching canon relationship quickly" (597).

It would be better to take some lines from the book which implicitly present that *Cranford* is not a normal novel; it is actually a rebellion against male dominancy. The narrator Mary Smith states:

> I never shall forget the dismay felt when a certain Captain Brown came to live at Cranford, and openly spoke about his being poor - not in a whisper to an intimate friend, the doors and windows being previously closed, but in the public street! in a loud military voice! Alleging his poverty as a reason for not taking a particular house. The ladies of Cranford were already rather moaning over the invasion of their territories by a man and a gentleman. He was a half-pay captain, and had obtained some situation on a neighbouring railroad, which had been vehemently petitioned against by the little town; and if, in addition to his masculine gender. (3)

The above excerpt of the novel portrays that women of the Cranford city are against of the presence of male in their city. Presence of Captain Brown is unwelcome. He felt himself "being poor." His masculinity is disregarded by the women of Cranford.

In her time, no woman was permitted to write, it was the courage of Gaskell who wrote such a rebellious novel amidst of male chauvinism. Her subject matters in the novel fascinated this reader to research this novel. Numerous critics have interpreted *Cranford* from various perspectives as stated above. However, my claim entitled "Woman Separatism in *Cranford*" is yet to be researched. This study will add a new brick in the foundation of literary research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORITICAL MODALITY

2.1 Culture: A Study

Culture, conceived as a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles, and varying between individuals in its specificities, is then not all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his or her world. However, the word "culture" is most commonly used in three basic senses: firstly, excellence of taste in the fine arts and humanities, also known as high culture; secondly, it is an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning; and thirdly, it is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group. It is his or her theory of his or her fellows know, believe, and mean, his or her theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he or she was born. Culture in this view is ordered not simply as a collection of symbols fitted together by the analyst but as a system of knowledge, shaped and constrained by the way the human brain acquires, organizes, and processes information and creates internal models of reality.

Etymologically, the word "culture" was derived from the Latin word “cultura” as a noun of process connected to growing crops, that is, cultivation. Subsequently, the idea of cultivation was broadened to encompass the human mind or "spirit" giving rise to the idea of the cultivated or cultured person. The idea of culture as "a whole way of life" emerged in the late eighteenth century (qtd. in Cultural Criticism 421). Mathew Arnold, the nineteenth century English writer, described culture as "the best that has been known and thought in the world" (qtd. in Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xiii). Culture as the form of human 'civilization' is to be counterpoised to the 'anarchy' of the raw and 'uncultivated masses'. Along Arnoldian line, famous English anthropologist E.B. Tylor defined culture as the "Complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities an habits acquired by man as a member of society" (*Literary Inquiry* 19). In this sense, Tylor seems more original in his definition of culture.

Culture has undergone a massive change by the mid twentieth century. In the twentieth century, "culture" emerged as a concept central to anthropology, encompassing all human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. Specifically, the term "culture" in American anthropology had two meanings: (1) the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and (2) the distinct ways that people living in different parts of the world classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively. Following World War II, the term became important, albeit with different meanings, in other disciplines such as sociology, cultural studies, organizational psychology and management studies.

Raymond Williams, perhaps the leading social critic of his time in England, contrasts this anthropological meaning of culture with the normative meaning of culture. Out of this conflict between culture in the anthropological sense, "the whole way of living of people and culture in the normative sense, representation of the organic voice of the people", there emerged a third way of using the term, "one that refers neither to a people's organic way of life nor to the normative values preached by leading intellectuals but to a battleground of social conflicts and contradictions" (qtd. in Cultural Criticism). Thus, the term "culture" itself is dissonant. So, to draw a single central culture rendering individual experience in coherent and meaningful way, is almost impossible.

Culture-building capacity has been perhaps the most important source of our strength. It has helped us to meet challenges and to keep us from problems. We have survived through culture, evolved with culture and acquired distinctiveness all our own because of culture. But our behaviors affecting cultural, natural and monumental heritage have turned as the threat on culture itself. The imbalances and disharmonies of our culture will prove our threat on heritage, our foibles self annihilate us.

2.2 Multiplicity in Cultural Studies Approach

It is difficult to define “Cultural Studies” with any degree of precision. It is not possible to draw a sharp line and say that on one side of it we can find the proper province of cultural studies. On the other, it is impossible to point to a unified theory or methodology which is characteristic to or of it. A veritable rag-bag of ideas, methods and concerns from literary criticism, sociology, history, media studies, etc., are lumped together under the convenient label of cultural studies.

The concept of culture is central to cultural studies, yet there is no "correct" or definitive meaning attached to it. Barker, in his book *Cultural Studies* writes:

> Culture is not 'out there' waiting to be correctly described by theorists who keep getting it wrong. Rather, the concept of culture is a tool which is of more or less usefulness to us as a life form. Consequently, its usage and meanings continue to change as thinkers have hoped to 'do' different things with it. We should ask not what culture 'is' but how the language of culture is used and for what purposes. (35)

Because of multiplicity of its referents and vagueness of study with which it has all too often been invoked, the term "culture" has by now acquired a certain aura of ill-repute in socio-anthropological circles. The system of inherited conceptions is expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitude towards life. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret experience and guide their actions. Such actions then take the forms of social structure and network of social relations that actually exist. Culture and social structure are then two different abstractions from the same phenomena.

Manifested amidst the turmoil of the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the approach, cultural studies, is difficult to define as such for it has no reference to which we can point. It is a set of practices constituted by the language games. It is not a tightly coherent, unified movement with a fixed agenda but a loosely connected group of tendencies, issues and questions. Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary or postdisciplinary field of inquiry which explores the production and inculcation of maps of meaning. According to Graff and Robbins, “The aim of cultural criticism is something more than preserving, transmitting, and interpreting culture or cultures. Rather, the aim is to bring together, in a common democratic space of discussion, diversities that had remained unequal largely because they had remained apart” (434-35). Cultural studies, in this sense, refuses the universality of culture.

Cultural studies does not speak with one voice and it cannot be spoken with one voice. Regarding its diversities, Womack writes, "cultural studies manifests itself in a wide array of interpretative dimensions, including such intersection fields of inquiry as gender studies, […] the politics of nationalism, popular culture, postmodernism and historical criticism, among a variety of other topics"(243).Those fields that focus on social and cultural forces either create community or cause division and alienation. Concerned with

the exploration of a given culture's artistic achievements, institutional structures, beliefs and systems and linguistic practices, cultural studies highlights the interrelationship and tension that exist between cultures and their effects upon both the literary works and the authentic texts of our lives. Moreover, it highlights how the adoption of a different culture and situation harms heritage. “Cultural studies not only explores the cultural codes of a given work but also investigates the institutional,
linguistic, historical and sociological forces that inform the work's publication and critical reception” (*What is Cultural Studies* 4).

Cultures, like texts, are seen as indeterminate site of conflict that can not be pinned to a single totalized meaning. It can be interpreted differently. Furthermore, a process is needed to become a culture. Cultural studies is, and always has been a multi or inter disciplinary field of inquiry, which blurs the boundaries between itself and other subjects. There must be something at stake in cultural studies which differentiates itself from other subject areas. According to Barker, "what is at stake is cultural studies' connections to matters of "power" and "polities"(5). So, its connections to 'power' and 'politics' is crucial. For Chris Baker, "cultural studies is a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice"(5). Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler emphasize that the intellectual promise of cultural studies lies in its attempt to "cut across diverse social and political interests and address many of the struggles within the current scene"(*Cultural Studies* 1).

Cultural studies in this sense transcends the confines of particular discipline such as literary criticism. In its extremity, it denies the autonomy of the individual whether an actual person or work of literature. E.P. Thompson, in his text *The Making of the English*

Working Class argues that “conceptions of individuality have become fragmented in the post-war period and no longer restrict themselves to nations of shared cultural interests and value systems” (qtd. in Womack 245). "Cultural studies", Guerin and others explain, is committed to examining the entire range of a society is beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices, including arts"(241). It remains difficult to pin down the boundaries of cultural studies as a coherent, unified, academic discipline with clear-cut substantive topics, concepts and methods which differentiate it from other disciplines.

Cultural studies is a discursive formation, that is, a cluster of ideas, images and practices, which provides “ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society” (*What is Cultural Studies* 31). Cultural studies is constituted by a regulated way of speaking about objects and coheres around key concepts, ideas and concerns. So, it focuses on how the change in perspective to handle heritage leads to cultural and religious transformation.

The concept of text suggests not simply the written words, but all practices which signify. This includes the generation of meaning through images, sounds, practices and objects. Such images, sounds, practices and objects are sign systems that signify with the same mechanism as a language, we may refer to them as cultural texts. Texts, “as forms of representations contain the possibility of different meanings which have to be realized by actual readers who give life to words and images” (*The Dialectical Imagination* 145). Meaning is produced in the interplay between the text and the reader so that the moment of consumption is also the moment of meaningful production.

Centrality of the concept of power is regarded as pervading every level of social relationship in the cultural studies. According to Barker, "power is not simply the bond that holds the society together, or coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another, though it certainly is this, but the processes that generate and enable any form of social action, relationship or order"(10). In this sense, power while certainly constraining, is also enabling. Such notion of power is similar to Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony", closely related to cultural studies, which implies a situation where a ' historical block' of powerful groups exercise social authority and leadership over subordinate groups through the winning of consents. So, such a discipline/an approach called cultural studies has the centrality of the Foucauldian concept of "power".

In this sense, the proposition from these observations can be drawn that cultural studies refers to a multi-stranded and cross-disciplinary intellectual movement that places cultural analysis in the context of social formations, seeing society and culture as historical processes unlike frozen artifacts, emphasizing the inextricable relations between culture and power and calling attention to social inequalities, thus, always making a committed call for democratization. It is not a discrete approach, rather a set of practices.

2.3 Feminism and Cultural Studies

British cultural studies is now in the process of redefinition through appropriation. This process appears to be both especially difficult and consequential. Difficult because it is not sharply bounded or single-fathered intellectual lineage. This is “a radical heritage, and its political standpoint appears in danger of being compromised by absorption into the American scene as just another paradigm for sale on the market-place of ideas” (*Culture and Heritage* 50). It seems that this arena has excluded and marginalized its feminist practitioners. Both feminism and cultural studies have complicated and contradictory histories, inside and outside the academy. It would be impossible to map out a comprehensive outline of these developments in this limited research paper. Obviously, there are some parallels between feminism and cultural studies in terms of these histories.

In the past two decades, literary studies in the United States has undergone a paradigm shift that has also affected feminist scholarship. Historians have yet to come up with good labels for the 1980s and 1990s. The 1980s have been called the "Decade of Greed" because of the aggressive business growth of the time, and the 1990s have been labeled the "New Economy" or the "Internet Age," recognizing the extraordinary influence of high-tech industries. These labels focus attention on the economic changes of the time, yet they may not fully recognize the extent to which the United States dominated Western culture. In world politics, economic innovation, and popular culture, the United States was the single most dynamic and creative force in the world.

Before the social movements of the sixties, U.S. departments of literature mainly focused on texts of elite canonical literature that they regarded as expressions of transhistorical, if not altogether universal, human values. However, from the sixties onwards veterans of the Civil Rights, Black Power, women's and Latino/Chicano movements and, more recently, postcolonial scholars, gained access to faculty positions at U.S. colleges and universities, transforming scholarship throughout the U.S. academy. In literature departments, scholars from the sixties were able to demonstrate that canonical texts often enough expressed, not universal values, but the interests of powerful white and first world men, while texts by women and U.S. and global people of color giving expression to other values and interests were deemed not worthy of inclusion in the canon and consequently ignored. Under the impact of such critiques, many U.S. literary scholars conceded the inadequacy of strategies of literary analysis that extracted a few select literary texts from their sociohistorical context and focused only on their internal functioning. Increasingly literary scholars turned to methods of analysis that allowed them to resituate canonical literary texts within history and to understand in what ways texts gave expression to the values and concerns of the social order from which they derived. Feminists had long recognized that literary texts could convey misogynist messages (cf. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, 1970) or give voice to women's experience, but their dawning recognition that the categories "woman" and" gender" varied across time and culture meant that they too needed a method that permitted more historical precision.

U.S. literature departments slowly transformed themselves in ways that also benefited feminism. Since the 1980s, contemporary feminists have argued that feminism should examine how women's experience of inequality relates to that of racism, homophobia, classism and colonization. In the late 1980s and 1990s postmodern feminists argued that gender roles are socially constructed, and that it is impossible to generalize women's experiences across cultures and histories They expanded the range of texts they considered, so that most departments now examine formerly "neglected texts by women and people of color; courses in some departments also deal with documents of popular or mass culture" (*Sexual Politics* 132); and some courses in literature departments even consider forms of cultural expression once thought to be the purview of sociologists, like shopping malls and fashion. As they attempted to develop a method that could help them analyze a greater variety of cultural products from an historically-specific perspective, U.S. literary scholars turned to a range of new theoretical approaches that allowed them to think about the relationship of text and context in new ways, including neo-Marxism, poststructuralism, and theoretical advances made by feminists and scholars of color. They also turned to an approach developed in the United Kingdom that was itself an eclectic product of recent theoretical developments, British Cultural Studies.

For U.S. literary scholars in search of a method, British Cultural Studies had many advantages that, at a time of waning student interest in elite literature, also provided a new justification and focus for their research and teaching. First, Cultural Studies used the term “culture” in an expanded sense that referred not just to canonical texts of high literature or other elite cultural forms, but rather in an anthropological sense, encompassing what the influential literary scholar Raymond Williams had termed “a whole way of life” (*Keywords* 30). As three U.S. commentators later put it: “Cultural studies is thus committed to the study of the entire range of a society’s arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices” (Nelson et al. 4).

In Cultural Studies, U.S. literary scholars thus found a theoretical legitimating for vastly expanding the purview of their investigations. Secondly, Cultural Studies insisted on the important “work” that culture does. For Cultural Studies practitioners, a wide range of cultural products and practices were responsible for shaping and determining “the way things are” or “common sense” at any particular historical period. In that sense, culture was responsible for producing what the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci had termed “hegemony,” that is, voluntary, not coerced, popular agreement with the “principles of the ruling order and conformity with its dominant practices” (*Selection from the Present Notebooks* 52). Whether under the influence of the neo-Marxism of Louis Althusser, who defined ideology as “people’s imaginary relationship to their real conditions of existence,” (*Reading ‘Capital’* 44) or of the poststructuralism of Michel Foucault, who defined "discourse" as the way "a topic can be conceptualized in a particular society at a certain point in time" (*The Archeology of Knowledge* 42), cultural studies practitioners stressed that hegemony, as well as the individuals subjected to hegemony, came into being at the intersection of multiple, potentially contradictory ideologies/discourses, thus could claim only a precarious stability.

Moreover, because, in a changing historical context, hegemony must constantly transform its practices to maintain its control, new forms of culture that sustain hegemony must constantly be produced. This instability built into hegemony means that its control is never absolute, but can instead be questioned, undermined, and/or subverted by counter hegemonic cultural products and practices. As well, because cultural production is always intertextual, drawing upon preexistent cultural forms and the range of semiotic systems to which they take recourse, cultural products are always polysemic, that is, possess multiple meanings that can be activated in different ways by different kinds of audiences inhabiting different social locations or "positionalities" (*Selection from the Present Notebooks* 54).

To be sure, at its outset the focus of Cultural Studies was rather more limited. Narratives of its origins maintain that the method was originally developed to explain the transformation of working class life in Britain after 1945. British workers' growing affluence in the 1950's and their expanded access to consumer goods like newly available television sets meant that older traditions of working class culture crumbled as workers' leisure time was increasingly dominated by commercial mass culture. In this context, Cultural Studies scholars determined to investigate the political function of mass culture in order to understand how it succeeded in wooing workers away from a once-oppositional stance towards ruling class values.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England, was founded in 1964 to investigate the new role that culture played in British politics, its first director Richard Hoggart succeeded in 1969 by the very influential Jamaican-born scholar Stuart Hall. As Hall recalls it, the earliest Cultural Studies scholarship was "culturalist," stressing the "agency of individual subjects operating within particular cultural contexts" (*Cultural Studies* 290). Until the eighties, however, Cultural Studies was concerned mainly with white male working class culture, rarely interrogating that culture's racism or sexism or otherwise asking questions about race and gender. But in the late seventies strenuous interventions on the part of feminists and British people of color coincided with the decline of the power of the British Labour Party and the accession to power of Margaret Thatcher. Analyses of racism, sexism, and the New Right proved more exportable than a concentration on British working class culture, and it was at this time und under these conditions that Cultural Studies became internationalized. By the early nineties it was possible to maintain, as the organizers of a large international conference on Cultural Studies in 1991 put it, that "The field of cultural studies is experiencing[…] an unprecedented international boom" (Nelson 1).

Despite Cultural Studies' commitment to analyses of how power is exercised and its abstract allegiance to the disempowered, the male scholars of the Birmingham School were noticeably less than welcoming to feminist critiques or even women in general. Feminists in Birmingham termed the Centre's chosen topics the "boyzone": "the domain of the public, the state, and the male working class (Brunsdon 276). Stuart Hall remembers feminisms' emergence onto the scene in Birmingham as a disruptive moment: "For cultural studies (in addition to many other theoretical projects), the intervention of feminism was specified and decisive. It was ruptural […]. As a thief in the night, it broke in, interrupted, made an unseemly noise, seized the time, crapped on the table of cultural studies" (282). However, Hall also emphasizes that feminism was responsible for very beneficial shifts in focus and emphasis within the larger field of Cultural Studies. Feminism's insistence that "the personal is political" caused a shift in Cultural Studies, that, Hall claims, was "completely revolutionary in a theoretical and practical way" (282), enabling Cultural Studies scholars to examine new areas of social experience from quite different perspectives. Likewise, the feminist reconceptualization of power as operative within the private sphere as well as the public domain meant that Cultural Studies had to rethink its understanding of how hegemony was secured and exercised. Feminists drew attention to the centrality of issues of gender and sexuality to an understanding of power, and they also compelled Cultural Studies scholars to reconceive their understanding of subjectivity and the subject. Finally, Cultural Studies efforts to address these matters also compelled scholars to rethink the relationship between society and psyche and to confront the question of how Cultural Studies could best appropriate the insights of psychoanalysis.

A 1999 collection called Feminism and Cultural Studies has attempted to "register the power and range of work by feminist critics working within cultural studies over the last twenty years" (Schiach 4) and also illustrates how feminists addressing gender issues have stressed some different issues than male Cultural Studies scholars. As the collection's editor Morach Schiach emphasizes, British Cultural Studies was long conceived principally as the study of contemporary culture (hence the name of the Birmingham Centre), but feminists have also emphasized the historical dimensions of cultural forms and experiences, stressing that gender arrangements within modernity have a long tradition. Feminist scholars have frequently focused on consumption, since the act of consuming has often been associated with, and has also seemed of particular importance to women, and they have underlined that consumption is in the main a practice carried out in the private realm. They have also pointed out that women's consumption of mass culture-shopping in shopping malls, reading mass market romances, or watching soap operas, say, does not merely illustrate their subjection to hegemonic forces, but can also help women imagine and constitute oppositional identities while enjoying subversive pleasures. White and non-white feminists in Cultural Studies have also been among those who have done ground-breaking work on the construction of race, racialization, whiteness, and the efforts of white women and women of color to negotiate those boundaries.

Finally, feminists in Cultural Studies like Alice Echols, Jane Adams, Charlote Perkin, have investigated the roles of various kinds of women in various nations in contributing to the production of modernity, nationhood, and the state by showing how they both respond to and transform ideologies that situate them in the realm of the private sphere, everyday life, tradition, and the home, insisting on their own agency as they participate in practices designated as "women's work" like housekeeping, cooking, and childcare.

Cultural Studies has understood itself from the outset as an interdisciplinary method; as the collection *Introducing Cultural Studies* puts it,

> Cultural studies is not a discipline. It is, in fact, a collective term for diverse and often contentious intellectual endeavors that address numerous questions, and consists of many different theoretical and political positions. That is why cultural

> studies is often described as an ‘anti-discipline’—a mode of inquiry that does not subscribe to the straitjacket of institutionalized discipline” (Sardar/Van Loon 8).

From its outset feminist scholarship has insisted on the necessity of its own interdisciplinarity, since it ultimately seeks to examine all aspects of all women’s lives in every time and culture. In this regard, feminist scholars can look to Cultural Studies for assistance in developing a method that will enable them to undertake such investigations with rigor and precision.

Cultural Studies allows feminists simultaneously to acknowledge how social structures variously constrain women but also to recognize their agency as they resist oppression in ways that also enable them to envision alternatives. Culture Studies allows feminist scholars who focus on cultural production (a “soft” academic area where female researchers have often been concentrated) to insist upon culture’s crucially important role both in sustaining current oppressive social arrangements and in agitating for change.

CHAPTER THREE: AN EXPLORATION INTO *CRANFORD*

3.1 Governing Women in Cranford

Cranford is the name of small imaginary town in the north-west of England. The narrator, Mary Smith, describes the lives of Cranford's inhabitants with affection and amusement. It is mostly "ladies" who rule Cranford- the men are not much in evidence- and these ladies have a great many social rules. Also, you must never talk about money- this is not done by people of good family. Another strange thing about Cranford is that there are not many men about. Most of the ladies in the town are quite old and they are not interesting in men (or that is what they say).

Cranford beams with kindness; it is in possession of the Amazons. At first this appellation seems simply to chuck these sweet ladies under the chin, but the Amazons bob up repeatedly in Victorian writing, usually to be banished as soon as evoked. The city is the model of female independence. However, Cranford is not simply inhabited by Amazons; they are more than citizens. "Cranford is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses above a certain rent are women" (1). The novel's very beginning lines emphasize on possession. But these women are beyond the years of waiting to hold a man in possession of a fortune. The hunt has failed, their mothers are dead, and they are in possession themselves, reminding us of the stability and power that accompany Cranford's genteel destitution. If the lives of single woman in Victorian England were socially and economically marginal, they were legally endowed with the unique power to put a married woman in truly in possession as the holder of a house. Beneath its idyllic veneer, the interest of *Cranford* comes from the tension between power and deprivation in its analysis of the etiquette of penury in this town of redundant women.

Clinging to itself, maintaining a genteel silence about its diminishing resources, free from the upheavals of birth, death, marriage, and moving, Cranford seems at first to share the solitude of the mad astronomer in *Rasselas*, who denies that the heavenly bodies move independently of his will.

> Oh, the busy work Miss Matty and I had in chasing the sunbeams, as they fell in an afternoon right down on this carpet through the blindless window! We spread newspapers over the places and sat down to our book or our work; and, lo! in a quarter of an hour the sun had moved, and was blazing away on a fresh spot; and down again we went on our knees to alter the position of the newspapers. (9)

Though this ritual fails to halt the sun at a spot convenient for Deborah's carpet, Matty remains undaunted: "[…] in a private and confidential conversation, she had told me she never could believe that the earth was moving constantly, and that she would not believe it if she could, it made her feel so tired and dizzy whenever she thought about it" (60). A world in motion is a world Cranford denies. In its stasis, its seclusion, its protective resistance against the rhythms of the universe, Cranford is implicitly defined by Deborah's beloved Dr. Johnson as insane.

This initial alliance with incompetence and unreality strategically intensifies the chock of Captain Brown's abrupt death at the end of the first number. The Captain has been established throughout as a norm of sense and skill, honesty and power. Yet, with all apparent human and literary right on his side, Captain Brown is struck by a train, as the villain Carker had providentially been in Dickens's own recent *Dombey and Son*. He said that he could not "help thinking of a passage in Dickens, which spoke of a chorus in which every man took the tune he knew best, and sang it to his own satisfaction" (83). If the collective spirit of Cranford cannot harness the sun to its yoke, it can, it seems, harness the most unpastoral and ungenteel railroad, which would seem more appropriate to the masculine and mechanized world of Drumble. The railroad makes a single obliging appearance to kill off Captain Brown and then fades out of this happy rural seat forever.

The episode of Captain Brown illustrates not only Cranford's unsettling power to obliterate men, but its corresponding gift of producing them at need. When the Captain's self-sacrificing daughter is left alone and unable to support herself after the death of her sister, a former suitor with a good estate in Scotland obligingly appears, with Deborah's thorough approval, to give a home t o Miss Jessie and a use to her dimples.

Throughout the novel, Cranford veers in this way between being a sanctuary of unreality-during the burglar panic, Matty erects an elaborate device intended to summon imaginary men to her aid against imaginary men-and a repository of sudden, quasi-magical power that destroys or appropriates the reality it excludes. The pathos of the little community is at one with its promise.

The death of Deborah Jenkyns (and with it the waning of Cranford's strict code of gentility) has been seen as the healthy demise of the town's female militancy. But, it is more plausibly the end of the severe patriarchal code Deborah inherits from her remote, adored father and enshrines throughout her life. With her death, leadership passes to the feminine, fluttery Miss Matty, "meek and undecided to a fault" (19), whom nobody can remember to call "Miss Matilda." With Matty's ascension, the town becomes feminine as well as female; but if it loses its Amazonian veneer, the essence remains. Sentimental, selfhating, child-loving, beloved, Miss Matty is the biblically appropriate follower of her sister, whom their father named after Deborah, the Hebrew prophet. In judges, Deborah prophesies in ringing tones, but it is the womanly, domestic Jael who slaughters the male enemy after meekly feeding and serving him. "Peace to Cranford," the last chapter of the novel, echoes the conclusion of Deborah's song of triumph in Bible: "And the land had rest forty years" (Judges 5:31)

Miss Matty's career in the novel is series of quiet, unconscious yet similar triumphs over blustering men who intimidate her. Shortly after Deborah's death, Matty's beloved Mr. Holbrook, whom Deborah's snobbishness had prevented her from marrying, returns to her life. With his honesty, appetite, loud voice, and love of books, he seems a resurrection of the hearty Captain Brown. His blithe unconsciousness of gentility reduces the ladies to helplessness when he offers them two-pronged forks with which to eat their peas:

> I looked at my host: the peas were going wholesale into his capacious mouth, shovelled up by his large round-ended knife. I saw, I imitated, I survived! My friends, in spite of my precedent, could not muster up courage enough to do an ungenteel thing; and, if Mr Holbrook had not been so heartily hungry, he would probably have seen that the good peas went away almost untouched. (24)

Once again, all our affections are thrown on the superior survival power of hearty hunger. However, these lusty assurances are displaced when Mr. Holbrook is dead a few days later, leaving finicky Matty mourning his loss and her own docility. While Miss Pole insists that Paris killed him, Matty trembles violently and the reader remains to wonder about the impact of their reunion on this striding, distanced man who has gone the way of Captain Brown. Like her sister, Matty replaces the openhearted departed with a proxy mate:

Martha, her servant, is allowed a follower, the honest Jem Hearn who, on the failure of Matty's name. With the abrupt death of the unexpectedly mortal Holbrook, "she submit [s] to Fate and Love" (30) in the lower classes, and will recoup her home and her name thereby.

When Signor Brunoni, the conjuror, sweeps into Cranford, the women are confronted with all the autocracy and mysterious skill the male seems to embody. Like Captain Brown and Holbrook, he enters with a burst of power, transforming the Assembly Room, the theater of their girlhood triumphs, into an arena of self-display. Matty is denied the sea-green turban she covets, emblem of power as well as style, but Signor wears a resplendent one which leads Miss Pole, half-sarcastic and half-awed, to dub him "The Grand Turk" (66). The aura of foreignness that surrounds all the men in the novel crystallizes around the exotic Brunoni.

Brunoni's power is more theatrical than real: the cynosure who makes the women tremble is brought low in an accident which renders him helpless, while the little ladies survive to pity and nurse him. Though, "Signor Brunoni was going to exhibit his wonderful magic in the Cranford Assembly Rooms" (62) there was less possibility to impress the ladies in Cranford. Only Hoggins can defy Cranford's magic circle to marry the sole nobility it boasts, and he never enters the action directly: we are allowed only witty glimpses of his embarrassingly flaunted knees. Moreover, Lady Glenmire is an acquisition of Cranford, not a native, her rank isolating her from the tattered gentility which is the badge of the true Cranfordian. Her real alliance is not with this noted corporate world but with Martha the maid, for whom life's only substantial aristocracy is its race of brides.

3.2 Portrayal of Woman Culture

Matty’s final triumph over the superior survival power of masculine reality is a triumph of community rather than slaughter. The failure of the Town and County Bank, in which Deborah has insisted that they invest their small competency, is less an illustration of Deborah’s “feminine” incompetence than it is of her misplaced trust in the masculine omnipotence her father embodied. Matty’s response to the failure of the bank is (by the book’s definition) feminine and corporate:

> I don't pretend to understand business; I only know that if it is going to fail, and if honest people are to lose their money because they have taken our notes - I can't explain myself," said she, suddenly becoming aware that she had got into a long sentence with four people for audience; "only I would rather exchange my gold for the note, if you please. (93)

Rather than seeing herself as a helpless victim of the masculine system, Matty firmly identifies herself with it. Apparently tucked away from reality, Cranford’s closely knit self-sustainment leads its representative to conceive herself instantly as part of a whole. The solitude of this feeble, deprived, far-from-stoical heroine is worlds away from the layers of bleakness in the lives of Miss Mann and Miss Ainley, the grimly spotless spinsters in Charlotte Bronte’s *Shirley*, who perform innumerable and unyielding good works but seem never to approach each other. Tender as they are, the ladies of Cranford are too involved in each other to interest themselves in their larger charitable mission. Miss Matty and her neighbours do know how important they are, and this banded knowledge is their triumph over the failure of economic and masculine reality outside.

Cranford’s motto of “elegant economy” (2) becomes more than a demure euphemism by which it disguises its sexual and financial poverty from itself. The situation itself negates this motto. Its stinting is a whispered reproof to the man’s world that seems so attractive and powerful with its big boots but is so consistently perishable. Unlike those of the banks, “on Mondays [Miss Matty’s] accounts were always made straight-not a penny owing from the week before” (55). Matty’s greatest act of innocence is to invest “laissez faire” (a policy of not interfering in the course of things) reality with her own communality, as she had previously invested Signor Brunoni and the nonexistent burglars with her own aura of magical power.

> She almost made me angry by dividing her sympathy between these directors (whom she imagined overwhelmed by self-reproach for the mismanagement of other people's affairs) and those who were suffering like her. Indeed, of the two, she seemed to think poverty a lighter burden than self-reproach; but I privately doubted if the directors would agree with her. (105)

Atomized Drumble lacks the power that makes Matty’s teashop thrive on love and incompetence and the silent cooperative gifts of “Our society.”

> [S]he did not dislike the employment, which brought her into kindly intercourse with many of the people round about. If she gave them good weight, they, in their turn, brought many a little country present to the "old rector's daughter"; a cream cheese, a few new-laid eggs, a little fresh ripe fruit, a bunch of flowers. The counter was quite loaded with these offerings sometimes, as she told me. (111)

Matty’s innocent generosity, which generates its own return, is her last triumph over the enemy of her people. The narrator’s father from alien Drumble, reverently presented to us only as “my father,” (7) embodies the incomprehensible omnipotence of all the novel’s patriarchs. In view of the unthinking tyranny of Matty’s own grandfather and father, and the alacrity with which her mother withered out of life, Miss Pole’s famous laugh line sufficiently explains Cranford’s crushed shrinking away from men: “My father was a man, and I know the sex pretty well” (72). Though the men read in the novel are always kind, by the Cranford code “They are very incomprehensible, certainly” (72). Only once are the hieroglyphics of their world brought into direct contact with touchstone of Cranford community, and the result of this confrontation is the patriarchy’s failure on its own terms:

> But my father says "such simplicity might be very well in Cranford, but would never do in the world." And I fancy the world must be very bad, for with all my father's suspicion of every one with whom he has dealings, and in spite of all his many precautions, he lost upwards of a thousand pounds by roguery only last year. (109)

In the verbal and commercial battle of nineteenth-century England, the cooperative female community defeats the warrior world that proclaims itself the real one.

Part of its artillery is the power of deceit. After the bank failure, Matty is preserved by a series of Cranford conspiracies on her behalf, “a few evasions of truth and white lies (all of which I think very wrong indeed- in theory-and would rather not put them in practice)” (109). Throughout the novel, Cranford threads its monotonous life with the strange, necromantic joys of fancy, peopling its world with self-created magic burglars, ghosts, spies, Frenchmen, and witches, placing the latter on a footing with Brunoni himself: “My dear Mrs. Forrester, conjuring and witchcraft is a mere affair of the alphabet,” (64) Miss Pole insists. But the final solidification of the community comes only when Matty's brother Peter returns from India and institutionalizes lies. Rising from "Poor Peter" to the "Aga Jenkyns" after his father drove him out of Cranford for dressing as a woman, he can return grandly now that the family (and, indeed, all families in Cranford) has vanished. Now "so very Oriental" (115), Peter is a domestication of the Grand Turk to the dimensions of the community. There is some apprehension that he will restore families to Cranford by marrying Mrs. Jamieson, but instead of proposing to the widow, he enthralls her with a spirited account of shooting a cherub. Marriage succumbs to a wonderful lie, and Cranford is at on with itself: "I want everybody to be friends," Peter declares, "for harasses Matty so much to hear of these quarrels" (119).

Matty does not need Peter to make of Cranford a holy community, for she has already transmuted itself: "It was really very pleasant to see how her unselfishness and simple sense of justice called out the same good qualities in others" (109). At the end of the novel, the narratives of Cranford have achieved beatitude under her aegis without the usual novelistic sacrament of marriage, and the financial, skilled, and procreative power of the Grand Turk has been harnessed to the perpetuation of the little world. Unlikely as it seemed at the beginning, Matty has captured the sun after all.

Women of Cranford city hardly welcome any male figure from outside. Actually, they are in a fear that they might be established by foreign power, especially patriarchal chauvinism. Entertained without terror by a generation by honest Jem, Matty can rest in an alliance between the kindness of gentility and the fertility of its servants that excludes both patriarchal marriage and the industrial and speculative rogueries of "my father":

> This day to which I refer, Miss Matty had seemed more than usually feeble and languid, and only revived when the sun went down, and her sofa was wheeled to

> the open window, through which, although it looked into the principal street of Cranford, the fragrant smell of the neighbouring hayfields came in every now and then, borne by the soft breezes that stirred the dull air of the summer twilight, and then died away.[…] It was a source of satisfaction to Miss Matty to see how few candles were lighted, even in the apartments of those houses from which issued the greatest signs of life. (116)

Destitute of the relationships of daughter, mother, wife, which were the props and dimensions of the Victorian woman's life, Matty is restored as she presides over an organic community rooted in the past and containing the future. If its triumph is aligned with the female error of perpetual duplicity, its sustained existence celebrates the sacrilegious accomplishment of shooting a cherub with elegant economy.

Cranford's durability as a community springs from an unlikely alliance: memory's transfiguration of Elizabeth Gaskell's own halcyon days in Knutsford before her marriage takes the color of her powerful obsession with the Bronte sisters as they appeared in her imagination. From the very beginning, she was inflamed by the story of the beleaguered sisters, a good deal of which seeped into and animated the genteel exclusiveness of Cranford before a biography proper seeded conceivable.

3.3 Cultural Geography of Gentility in *Cranford*

The relationship of the narrator (Mary Smith) of *Cranford* to her subject matter resembles that of anthropologist the strange culture she tries to decipher in the novel. Mary Smith's narration is founded on the attitude that the town's genteel society is not merely strange, it is also a system unto itself, an organized totality requiring outsiders to immerse themselves in it if they are to understand it. However, there was a widespread and long established practice of amateur collecting and writing on unfamiliar locales encountered in travel or residence in foreign and especially imperial domain. Cranford is the city which is imperialized by independent culture of women. Mary reports:

> Their dress is very independent of fashion; as they observe, "What does it signify how we dress here at Cranford, where everybody knows us?" And if they go from home, their reason is equally cogent, "What does it signify how we dress here, where nobody knows us?" The materials of their clothes are, in general, good and plain, and most of them are nearly as scrupulous as Miss Tyler, of cleanly memory; but I will answer for it, the last gigot, the last tight and scanty petticoat in wear in England, was seen in Cranford - and seen without a smile. (1)

Like other amateur reporters from foreign parts Mary is a traveller removed from her home culture, collecting data on the alien culture she happens to visit. True enough, her traveling is a rather home bound affair when compared to the world wide exploits of a gentleman voyager she journeys out of her own home into yet another sphere of domestic life that of the Cranford ladies where she avails herself of the opportunity to travel well inside the boundaries of gender-coded behaviour in the period.

But even as the scope and character of Mary’s travels are constrained by a sexual division of labour. She conveys a consciousness of change and modernity that is alien to Cranford. Mary’s sojourns in Cranford involve a great deal of the kind of work that she plays a role as interviewing informants observing rituals eliciting kin terms, tracing property lines, censuring house holds and writing a journal. Moreover, Mary does all this in a way that is surprisingly methodical. Local idiosyncrasies of speech, diet, sexual custom, class, and political economy are all registered and explained by Mary Smith:

> [W]ith a fresh effort, and a vigorous pull from some unseen hand, it flew up, revealing to our sight a magnificent gentleman in the Turkish costume, seated before a little table, gazing at us (I should have said with the same eyes that I had last seen through the hole in the curtain) with calm and condescending dignity, "like a being of another sphere," as I heard a sentimental voice ejaculate behind me. […] Miss Pole's energetic speeches had the good effect of wakening up Mrs. Jamieson, who opened her eyes wide, in sign of the deepest attention - a proceeding which silenced Miss Pole and encouraged the Grand Turk to proceed, which he did in very broken English - so broken that there was no cohesion between the parts of his sentences; a fact which he himself perceived at last, and so left off speaking and proceeded to action. (65)

Mary presents all the descriptions as possible as she can. However, her detachment is not one of perfect neutrality, and she does not pose as a professionally disinterested observer. Rather, her tone is one of the concerned and emphatic amateur, whose connections with her subject are based on chance and benevolence.

The central mechanism of Cranford gentility, "the trick of the place," Mary explains, is the claim of an "aristocratic connection" (61). (Mary Smith invariably places the Cranfordian self-identifications in quotation marks: for instance, she talks of "genteel society" or "aristocratic society" (34).) In treating the subject of economic status with vagueness ("certain rent"), Mary shows that she has learned the studied indirectness that characterizes the local attitude to these matters. Money talk is prohibited in Cranford society, because the society sees itself as free from economic necessity, like the leisure class it emulates. Yet Mary perceives that likelihood

> [T]hat a few of the gentlefolks of Cranford were poor, and had some difficulty in making both ends meet; but they were like the Spartans, and concealed their smart under a smiling face. We none of us spoke of money, because that subject savoured of commerce and trade, and though some might be poor, we were all aristocratic. The Cranfordians had that kindly *esprit de corps* which made them overlook all deficiencies in success when some among them tried to conceal their poverty. (2)

The community's self-understanding as "aristocracy" is primarily constituted not by economic status, but by an active maintenance of a group solidarity. For the sake of their communal solidarity, Cranford women discarded the so-called social institutions like marriage. Mary presents the conversation,

> Marry! Madness!"
>
> "Marry!" said Miss Pole, with the decision that belonged to her character. "*I* said marry! as you do; and I also said, 'What a fool my lady is going to make of herself!' I could have said 'Madness!' but I controlled myself, for it was in a public shop that I heard of it. Where feminine delicacy is gone to, I don't know! You and I, Miss Matty, would have been ashamed to have known that our marriage was spoken of in a grocer's shop, in the hearing of shopmen!"
>
> (85)

Women of Cranford not only discarded the male-made social institutions but also their economic system. Barter system was still prevailed in Cranfordian society. Mutual bond was not determined by economic factor. Mary is critical about this crisis in Cranford. She explains this bond as a response to the economic predicament of the Cranford society, one that affirms Cranford’s indifference to the exigencies of “commerce and trade” that dominate the world outside the town. So, to be separate from mainstream society is not easy enough. Difficulties come time and again because of their obstinacy to be separated from males.

Despite such claims of independence, the novel persuasively acknowledges that the Cranford matriarchy, in other words woman separatism is affected by the male business world. The culture of Cranford did no longer remain Global change obviously affected the way of life in the town. The Cranfordian people are also compelled to adopt the eastern (oriental) culture. “The pearl necklace disappeared; and about that time many handsome and useful presents made their appearance in the households of Miss Pole and Mrs Forrester; and some rare and delicate Indian ornaments graced the drawing-rooms of Mrs Jamieson and Mrs Fitz-Adam” (114). This reporting of Marry shows that culture of Cranford was gradually (though slowly) getting exchanged with other cultures. That this capital circulates in the larger economic domain, subject to vicissitudes outside the Cranfordians’ control, is the source of the most dramatic peripety in the novel.

On the occasion, Mrs. Jamieson, the most conservative defender of Cranford ways, reaffirms the patrilineal logic undergirding Cranford in arguing Matty’s right to retain her status as Cranford gentlewoman. “[W]here as a married woman takes her husband’s rank by the strict laws of precedence, an unmarried woman retains the station her father occupied,” (107) she said. Like economic capital, rank as social capital is largely outside of Cranfordian’s control apart from the act of marriage. Consequently, the most important conflicts in the community center on the problem of what constitutes a proper marriage in terms of rank. The contrast between the contemplated marriage of Miss Matty and Mr. Holbrook and the actual marriage of Lady Glenmire and Mr. Hoggins illustrates the transition from more to less rigorous interpretations of rank in the local community. This is actually the process of cultural change. Certain population is needed to be a state or city. Therefore, there must be opposite sexes to generate population.

Cultural exchanges take place in every society. Every culture demands change when the time passes. Cranford also needed that change. The narrator indicates this in last chapter: “[A]ll the effects of the open window had quite vanished. I had superintended most of the alterations necessary in the house and household during the latter weeks of my stay. The shop was once more a parlour: the empty resounding rooms again furnished up to the very garrets” (116). The distinguished fact is that the women of Cranford have changed very slowly. “Tea was sent in presents to the Cranford ladies” (114) from India which the narrator calls “so very Oriental” (115).

Even as Mary “had vibrated all [her] life between Drumble and Cranford” (115), her narrative is not an exercise on Cranford with little reference to herself or Drumble. We know that Mary may have a tie of kinship with the Jenkynses:

> I have spoken of my father's old friendship for the Jenkyns family; indeed, I am not sure if there was not some distant relationship. He had willingly allowed me to remain all the winter at Cranford, in consideration of a letter which Miss Matty had written to him about the time of the panic, in which I suspect she had exaggerated my powers and my bravery as a defender of the house. But now that the days were longer and more cheerful, he was beginning to urge the necessity of my return; and I only delayed in a sort of odd forlorn hope that if I could obtain any clear

> information, I might make the account given by the signora of the Aga Jenkyns tally with that of "poor Peter," his appearance and disappearance, which I had winnowed out of the conversation of Miss Pole and Mrs. Forrester. (88)

It is read that her father has some commercial employment in Drumble. He sometimes passes along business advice to the Jenkins sisters. No other information is given about him clearly. Beyond that her life is largely unrepresented. But the crucial fact about Matty's position relative to Cranford is that, with her economic grounding in Drumble and her gendered place in the domestic circles of Cranford, she is equipped to assume the roles of both observer and participant in the visited culture. In Cranford she can pass for a Cranfordian, slipping into local customs and into the local sense of identity, which is often registered in her reports by a "we," while she can also speak in a different register to her outside audience about the eccentricities of the place.

In asides to the readers, Mary is a vocal satirist of the town's ways, but Gaskell never puts her in a position to radically question the town's regime. Her actions are restricted by her function as observer. Indeed, her activities turn only to restore the conditions that existed before her arrival. Largely through Matty's offices, genteel society decides to keep Matty within its ranks, though Matty is only a shopkeeper now. It thus appears that Mary engineers a slight degentrification of the local class affiliations. But this is reversed by her other disruptive interference, her attempt to find Matty's long-lost brother, which has the effect of regentrifying Matty, who upon her brother's return can give up her shopkeeping career and return to living "very genteelly" (114). The end result of Mary's participation in Cranford life is to reestablish a prior order- as if Mary could erase the effects of Drumble and modernity, effects which she herself partially embodies.

Her distance as an observer is often underscored by stylistic device of quoting certain terms of Cranfordian phraseology, such as “genteel society,” “elegant economy,” and “vulgarity,” thereby foregrounding their status as key ideologemes of the local parlance. Their strangeness is not intrinsic but derives from the fact that they are borrowed from a class language of more general circulation. “Genteel society” does not mean in Cranford precisely what it would mean elsewhere. By calling attention to the second-hand character of Cranford idiom, Mary suggests that the eccentricity of the local community is produced by emulating the national paradigm of gentility, not by striving to be different. In other words, the local oddity is found not in radical difference from a normative culture, but rather in idiosyncratic by-products of an attempt to reproduce the norm faithfully. Therefore, if the name the Cranfordian women use for their community reveals a discrepancy in class position between the local and the national elites-for the disadvantages of the Cranfordians’ political and economic status are only too obvious-it also reveals and affinity by which the local regime shapes itself on the national level.

The novel seldom ventures one of the provincial worlds of Cranford but the local class regime is virtually unintelligible without reference to the national class culture of gentility. The defamiliarizing irony of Mary Smith’s narration points to this larger system of which Cranford is but eccentric version.

Moreover, *Cranford* demonstrates the powerful appeal of gentility as its outermost limit. Geographically and economically distant from the southern English ideal, the Cranfordians bear testimony to the reach of paradigm. Questions of internal stratification dominate social relations in the town. For instance, there is much debate over whether a former shopkeeper, Betty Barker, should be accorded the privileges of society, or whether those should be denied to Mrs. Hoggins after marrying below her rank. Describing the Barker sisters, Mary Smith sums up the snobbish mechanism of differentiation central to the maintenance of both specific rank distinctions and the whole genteel system: “They only aped their betters in having ‘nothing to do’ with the class immediately below theirs” (46). Throughout the novel, the analogies between the national and the local genteel cultures destabilize the presumed marginality of the local community as an “ethnographic” (pertaining to scientific description of different races and cultures) subject. The pseudo-sacral status of the national paradigm of gentility in Cranford is foregrounded comically in Mary’s description of Mrs. Jamieson’s table, “devoted to literature, on which lay Bible, a Peerage, and a Prayerbook” (57). The placement of the lexicon of aristocracy between the two sacral texts speaks for itself: the class arrangement functions as an article of local faith.

In its anatomy of small-town life, *Cranford* illustrates the alignment of provincial polite society with national culture of gentility against the industrial culture of the north. The contours of this triangular arrangement are suggested from the start by the narrator’s (Marry Smith’s) situation as a reporter from the industrial Drumble writing on the small-town culture of Cranford and addressing herself to the metropolitan public. In addition, the novel supplements this national triangle with a fourth term, that of the Empire, where comes the symbolic resolution of the novel in form of Peter Jenkyns’s return to Cranford and the restoration of social arrangements to their condition prior to the bank crash. The imperial domain is a realm just as opaque to Cranford society as is the domain of industrial capitalism evoked at the outset. But the empire is legitimate subject of genteel curiosity and discussion, whereas the occupations of Drumble clearly are not. The novel’s final few chapters, centering on Peter’s return from his exploits in India, establish the distinction.

> I went over from Drumble once a quarter at least to settle the accounts, and see after the necessary business letters. And, speaking of letters, I began to be very much ashamed of remembering my letter to the Aga Jenkyns, and very glad I had never named my writing to any one. I only hoped the letter was lost. No answer came. No sign was made. (110)

Cranford and Drumble are geographically proximate but ideologically distant because of Drumble's visible and direct relationship to money-making. Contrarily, Cranford and the geographically distant empire are ideologically proximate, since empire allows the business of wealth accumulation to remain distant and invisible.

Peter's imperial sojourn thus dramatizes the Cranfordian disposition to imagine imperial wealth as compatible with gentility. His imperial career, though different from the kind he would have had at home, does fit into Cranford standards. Expected in his youth to become a rector like his father, Peter instead left England to fight Napoleon, and wound up settling as a landholder in India, where he becomes known as Aga Jenkyns. Even though the circumstances of his departure from home make forsake a profession deemed highly respectable in the small-town social hierarchy, his success as an indigo planter-that is, as a colonial version of the territorial aristocrat-permits him to return to England in possession of a small fortune that is very genteelly disconnected from its source. The Cranford ladies know little of his Indian life, a circumstance Peter exploits to test their credulity with tales of adventure so fantastic that Mary compares them to those of Munchausen or Sindbad. By their willingness to credit his absurd accounts, the Cranfordians reveal their failure to understand the empire that supports them, outside of the categories and exaggerated stereotypes of adventure tales.

Deferring to the genteel abhorrence of openly acquisitive economic practices, Peter presents in his narratives a vision of the business of empire without reference to the shunned question of how money is made. But the suppression of this central component of imperial reality creates a narrative vacuum that fantasy is called upon to fill: the audacity of Peter's tales is a tacit acknowledgement of the other side to his imperial coin. Mary Smith observes that Peter talks in a very different manner with men: "I don't think the ladies in Cranford would have considered him such a wonderful traveller if they had only heard him talk in the quiet way he did to [the Rector]" (115). Even when it appears that he has privately given Matty a realistic account of how he made his fortune, he seems to have done so in a very sketchy and perhaps even unreliable form, such that Matty's repetition of the account leaves Mary lamenting that she "never quite understood the whole story" (113). Mary's comment succinctly recreates the impertinence-irrelevance and inappropriateness-of a thorough relation of imperial experience to the Cranford sensibility. The only verifiable story of Peter's Indian existence that comes to Cranford is about an act of chivalry, of his coming to the assistance of a poor English woman (Sam Brown's wife) traveling alone with a child. Identifying Peter as a protector of vulnerable womankind, this anecdote prompts Mary to seek him out as a potential savior of Cranford's genteel regime.

Peter's usual narratives are like the shawls, muslin gowns, and pearl necklaces he has sent or brought from India-consumer products representing distinction and directed to the same taste that savors the performance of the conjuror Signor Brunoni, who claims association with a host of Indian dignitaries ("Magician to the king of Delhi, the Rajah of Oude, and the Great Lama of Tibet" [118]). Only long after the show do the Cranfordians learn that Signor Brunoni was associated with somewhat less glamorous aspects of British life in India, where he was known as Sam Brown, a poor army sergeant who returns to England as poor as he was before serving in India and takes up the trade of conjuring. This information is disclosed to Mary by Signor Brunoni , whose own sensitivity to rank is not be confused with his twin brother, since he is the more genteel of the two. Signor Brunoni’s appeal to the Cranford residents depends on his ability to invoke the language of gentility to advertise his trade and on the disposition of the Cranfordians to romanticize the Empire in accordance with genteel ideals. Even so, before Signor Brunoni‘s performance the Cranfordians are not entirely at easy about the gentility of conjuring as a profession. Matty is reassured only after seeing the Rector Hayter in the audience, which leads her to “conclude that this wonderful man is sanctioned by the Church” (66).

As Mary Smith’s reports show early of the most conspicuous form of Cranford’s participation in a national culture of gentility is its adherence to a phraseology of elegance and vulgarity it deserves from the practices of the national elite, mediated by verbal reporter by print. Questions of language and literature are shown to be capable of provoking disruptions in the town’s routine almost as dramatic as that caused by the bank failure. The proper Cranfordians obey a linguistic etiquette they share with English gentlefolk everywhere, whereas only the lower orders speak an identifiably regional dialect. The normative upper-class idiom ruling good Cranfordian speech is presided over by Samuel Johnson, whose style is championed by Deborah Jenkyns as “a model for young beginners” (7). Deborah values Dr. Johnson’s style not just because she thinks it the most accomplished style of literature, but also because it supplies a pedagogic ideal necessary to ensure a proper and uniform discourse across the geographically divided genteel orders.

In Mary Smith’s archival research into the past life of the Jenkyns sisters, represented by their epistolary productions, she comes upon a letter in which Deborah laments, in accordance with her ideology of linguistic propriety, “Captain Brown’s sad want of relish for ‘the pure wells of English undefiled’” (9). For Captain Brown prefers the “vulgar” Dickens of *The Pickwick Papers*. The conflict between Deborah and Captain Brown and their literary icons is a conflict between a nationally uniform language and various demotic forms of language that are inadmissible in polite society, at least in part because they are locatable. The episode Captain Brown chooses to read to the Cranfordians, for instance, features Sam Weller, whose speech is instantly traceable to the Cockney precincts of London. “There was nothing new to be discovered respecting their [Cranfordians’] poverty” (14). The arrival of Captain Brown in remote Cranford thus not only causes anxiety over the effects of industrialization on local genteel culture, it also threatens to dislodge the uniform idiom of gentility in favor of a Dickensian polyphony which gives great prominence to more plebeian and local voices.

The literary taste of the Jenkyns daughters is imparted to them by their father, the Anglican Rector of Cranford, the major event whose life was his trip to London in 1782 to supervise the publication of a sermon he wrote for “*The Gentleman’s Magazine*” (34). Having studied his correspondence, Mary is able to provide a sketch of a vain man, susceptible to snobbery and sycophancy in his public function and in his domestic life bent on making his wife and daughters mimic the mores of the aristocracy.

In its deep reading of the novel, Gaskell’s aging Amazons (Cranfordian women) have failed to prepare or protect themselves from outsiders. The spinsters certainly regard strangers with suspicion, for they represent the cultural other that menaces the utopian status quo, but they have little power and few means to counter such a threat. They still think “a husband as a great protector against thieves, burglars, and ghosts” (79) though they are in complete matrimonial reign. They cannot confront the invasion from other country:

> Signor Brunoni, Magician to the King of Delhi, the Rajah of Oude, and the great Lama of Thibet," &c. &c., was going to "perform in Cranford for one night only," the very next night; and Miss Matty, exultant, showed me a letter from the Gordons, promising to remain over this gaiety, which Miss Matty said was entirely Peter's doing. He had written to ask the signor to come, and was to be at all the expenses of the affair. Tickets were to be sent gratis to as many as the room would hold. (118)

This is the burning example of cultural encroachment in Cranfordian society. Not only nearly occidental culture but also the oriental activities of India are also entered in so-called culturally intact city of female.

Interestingly, Captain Brown’s removal to Cranford may secretly welcomed by the approving cluck of some of its unmarried women. But his visibility in the community promises alterations to Cranford’s social and cultural landscape. This helps explain why Miss Jenkyns so vituperatively argues against Captain Brown’s “disparaging remarks upon Dr. Johnson as a writer of light and agreeable fiction” (8) (His preference of Charles Dickens over Samuel Johnson). His preference signals the growing strength of outside trends and popular tastes. Miss Jenkyns cannot completely disguise her apprehension about the moral dangers represented by the introduction of Dickens’s writing into Cranford’s daily routines Captain Brown and Miss Jenkyns “were not very cordial to each other. The literary dispute […] was a ‘raw,’ the slightes touch on which made them wince” (10). But, her defensive praise of Johnson hardly inculcates a lasting decorum on either her Cranfordian sisters or Captain Brown and may actually serve to hasten its decline. Her obsession with protocol and literary style, in fact, reveals how completely she misreads *Rasselas*, for the moral of *Rasselas* is that every place within and without the Happy Valley presents the same human situation of mortal hopes thwarted. The narrator comments her conversation with Captain thus:

> "Fetch me *Rasselas*, my dear, out of the book-room." […] She read one of the conversations between Rasselas and Imlac, in a high-pitched, majestic voice: and when she had ended, she said, "I imagine I am now justified in my preference of Dr Johnson as a writer of fiction." The Captain screwed his lips up, and drummed on the table, but he did not speak. She thought she would give him a finishing blow or two. (6)

Miss Jenkyns is romanticized by reading the novel. She read it just to justify her favorite writer Dr. Johnson “as a fiction writer.”

As a representation of national life, *Cranford* suggests that accommodations can be made because industrialization and the middle-class literary culture anchored by Dickens are new and powerful but not dominant forces in the British polity in the first half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, a place like Cranford draws its strength from association with the national regime of gentility. This has the ability to reinvent itself and continue to preside over both the domestic and imperial politics underwrites Cranford’s own endurance as a culture.

3.4 Menace to Cranfordian Cultural Integrity

No longer truly isolated, the town’s inhabitants manage to ignore such radical changes for a time by obsessively focusing on the minutiae of daily life and traditional protocols. But in the end, the Cranfordians, in particular the town’s elderly spinsters and widows must confront their pretense. According to Mary, Cranfordians have “felt the stain upon its character at this time doubly” (67). They must face the fact that these outside pressures have created new borders, obliterating their assumed social distinctions and displacing their unique social status. The narrator further confesses Cranfordians’ pretension to be rigid in their way of life: “The Cranford people respected themselves too much, and were too grateful to the aristocracy who were so kind to live near the town, ever to disgrace their bringing up by being dishonest or immoral” (68). Gaskell uses Cranford’s humdrum quaintness to mask the nearly invisible disintegration of its ideological conservatism as well as the thorough dismantling of its correlate institutions and traditions by forces from the outside “strangers [or] foreigners” (68). Gaskell’s Cranfordisms are signs of cultural belatedness. They poignantly testify to a civic transformation that will soon take place, perhaps is taking place, even as we read about and revel in Cranford’s utopian simplicity:

> Cranford is for kindness! I don't suppose any one has a better dinner than usual cooked but the best part of all comes in a little covered basin for my sister. The poor people will leave their earliest vegetables at our door for her. They speak short and gruff, as if they were ashamed of it: but I am sure it often goes to my heart to see their thoughtfulness." The tears now came back and overflowed; but after a

> minute or two she began to scold herself, and ended by going away the same cheerful Miss Jessie as ever. (10)

However, this utopian simplicity narrated by Mary may not remain perennially in Cranford. Changeability is the nature of any culture. Not only do individual Cranfordisms captivate the reader by evoking pastoral charms, but they also sinisterly mirror the signs of a transformed national culture which has long abandoned such an ideology. By novel’s end, the town’s aging gentility has lost its traditional markers of class. Hence, these details become sites for recognizing national instability and change, especially as they pertain to women. While Cranford may be “in possession of the Amazons” (1), a consortium of aging women who resist the social and cultural encroachments of the outside world, Cranford’s patches and rags of its daily life interpellate the “Amazons” onto a dynamic fields of a rapidly altered national culture. Their interpellation guarantees that the old Cranford, and its attendant Cranfordisms with their insistently eccentric charm, will inevitably be displaced. They will give way to a new set of highly visible, economic and social configurations that will obliterate the quaint traces of provincial life, turning Cranford’s hairless cows, queasy cats, and passé fashions into nostalgic emblems of an irrecoverable past.

Cranford is nonetheless highly vulnerable, even if it feebly stands in ideological opposition to a competitive marketplace in which men dominate and rule. Cranford’s sorority can survive by assimilating the enemy, inasmuch as the Cranfordians defend themselves from the threat of intrusion by converting men to their own superior, if unacknowledged feminine social structure. The Amazons’ lovable eccentricity can defeat the colt patriarchal culture of commerce and technology. Similarly, Cranford assimilates the outside world in which men travel and that this assimilation produces positive social changes. Mary narrates:

> There was nothing new to be discovered respecting their poverty; for they had spoken simply and openly about that from the very first. They made no mystery of the necessity for their being economical. All that remained to be discovered was the Captain's infinite kindness of heart, and the various modes in which, unconsciously to himself, he manifested it. (7)

Men bring into the women's encloses lives a hint of transgressive magic. The wider sphere in which they move may embrace war, empire and cut-throat trade. But the men who actually enter Cranford's life-from Captain Brown onwards-have a beneficial effect in prompting the women to modify those rules which have bound as well as supported them. In this sense, *Cranford* is a story of loss, for the wider sphere cannot readily assimilate the softening virtues of women into masculine activity.

Women of Cranford practice different kinds of cross-cultural communication. They do not prioritize their personal interests. Rather they believe in collectivity. Members of communal groups prioritize their members and groups for which individuals will make sacrifices. Mary states,

> Everybody lived in the same house, and wore pretty nearly the same well-preserved, old-fashioned clothes. The greatest event was, that Miss Jenkyns had purchased a new carpet for the drawing-room. …] We were very busy, too, one whole morning, before Miss Jenkyns gave her party, in following her directions, and in cutting out and stitching together pieces of newspaper so as to form little

> paths to every chair set for the expected visitors, lest their shoes might dirty or defile the purity of the carpet. (9-10)

Their activities match with eastern culture. Members of collectivistic cultures (here Cranfordian culture) have only a few general communality (e.g., work groups, universities, families etc.) that influence their behaviour across situations. They all share the same house (may be colony) and they do not care about ongoing fashion. They have their own unique way of life which is totally based on communalism. This effect may be the cause of the arrival of “all East Indians” (20).

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The women of Cranford try to create utopian city. They have resisted the prevailing conventions of their time and have attempted to recover their own culture through separatism. This is the city of the women, for the women, and by the women. They want to be intact from the outsider, especially from males. Women in Cranford have suffered from xenophobia. For the sake of security their "houses and shops entered by holes made in the walls, the bricks being silently carried away in the dead of the night, and all done so quietly that no sound was heard either in or out of the house" (128). This feminization, a domestication of the foreign, further undermines any fixed point of masculine occidental authority. Cranfordian culture is a kind of counterculture to challenge the mainstream culture of contemporary Britain. The rigorously excluded historical "present" which abuts the present of Cranford represents an entire world of commerce, manufacture, engineering, and imperialism, all of which gathered in masculine. The people of Cranford have unique communal spirit though they separate themselves form male dominated community. Now and again, city of Cranford is threatened by outsiders. It is in the threshold to be encroached. Nonetheless, Cranfordians manage to defend their cultural heritages.

In fact, this novel is a protest against male dominance. It is Gaskell's courage to write such a novel of women when the patriarchal dominance was in climax. It was the period of colonialism as well as industrialism. There was no role of woman in both fields; rather they were limited within four walls. They were deprived of those rights entertained by males. They even could not vote; the question of publishing their writing was a far cry. In such situation, Gaskell ventured to create woman separatism in *Cranford* no matter how much fictitious it be. No male is leading character in the novel. Every major character is female and all of them have made the city Cranford as a female state. They were attached with their own unique fashions and suffused it with feministic literary tastes. They did not care the development outside the city. In other words, they did not internalize a new ideology or advocate a politics of change. Consequently, they secluded themselves not only from the male dominance and their suppression but also their material progress outside Cranford.

Later on, Cranfordians realized their fate to be secluded themselves as well. They compromised in their way of life a bit but could not revolutionize their Cranfordian tastes. They felt the help and support of men but did not let them rule over . Rather "handsome young men [are] abounded in the lower classes (34)." They adopted different aspects of their neighboring cities and of Eastern life styles. Yet, they could not erase their own culture and heritage to be modernized though they broke the tradition of patriarchal dominance. They even broke the male-made social institutions such as marriage and wife's role in it.

Conclusively, Gaskell's imaginary city of Cranford is created to counter Eurocentric view of colonialism as well as patriarchal suppressive culture. This statement is underpinned by the excerpt on *Cranford*: "[M]en will be men. Every mother's son of them wishes to be considered Samson and Solomon rolled into one - too strong ever to be beaten or discomfited - too wise ever to be outwitted" (72). Not only male but also females can rule a state ("the ladies of Cranford are quite sufficient" [1]): a voice that Gaskell may want to articulate and this research's attempt to portray this fact got realized.

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