

**Tribhuvan University**

**Resistance to Patriarchal Ideology in *Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford***

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Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled “Resistance to Patriarchal Ideology in *Elizabeth Gaskell’s Cranford*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Lila Shrestha have been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Abstract

This thesis project analyses the prevailing patriarchal notion and female resistance in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*. The novel shows the situation of Victorian women, their economic problems, social status and how they go against such ideology by practising female bonding and maintaining their distance from the male counterparts. They are represented as bold, courageous and independent women in the society. Mary Smith and her old friend Matilda Jenkyns are the two women characters who symbolize the union of England with the old Victorian values. The research theorizes Victorian ideology which discusses upon social impact and gender issue in England. By taking theoretical insights on feminism proposed by Simone de Beauvoir, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the research exposes how the females suffer heavily due to male domination and how female bonding help womankind fight against pervasive ideology of patriarchy.

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## I. Prevailing Patriarchal Notion and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*

In the last half of the twentieth century, Elizabeth Gaskell, an author who had been dismissed as merely one of the popular lady novelists of the Victorian era, has begun to receive serious critical attention with the value that the ever increasing number of feminist critics placed on works that dealt with women's spheres, Gaskell's successful career in a predominantly male driven profession and her works, with their strong domestic realism and prominent female characters, naturally drew attention. But Gaskell herself was somewhat of an enigma to the early feminists.

By using the decidedly male patriarchal ethos in the form of courtroom trials and interrogation like scenarios for her female characters in their everyday lives, Gaskell shows her leading social role that judgments are too quickly dispensed and verdicts erroneously assumed, and she thus promotes sympathetic judgments of others, women specifically. In her fiction, she seeks justice for her heroines, and, when that is unachievable, she has then sought divine justice instead. To establish the credibility of her heroines, Gaskell uses a rich display of narrative devices to critique women's discursive abilities and to re-authorize their representations of reality.

The thesis is concentrated on cases of trials, confirmation, and declaration of social esteems. She has upheld for believable judgments by consolidating moral talk, individual divulgements, and meddling storytellers as an agent nature of radical women's activist. Gaskell's books endeavour to advance sensitivity, sensible judgments, and more estimated recognitions in the general public.

In Gaskell's fiction, she not just announces that ladies are believable truth-tellers at the same time, by developing her stories in ways that give female characters office, she drives her peruses to this same conclusion as female are solid. Elizabeth Gaskell is one of the most beloved and critically acclaimed novelists of Victorian

literature. Gaskell was also heavily involved in reform and humanitarian efforts. Most of her work centered around the suffering of the poor, the relations between master and labourer, religion, and the social responsibilities of women.

Gaskell left behind a rich literary legacy, including six novels, several short stories and non-fictional pieces, as well as the first biography of Charlotte Bronte. Her novels are beloved for their vivid characters and arresting portrayals of Victorian life. Gaskell was a vibrant new voice to the genre of industrial fiction. Her work helped reanimate Victorian society into aiding humanitarian causes.

The novel projects an effect of poor people's struggle to survive in a changing society of *Cranford*, England which needs them as workers yet turns a blind eye to their suffering. *Cranford* is concerned with the struggle of an old-fashioned society against the changes being forced upon it by the new industrialism. In *Cranford* there are two main characters that grow and change together: a young woman called Mary Smith, and her older friend Matilda Jenkyns. Through their friendship, these two women symbolize the union of New England with the old Victorian values. It is apparent that industrialism is making it difficult for the old ways to continue, especially the major force in the lives of women, and men, of *Cranford*. However, we understand at the end that it is possible for the old to co-exist with the new as Mary Smith merges the values and behaviours of the older generation with her background.

There is no real plot in the novel but rather a collection of satirical sketches, which compassionately portray changing small town customs and values in mid Victorian England. Remembering back to memories of her childhood in the small Cheshire town of Knutsford, *Cranford* is Elizabeth Gaskell's affectionate portrait of people and customs that were already becoming survivals.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* is the depiction of a small English village and is concerned with the everyday occurrences in the lives of mainly older ladies, rather than the story of a great social problem threatening the lives and security of the characters. Gaskell's offer a point by point picture of the lives of numerous strata of society, including the extremely poor, and are of enthusiasm to social students of history and in addition mates of writing.

Gaskell was hostile to any form of biographical notice of her being written in her lifetime. Gaskell advocated literary criticism with a radical alternation of the vision of entire female avoiding hitherto mentality of patriarchal society. In the Victorian society, some Victorian women have been seen as irrelevant or even counterproductive but Gaskell remains a respectable minor Victorian, colonised up to point by Marxists, but almost ignored by feminist.

The ladies of *Cranford* are full of human foibles that make them so respected. They are survivors, preserving their town with the codes of their gentile society and trying to keep it from change. The whole story takes place in Cranford, a small imaginary town in the north-west of England. In *Cranford*, all the holders of houses, above a certain rent, are women. No man ever felt comfortable enough to settle in *Cranford*, because of the female society. Female, in the society takes the action if they ignored in there.

In this thesis, the researcher examines relationships and the condition between male and female. Researcher also covers gender and social condition of Victorian era. With the representative character, Elizabeth Gaskell displays the position of women within in the nineteenth-century. Feminism has long been a subject of debate, and her celebration of and focus on femininity, women's lives, and the domestic sphere of nineteenth-century.



The novel depicts the social relationships among the respectable classes in the mid-nineteenth century. Gaskell goes on to describe the genteel poverty of the town. The code of social conduct forbids its inhabitants to admit to their limited circumstances, so each pretends to be of more comfortable means, all the while knowing exactly where each stands in the social pecking order and why.

There are some problems in relation to gender. So in the Victorian period the English society has divided on the basis of gender, cultures and social practices. The Victorian period was guided by traditional way of life style. Because of the traditional concept of the people of European people the English culture and lifestyle was not acceptable for women. The research questions to why the ladies people are unable to accept the old fashioned of the society? What social factors precede their behaviour? What are some of the social consequences of this behaviour? How have others responded to their behaviour?

During Victorian period, most of the females were dominated by the traditional society. Gaskell lived in the English Midlands during the Industrial Revolution, and her social and political leanings hone the edge of her prose. There is pain, frustration, identity crisis and anxiety in the society and these all factors invite crisis of the women's' self. The crisis is also due to the situation that neither one has the access of his own society, nor can accept the patriarchal pressure. This critical situation constructs hindrances on the way of exploring the development of the self. This academic research aims to find out how people of Victorian period raise voices for social revival in England. Female characters in Gaskell's *Cranford* resist to patriarchal ideology by practising female bonding and maintain their distance from the male counterparts. They are represented as bold, Courageous and independent women in the society.

Since the publication of the novel in Nineteenth Century, many critics have analyzed the novel from different perspectives. Social legacy in England refers to the cultural, social, economic and political impact of English people. Female were not free in their society. Through a series of vignettes, Elizabeth Gaskell portrays a community governed by old-fashioned habits and dominated by friendships between women and she is not agree to accepts the such traditional notion imposed by the patriarchal society

The novel has been studied from various perspectives from different insights. The following reviews of the novel show many critical readings. Among them, critic Siria Domi analyses the novel with all the social restrictions placed on unmarried women, with just enough social status to be unable to work to support themselves, but with not enough income to keep themselves independent and so while they have to face trials" (3). This represents the issue of backwardness of the female. She pours her dissatisfaction through her society. This shows vulnerable position and he becomes hopeless and helpless. Similarly, JAV Chapple, Pollard A argues; ". . . you will remember the country people's use of the word "unked". I can't find any other word to express the exact feeling of strange unusual desolate discomfort, and I sometimes "potter" and "mither" people by using it" (67). In the above lines, JAV Chapple, A Pollard analyses the novel from the perspective of social wordings and social dignity.

Another critic Jennie Berry claims "*Cranford* is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses above a certain rent are women"(1). She clarifies that women of *Cranford* are not visibly suffering, as many of the mill workers do in North and South, and that they spend their time playing cards and fretting over matters of etiquette, may make them seem worthy of dismissal in the eyes of some. But their concerns are real and deeply felt; their losses are all the more poignant for the

fortitude and quiet dignity with which they face them. Another critic Nicola when says; 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” (4).

Fashion was generally represented in Victorian fiction as a female obsession. This indifference is an indifference to what is generally imagined to be one of the main things women care about. Fashion is also associated with social as well as cultural dignity. Here the fashion is taken with the sense of symbolic meaning in relation to Victorian women. Another critic Ramford argues:

To be honest, I do not usually read this type of book, as I prefer not to be distressed or depressed by books! However, I make an exception to this book as it shows that the human spirit can withstand an amazing amount of cruelty to survive and to overcome attempts at being broken in the most dreadful way. (10)

Ramford, in the above statement, has analyzed the novel from psychoanalytical perspective. He sees amazing enduring human spirit in the novel. He explains such endurance as resulting from survival strategy. Moreover, the endurance comes to protect the self from being completely broken down.

All these criticisms are found to have the implicit assumption that human beings are not free from particular psychological, cultural, social, utilitarian values to which they are exposed and brought up. Everybody in a specific society shares some underlying values. Thus these scholars believe in Patriarchal value is the determining forces to this research.

The research theorizes Victorian ideology which discusses upon social impact and gender issue in England. The focus of this study is on how these phenomena

might alter the feminist issue related theories. Specifically, the research will analyse the novel from social and gendered perspectives in order to show the social dignity crisis of the female.

To materialize this research, the theories related to developed by the radical feminist theorists like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Mad Women in the Attic*, Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Elaine Showalter, Elizabeth Barrett, Christina Rossetti, and Elizabeth Gaskell, Eline Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*. Moreover, as per the need of related theorist such as Gubar's *Mad Woman in the Attic*, Nina Auerbach will be applicable to this research.

The prominent figure from period is the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, who's ground-breaking and provocative study *The Second Sex* is seen as the initial effort to challenge human history from a feminist perspective. What makes her so important is;

. . . formulates three principles and applies them to women's situation in the world. First is her foundational insight that man 'is the Subject, he is the Absolute: she is the other.' Man incarnates humanity; woman, by virtue of being female, deviates from the human norm. The consequence is that women constantly experience a painful conflict between their humanity and their femininity. (77)

De Beauvoir's ideas then, and in particular her notion of woman as "the other" has been referred to throughout this thesis. Interestingly, *The Second Sex* is said to mark the transition from first to second wave feminism as it gave focus a wider range of obstacles for women, such as sexuality. Moreover, she adds her arguments that; "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (181). This, the opening line of Book II, is de Beauvoir's most famous statement. It represents the logical continuation of the

proofs de Beauvoir offers in Book I to support her argument that femininity does not arise from differences in biology, psychology, or intellect. Rather, femininity is a construction of civilization, a reflection not of “essential” differences in men and women but of differences in their situation. Situation determines character, not the other way around.

Woman is not born fully formed; she is gradually shaped by her upbringing. Biology does not determine what makes a woman and learns her role from man and others in society. Woman is not born passive, secondary, and nonessential, but all the forces in the external world have conspired to make her so.

Females' distinctive concepts of culture and hierarchy in the background of feminist movement summarize the whole thesis, pointing out that Cranford, with its significant realistic sense and feminist approach will continue to attract more readers around the world. The whole novel describes the understanding of women towards the world and the decisive feminist ideology runs through the novel.

Elizabeth Gaskell has been marked as a proto-women's activist and, on the other hand, a traditionalist and even defender for patriarchal belief systems. This thesis contends for the complexities of Gaskell's reasoning about sexual orientation and shows how she both takes an interest in and moves past the talks of her time, at last imagining connections between individual ladies and men and sex standards in a testing and lighting up way. To prove these ideas *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan declares her conviction that *The Problem that Has No Name*, which is found in the widespread discontent of women, has a very definite cause, and actually makes women ill. In her view, the problem of identity is significant and women experience a restriction of growth that is caused by and maintained by the feminine mystique. The “feminine mystique” was, in Friedan’s view a kind of ideological idea that provided

women with a “sexual role” that they should try to conform to, but which really restricted their growth:

As the Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic sexual need, our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfil their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role. (58)

The search for human identity is, Freudian understanding, not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, humans have experienced various kinds of identity crises throughout history. What was described in theology, sociology and psychology, was man’s search for identity, and not woman's. Women, Freudian continues, have never been expected to grow up and find their own human identity, and this is because theorists and conventions have stated that woman’s identity is destined by biology and anatomy. Again, the issue of conventional thoughts on femininity and womanhood has consequences that reach far beyond the individual woman. In the middle of the twentieth century, women were, and still are considered “the other” and not permitted to search for and determine their full human identity. This is also what de Beauvoir voiced when she described the mystery of womanhood, where the mystery is projected onto the woman.

Furthermore, Woolf is not only concerned with a physical space for women to be creative; she also explores a language suitable for women. Through the use of imaginary women writers, like Mary Carmichael, she explains how women must try to find their own language as a female language has not been used before. Her point is that women should not write like men, neither in form nor in theme. The values of women differ from the values of men and these values are, according to Woolf,

transferred from life to fiction. However, in society and literature the masculine values prevailed and had to be taken seriously. In the literary world women had to write as men and not as women. Only a few writers refused to give in to the structures of patriarchy, and as Woolf declares ;□ What genius, what integrity it must have required in face of all that criticism, in the midst of that purely patriarchal society, to hold fast to the thing as they saw it without shrinking. Only Jane Austen did it and Emily Brontë [. . .] they wrote as women write, not as men write □. (75).

To Woolf, it seems vital that women find their own language and have the courage to use it in their writing. Through their own language they can find a metaphysical space where they can exist. On the issue of genre and language, it is also interesting to note that although the novel was the preferred genre for women, both Nightingale and Woolf wrote vividly through the essay. In *The Modern Essay* she gives her opinion on the objective of the essay; “a good essay must draw its curtain round us, but it must be a curtain that shuts us in, not out” (211). So, to Woolf, the goal of the essay “is simply that it should give pleasure [. . .] It should lay us under a spell with its first word, and we should only wake, refreshed, with its last” (211-222). Until now, we have seen how Woolf investigated women in literature in the past, however, she also considers her contemporary female authors, and finds that there are almost as many books written by women as by men, and also that women do no longer only write novels. She proposes that women may begin to use writing as an art and not as a method of self-expression. She Writes;

In *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter shows how women's literature has evolved, starting from the Victorian period to modern writing. According to her, the movement can be divided in several stages. Firstly, the Feminine Stage, a period beginning with the use of

the male pseudonyms in the 1840s and ending in 1880 with George Eliot's death. Secondly, the Feminist Stage, from 1880 till the winning of the vote in 1920; and finally the Female Stage, from 1920 till the present-day. In the Feminine Stage the literature by women was characterised by the imitation of the governing structures of tradition and an “internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles. (36)

Although the conditions for women writers have improved, Woolf still finds that not all Victorian ideals have disappeared. In *Professions for Women* (1931), a shortened version of a speech she held before the National Society for Women's Service, she urges her audience to move beyond what society expects them to be and become an individual:

Outwardly, what is simpler than to write books? Outwardly, what obstacles are there for a woman rather than for a man? Inwardly, I think, the case is very different; she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome. Indeed it will be a long time still, I think, before a woman can sit down to write a book without finding a phantom to be slain, a rock to be dashed against. And if this is so in literature, the freest of all professions for women, how is it in the new professions which you are now for the first time entering? (Woolf 4)

Woolf asserts that women now have access to most professions, yet there are still hindrances from the past for women to overcome. Here, Woolf goes to the core of her understanding of woman. These “ghosts” from the past are the main challenge and the reason why women need to explore the self rather than the globe, as this is still unknown territory. They need to figure out who they are not only as women, but as



women, beings and I, to be able to reach intellectual and artistic freedom. Yet again, she stresses the importance of the personal experience, and she calls for a consideration of multiplicity.

Although women in the Victorian Period participated in society within charity work and other philanthropic activities, they came to realize that they had little influence and power to change things. This realization became the starting point for a demand for an improvement of the position of women. Women wanted to be able to influence their own fate and the first aim of the women who later was known as the first-wave feminists, was improved education and working possibilities, better working-conditions for those women who worked and finally, to attain the right the vote. Even though this first-wave of feminism came about towards the end of the Victorian Period, it had strong historical origins.

According to de Beauvoir, the first woman to “take up her pen in defence of her sex” was Christine de Pizan, who lived in the 15th century (125). Another prominent writer who advocated women’s rights was Mary Wollstonecraft, who published, what was later termed the first feminist treatises, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. Wollstonecraft is considered the grandmother of British feminism and her ideas shaped the thinking of the suffragettes, who campaigned for the women’s vote.

The feminist critics try to show the situation of Victorian women, their economic problems, social status not only that they tried to show as well as re-examine the representation of women in men's text. In Victorian times the representation of women was, as, immanent, passive, sensual, passionate. The feminist critics tried to dismantle the earlier representation and earlier images. They

concluded that the Victorian social condition of women was mainly due to the patriarchal society.

This research has been divided into three chapters. Orderly, the first chapter introduces the general overview of this text, literature review, and theoretical aspects. It talks about the entire project that we are going to do entire project of this research. It is the preview of this research. Similarly, the second chapter which is most important part of this research because it includes both theoretical as well textual aspects and it covers the important section of the research. It brings many theoretical aspects and it connects with textual evidences. Last, third chapter concludes the whole research.

## II. Resistance to Patriarchal Ideology in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*

With the rise of feminism in the mid-20th century, the basis of this dismissal came to be the very reason Gaskell received recognition. Feminists saw in *Cranford* a 'feminist utopia' that defied patriarchal ideology and constraints and established itself as a different community, empowering its female citizens to live full lives in spite of their perceived disadvantages of spinsterhood. The village of Cranford is not a place where the Victorians could escape from the problems and troubles facing their culture, but rather a site where these controversies could be engaged, where domestic roles intersect public performances, and where tradition meets progress.

The role of Gaskell is an aware of her contemporaries' fascination with theatricality, created works that are ultimately concerned with authentic performances of societal roles. These roles, Gaskell paradoxically argues, have the dualistic potential of either initiating self-knowledge of existence. Seeking various arguments Gaskell acknowledges the integral part the community plays in a self's development but ultimately privileges individual integrity in accomplishing positive societal change avoiding the patriarchal notion in the Victorian society. With the representative character, Elizabeth Gaskell displays the position of women within in the nineteenth-century. Feminism has long been a subject of debate, and her celebration of and focus on femininity, women's lives, and the domestic sphere of nineteenth century.

One of the most popular writers of the Victorian era, Gaskell is principally remembered today for her novel *Cranford* (1853). 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. In sharp contrast to *Cranford*, Gaskell gives challenges to the male dominated society in the commercial world of Drumble.

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 fulfilment 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.

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 behaviour and thoughtless conformity to custom, a minority opinion that frequently corresponds with an interpretation of Miss Matty as a figure evocative of pathos rather than admiration.

Often dismissed by early critics, 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.

In more recent years, feminist critics of *Cranford* have endeavoured 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.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* was first published between 1851 and 1853 as a series of episodic stories in *Household Words* under the editorship of Charles Dickens; it wasn't until later that *Cranford* was published in single volume book form. As described in its opening sentence, "In the first place, Cranford is in possession of

the Amazons; all the holders of houses, above certain rent, are women” (1). Cranford is portrayed through the eyes of the first person narrator, Mary Smith, an unmarried woman from Drumble who visits Cranford.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* can be interpreted as a piece looking backwards as a means of looking forward; acknowledging and commemorating the existence of a rich and detailed past allows for the closing of its chapters, and thus eventual movement into a new future. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* offers insight to the author's pervading ideology regarding different kinds of change and the role that literature takes in its wake.

From its beginning, Gaskell's *Cranford* project focused on the retelling of an antiquated society in a kind of historical preservation. At the start of her *Cranford* project, Gaskell, in her early forties, returned to Knutsford and noted the changes that had come to the rural dwelling since her girlhood; it was” . . . as if science and progress were sweeping away the era of her youth” (3) and that” *Cranford* is itself a symbol of moral and social virtues and an attitude to life which is worth preserving . . . .” (76). Cranford is a replication of the past, and as such it offers an intricate taxonomy of the routines, traditions, rules, values, and norms of various inter.

With *North and South*, Gaskell continues to stress the importance of performance, altering, however, from her focus on society's response to characters' performances to the internal dilemmas facing the characters as they seek to balance their communal responsibilities with their private desires. Gaskell creates an industrial setting widespread with ethical and temporal problems against which her characters can act and, thereby, ultimately effect the betterment of the community. With the motif of bravery, Gaskell argues that characters must fearlessly and wholeheartedly

embrace their performances, if they are to be successful in the community actions in an old-fashioned small town.

Gaskell recognizes the tension not only between the multiplicity of roles enforced by society but in the very act of performance, for societal roles are not merely external actions but integrally part of the fabric of the individual self. Personally seeking a method that would enable her to successfully perform in these roles condoned and constructed by society, Gaskell creates a theatrical experience in her novels that allows readers to watch as characters.

Navigate the dichotomy of performance and authenticity; the works examined in this thesis reveal a progression and maturation not only in Gaskell's artistry but also in her understanding and depiction of performance. *Cranford* blatantly acknowledges the inescapability of performance and its significance in shaping the community. *North and South* is subtler in its analysis of performance. While Gaskell still recognizes the necessity of societal roles, her concern with internal and external motivations of performance and their corresponding effects on the individual self becomes the focal point. Finally in *Wives and Daughters*, her last and, perhaps, greatest achievement, Gaskell most fully engages with the paradox of performance with its dualistic potential for self-development and self-annihilation.

American Literary critic, a feminist writer Elaine Showalter in her novel "A *Literature of their Own*" advocated feminist criticism from the cultural perspective in the current female phase rather than from the perspectives that traditionally come from and concentric perspective like psychoanalytic and biological theories. She suggests that approaching women's writing from the cultural perspective is one among many valid perspectives that will uncover female traditions. She supports with these lines;

. . . women with no ties, no duties, no ambition, who drone a way a hopeless, selfish existence, generally ending in confirmed invalidism, or hypochondria, or cultural insanity!-for diseased self-absorption is the very root of madness .Through writing, female madness was explored and the mad women became an emblematic figure in literature. But Showalter does not agree to accept the blames of the males. (47)

Showalter as a Gynocritics describe literary criticism based in on a female perspective. In contrast to fixation on male literature, the concept of Gynocritics is to construct a female framework for analysis of women's literature to develop a new models based on the study of female experience, rather than adopt the male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the liner absolutes of male literary history, stop to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female.

Alison Kiesel elaborates upon the idea of preservation in Cranford in her article "Meaning and Misinterpretation in Cranford." She describes the society at Cranford on the brink of change, an isolated Garden of Eden doomed to fall into modern times. Cranford is symbolic of a colony on the verge of being colonized by industrial London. For this reading Mary's narrative indicates that an unwelcome change is coming to Cranford; she is likened to an ethnographer in an alien culture making careful observations while Cranfordians cling to the past as a means to ward off inevitable outside stimulation. In Kiesel's words:

In this short, deceptively tranquil novel, Gaskell portrays the intricate codes and interpretative systems that this new Eden requires while simultaneously chronicling the story of its transformation/corruption.

[. . .] Through its inescapable nitration by men, industrial and financial capitalism, technology, and alien imports, Cranford approaches a second fall so dire that only the miraculous, messianic return of Peter can redeem it. (13)

Kiesel's reading of Cranford still gives the illusion of a traumatically from the old to the new. It suggests that the driving force of the novel is change. I would rather postulate that change and the future are not the main drives in Cranford but catalysts motivating a desire for historic preservation through literature.

In the mid-19th century, Cranford was received by an audience whose national identity and unity was dependent on invaluable innovations made possible by industrialization. England was a rapidly developing nation that valued technological advancement and economic progress, both of which propelled society into a fast paced pattern of constant change. "It would have been impossible for her if she had tried, to have found a subject less suited to her talents [than the industrial revolution]. It was neither domestic nor pastoral . . ." (3)

In Victorian England underwent a dynamic revolution in its traditions, values, and female identity. For the sake of clarity, I will label this kind of change as female identity, because it is directly associated with Industrialism and the kind of change it represents was completely new and innovative, meaning, it did not exist previously in Victorian culture. Cranford captures a picture of an older, more stagnant England isolated from the influences of modernity and rejecting the possibilities of female progress. But female were not accept the traditional concept up on this.

The Victorian reader, being versed in the widespread modern Victorian conventions and values, separates Cranfordian convention as old-fashioned and abnormal, there by equating them and it with the past. In its opening passages of the



first chapter, the reader learns that Cranford is not a masculine centre of business and industry, but a primarily domestic sphere maintained by women. Men are almost completely absent from Cranford; the narrator comments:

For keeping the trim gardens full of choice flowers without a weed to speck them; for frightening away little boys who look wistfully at the said flowers through the railings; for rushing out at the geese that occasionally venture into the gardens if the gates are left open; for deciding all questions of literature and politics without troubling themselves with unnecessary reasons or arguments; for obtaining clear and correct knowledge of everybody's affairs in the parish; for keeping neat maid-servants in admirable order; for kindness (somewhat dictatorial) to the poor, and real tender good offices to each other whenever they are in distress, the ladies of Cranford are quite sufficient. 'A man,' as one of them observed to me once, 'is so in the way in the house!' (1)

This excerpt seems to suggest that the absence of men in Cranford contributes to its stagnancy. Men do not occupy Cranford because there is no economic occupation to be had, and similarly, no industrial business can be found in Cranford because there are no men to promote it. This immediately shows that Cranford hangs behind the rest of the world in the pursuit of industrial progress. Most of the radical change in Victorian England occurred in the public sphere, which was primarily occupied by men. Women, being confined to the realm of the domestic sphere, had much smaller roles in promoting the technological, industrial, and economical changes that were dynamically influential. Therefore, men were the primary carriers of modernity and

progress of the age, for with them they brought industrial innovations and commerce essential to 19th century economy.

Poor Thomas! That journey to Paris was quite too much for him. His housekeeper says he has hardly ever been round his fields since, but just sits with his hands on his knees in the counting-house, not reading or anything, but only saying what a wonderful city Paris was! Paris has much to answer for if it's killed my cousin Thomas, for a better man never lived. (33)

Captain Brown's and Mr. Holbrook's encounters with the outside world suggests that exposure to modernity threatens the wellbeing of *Cranford's* members, and hints that Cranford itself is unable to adapt to social change. Cranfordians also choose to separate themselves from the world in terms of fashion. One may assume that with the growing venues of advertisement in England in the mid-19th century homorganic fashion norms were able to span all distances within the country's borders. Standards and trends in fashion could be set and paid attention to by a larger, national audience. But at Cranford, the ladies seem to give little heed to the mandates of national fashion. Mary explains, "Their dress is very independent of fashion: as they observe 'What does it signify how we dress here at Cranford, where everybody knows us?' (2).

Mary describes the use of "calashes" or "a covering worn over caps, not unlike the heads fastened on old fashioned gigs" and comments on the terrible fascination such headgear had for the children of Cranford (56). In the thick description of an ethnographer she states:

I counted seven brooches myself on Miss Pole's dress. Two were fixed negligently in her cap (one was a butterfly made of Scotch pebbles, which a vivid imagination might believe to be

the real insect); one fastened her net neckerchief; one her collar; one ornamented the front of her gown, midway between her throat and waist, and another adorned the point of her stomacher. Where the seventh was I have forgotten, but it was somewhere about her, I am sure. (64)

The ladies at Cranford fail to conform to national norms dictating fashion, but instead maintain a group identity rooted to their own isolated town. As resident of the modern town of Drumble, Mary seems to recognize some of the more eccentric fashion deviations that members of Cranford attempt and tries to prevent them. Matty does not degrade herself by teaching her skills, but the solution of opening a tea shop in her own home satisfies Cranford's "genteel" demands. Mary reasons:

Tea was neither greasy nor sticky- grease and stickiness being two of the qualities which Miss Matty could not endure. No shop window would be required. A small, genteel notification of her being licensed to sell tea would, it is true, be necessary, but I hoped that it could be placed where no one would see it. (114)

In this sense Matty does not convert to economical modernity promoted by Industrial radical change; she does condescend to trade but only on her own strict terms. Matty goes even further from the worldly norms of masculine trade by consulting Mr. Johnson, Cranford's shopkeeper, about whether her business will have a negative effect on his.

Gaskell's successful model of progress in Cranford is marriage. In the midst of developmental stagnancy in Cranford, characters representing some sort of marital and reproductive activity suggest ability to transition into the future. Still, like radical

change, even traditionally accepted changes caused by marriage are suspected in bringing negative consequences to Gaskell's created societies. In this section I intend to show that even though Gaskell allows for her characters to progress traditionally through marriage, she reveals herself to be doubtful if such progress actually yields dependable advantages. Gaskell seems to advocate taking extreme care in choosing one's partner in marriage, because like all change, marriage can incur negative consequences and loss for the individual.

In *Cranford*, Gaskell portrays marriage in a very solemn light. Most of the characters show no desire to marry, and/or little regret for having never married. For example, upon the news of Lady Glenmire's engagement to Mr. Hoggins, Miss Pole is described as giving " . . . a long congratulation to Miss Matty that so far they had escaped marriage, which she noticed always made people credulous to the last degree; indeed, she thought it argued great natural credulity in a woman if she could not keep herself from being married. . . ." (91). In congratulating themselves for never having married, ladies such as Miss Pole admit to the negative consequences that are suspected to follow such a union. Yet despite Cranford's suspicion, in some cases marriage is the only necessary means of survival for its members. In *Cranford*, a traditional mode of progress such as marriage becomes characters' means of self-preservation.

After the financial bankruptcy of her beloved mistress, servant Martha is hard-pressed to preserve herself and Miss Matty by means of marriage. Her drastic situation and loyalty to Matty spurs her to take hold of opportunity of aligning herself with her suitor, Jem Hearn. Matty's initial response is to exclaim "Marriage is such a very solemn thing!" and after Martha's plan Mary describes:

. . . Miss Matty sat down and cried very heartily, and accounted for it by saying that the thought of Martha being married so soon gave her quite a shock, and that she should never forgive herself if she thought she was hurrying the poor creature. I think my pity was more for Jem, of the two; but both Miss Matty and I appreciated to the full the kindness of the honest couple, although we said little about this, and a good deal about the chances and dangers of matrimony. (116)

For the ladies in *Cranford*, the "dangers of matrimony" threaten the existing simplicity of their peaceful, single lives, but is resolutely embraced when threatened by the bigger, meaner enemy of poverty. Lady Glenmire also marries under more extreme circumstances, but also according to her own individual feelings. *Cranford* seems to view her as a widow who has done her marital duty; she married Scottish nobility and bears the title of "Lady" like a badge of honour. But Lady Glenmire's Compromising economic situation perhaps helped persuade her to enter into a second marriage beneath her social status.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* has often been unfairly dismissed by literary critics for its apparent lack of structure and dull sentimental over tones. Even though the rise of feminist criticism in 1916's did some justice to the author, it never the less curtailed to cast shadows on some of her literary work for the feminist movement of the late twentieth century, grand ford was old fashioned and a tributary to the strong oppressive set of patriarchal values. The main objective, of this paper is to revealing the way in which the value of *Cranford* struggles with gender stereotypes, fight male conventional claims to centrality and challenges the domestic ideology which bespeaks women's submissions, facility and the patriarchal point of view challenges

of nineteenth century less associated to an open conformation between equal or equivalent opponents and more to our an natural rendering of formal identity for the female rights supporters and writers the challenges represented a means of voicing their inadequacy in society which refused to acknowledge their equal existence.

What is a women's proper sphere of duty? How can women of passion find her equal in society which disapproves of strong women and their (romantic) order? an a women find her own way in patriarchal culture without in heritance properly and the legal rights denied married women in particular. (178)

For Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* ladies the last question does not seem to elicit too much inquiry at least at the beginning according to the story, they have achieved a kind of financial independence atypical of ordinary women, coupled with some sort of social and administrative self-governance moreover as most of them are aging their romantic order has . . . as well unsurprising by the interests of those quite sufficient ladies are far from the bustle of both capitalist enterprise epitomized by the great neighboring commercial friend of the urban cities to what extent have the ladies of *Cranford* managed to fulfill their need.

In fact, the ladies of *Cranford*, in the manner of true Victorian Amazons, have secured their possession of the town by extending their occupancy over all its important estates. Under the patriarchal property customs of the day this would represent an unusual and, at the same time disquieting situation. *Cranford* is not simply inhabited by the Amazons; these remarkable women have managed to take this small provincial town into their command. As for Men, they are deemed absent not because they are deeply hated or have turned extinct after some sort of heroic

confrontation with them; the reason for their absence is aptly identified by one of these ladies.

The critical literature on *Cranford* has stressed the polarization of the novel without necessary looking in to the reasons led to this phenomenon. For Elizabeth Langland

*Cranford* the novel and *Cranford* the place are; quite simply, world's structured by women's signifying system; calling and visiting, teas and dinners, domestics economics, charitable activities and management of servants. (118)

*Cranford* represents a closed female society carefully organized around a set of strict social practices and a blinding code of linguistic propriety and decorum; whoever happens to come to *Cranford* is promptly informed of the regulations for visiting and calls. For the ladies of *Cranford* economy was always elegant and money spending always vulgar and ostentatious.

As to male insensitivity and inconsiderateness, Peter's words towards helpless sister, loudly uttered by the end of the novel, are more than telling by miss matty;

I could have sworn you were on the high road to matrimony when I left England the last time! If anybody had told me you would have lived and died an old maid then, I should have laughed in their faces. Well, that's long years ago; more than half a lifetime and yet it seems like yesterday! I don't know a felt I should have liked better as a brother in- law. You must have played your cards badly, my little matty. (189)

Whenever prompted the ladies of *Cranford* to go ‘Amazon’ their decisiveness in proving themselves different and independent has resulted either on their territory by man and gentleman or in a faculty agreed distance of mankind as a whole.

Moreover, Gaskell’s comments about the position and the petition

A husband can coax, wheedle, beat, or tyrannize his life out of something and no law whether will help this that I see However, our sex is badly enough used and legist against, there’s no doubt of that so though I don’t see the definite end proposed by this petitions I’ll sign.  
(379)

Despite its seemingly militant idealism, Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* is a fictionalized feminist manifesto. In same line, *Cranford* ladies as a bunch of feminist activities campaigning for women rights or subversively infiltrate the *miguty* patriarchal culture and its expectations. Theirs is a war of resistance against dehumanizing industrial capitalism that seeks to stabilize meaning and value in productivity, profit and use and assigns progress as its ultimate goal. Furthermore, there is a war of resistance against that rigid gender encoding which make both sexes equally vulnerable to their alleged idiosyncrasies. Moreover, Gaskell’s solution to the fundamental war between sexes is not the substitution of female for male superiority as radical feminists would have liked. To this end Mrs. Gaskell’s plays the ambiguity and the idea of women being equal to men. Gaskell’s emphasizes the fluidity gender polarities which furetions in the end as a medium of reconciliation in the eternal war of the sexes.

In 1979, Susan Gubar and Sandra M Gilbert published *The Madwoman in the Attic*. The woman write and the Nineteenth Century Imagination, a hallmark of second-wave feminist criticism. Gilbert and Gubar proposed that all female characters



in male-authored novels can be categorized as either an angel or Monster; woman in fiction were either pure and submissive or Sensual, rebellious and uncontrollable.

As Douglas reminds us too, though, Victorian domestication of death represents not just acquiescence in death by the selfless, but also a secret striving for power by the powerless. Exercised from public life, denied the pleasures of sensual existence, the Victorian angel in the house was allowed to hold sway over at least one realm beyond her own household.

Who has the right to speak to society? Where should such a person stand in addressing the larger community? And most important, what form must a speaker's words assume in order to assert their validity for author and audience? Only if these questions are answered can an author undertake the kind of work Elizabeth Gaskell desired to do in addressing Victorian England. (48)

Largely known as a writer of social problem novels, Elizabeth Gaskell also engaged legal concerns of her time. This dissertation argues that Gaskell's novels challenge nineteenth-century notions of what constitutes reliable, credible, and even admissible truth claims. She reflects the public's and the legal community's anxiety regarding truth claims and the evidence that was permitted to be used to ascertain the truth. Gaskell's novels address this anxiety through narrative techniques that incorporate different forms of evidence to open a discussion among her readers regarding gender and credibility. By using the decidedly male legal system in the form of courtroom trials and interrogation-like scenarios for her female characters in their everyday lives, she shows her reading social judgements that are too quickly dispensed and verdicts incorrectly assumed based on gender bias. She encourages readers to apply all their God-given faculties to the task of judgment and to use each judiciously to critique

abuses of any one. Gaskell uses the basic elements of fiction plot, character, and narration to engage Victorian crises of truth-telling, which arose from a variety of epistemological developments, notably in law and theology, and that have particularly crucial implications for women. Gaskell has been credited for innovations in realistic narrative, and her sense of an ethical literary vocation has been acknowledged.

Building on the work of Jan-Melissa Schramm, who treats Gaskell as one example of literary interventions in Victorian crises of truth-telling at the intersection of law and theology, I offer an analysis of Gaskell's narrative innovations that are aimed at providing new authoritative bases on which to authorize women's speech. Gaskell's fiction presents a rich array of narrative devices to critique women's discursive disabilities and to re-authorize their representations of reality. Through narrative voice, she advocates for credible judgments from her reader.

In this dissertation, plot, character, and narration have been deliberately separated in order to analyse Gaskell's strategy in persuading her readers of judging others, women specifically, more sympathetically. In fiction, these elements of course are combined, and their interdependence underscores the significance of Gaskell using each one to forward her agenda.

Much of Gaskell criticism has overlooked the subtle contributions that she made to the Victorian novel, specifically the ways that she gave her female characters voice and credibility a daunting task in "Cranford grants the few men who do appear an unusual degree of importance, and the story draws much of its narrative energy from the very intrusions of which 'the ladies of Cranford' despair" (50). Inverting the difficulty of women with her creation of a society that disappreciates men, Gaskell impresses on readers the disadvantages of closed societies, which lead to repression and stagnation, and subtly suggests alternative practices, which embrace the shared

humanity of all. To give their way of life a sense of purpose, the ladies of Cranford create rigid roles which must be followed at all times. For themselves the ladies circumscribes a sphere where

Keeping the trim gardens full of choice flowers without a weed to speck them; . . . frightening away little boys who look wistfully at the said flowers through the railings; . . . rushing out at the geese that occasionally venture into the gardens if the gates are left open. . . deciding all questions of literature and politics without troubling themselves with unnecessary reasons or arguments; . . . obtaining clear and correct knowledge of everybody's affairs in the parish; . . . keeping their neat maid-servants in admirable order. (165)

While banal, these duties unite the ladies of Cranford, ordering their lives while strengthening their sense of self-importance. Their sphere has no place, however, for men, who are, therefore, relegated by the indomitable ladies to the role of an annoyance that should be avoided, overlooked, and ignored at all times.

Aggressively defining their own spheres, the ladies of *Cranford* have no compunction in dictating to their neighbours “there were rules and regulations for visiting and calls; and they were announced to any young people who might be staying in the town” (166). Cranfordian rules not only apply to actions but also to speech. For example, the general poverty of Cranford's leading ladies cannot be acknowledged because it might call into question their “aristocratic” standing” (166). The discretion necessary for this charade demands a careful use of speech, resulting in singular phraseology where “economy . . . always ‘elegant,’ and money-spending always ‘vulgar and ostentatious’” (167). While the narrator good-naturedly humanizes

the ladies' adherence to their self-imposed paradigms, she recognizes that these constructed roles perpetuate Cranford's way of life by maintaining a connection with the past, a connection which all of the ladies feel to be not only appropriate but also necessary for survival.

It is into this rigid state of being that Gaskell introduces her first character, the very manly Captain Brown. Captain Brown's arrival in Cranford with his two daughters is perceived as an "invasion" (167), for his frankness and manners assault the ladies' genteel sensibilities. Cleverly introducing the Captain through the eyes of the Cranford ladies, Gaskell lets her readers know immediately the obstacles that the Captain faces as he attempts to enter the closed community. It is not so much the fact that he is a man that offends the ladies after all they have dealt with men quite effectively in the past it is the fact that he will not conform to their model of masculinity. Instead of quietly disappearing, Captain Brown "openly spoke about his being poor not in a whisper . . . in a loud military voice" (167) in the open street and publically carried a "poor old woman's dinner . . . one very slippery Sunday" (173). For these transgressions the ladies send the Captain "to Coventry" (167) but "blind to all the small slights and omission of trivial ceremonies with which he had been received" (168) the Captain misses the cues given by the ladies and continues to perform kind acts out of the goodness of his heart.

Mr. Holbrook, cousin to Miss Pole, has lived in the vicinity of *Cranford* for his entire life, but, content to be one of the banished men of *Cranford*, he has avoided interaction with the ladies of the village. Readers and Mary Smith, the narrator, learn, however, that he once forgot his place in his youth and attempted to woo Miss Matty, Rector Jenkyns's daughter. Deemed unsuitable by Miss Jenkyns, his suit was discouraged. This dismissal is based in pride, but the pride is not just Miss Jenkyns's.

Mr. Holbrook's strong sense of pride prevents him from promoting himself. Mr. Holbrook says:

property was not large enough to entitle him to rank higher than a yeoman; or rather, with something of the 'pride which apes humility,' he had refused to push himself on, as so many of his class had done, into the ranks of the squires. He would not allow himself to be called Thomas Holbrook, *Esq.*; he even sent back letters with this address, telling the postmistress at Cranford that his name was *Mr. Thomas Holbrook, yeoman.* (188)

Except for his singular pursuance of Miss Matty many years ago, Mr. Holbrook obstinately adheres to the role he inherited. He "[despises] every refinement" which the ladies in Cranford put great value on (189), but he is not insensitive to and unappreciative of beauty, nor is he dismissive of the feelings and needs of others.

In the fiction, while the ladies are somewhat assured by the Presence of the rector, the sense of confusion and uncertainty raised by Signor Brunoni's performance continues and gives rise in the following weeks to a terror on the perceived invasion of the neighbourhood by criminals. Signor Brunoni becomes a dark and threatening figure in their minds, responsible not only for attempted break-ins but for the death of Mrs. Jamieson's beloved pet, Carlo.

Ironically, Miss Pole is correct in her claim that the magician is an imposter just not in the way she thinks. In reality the Signor is not some "foreign gentleman" but Samuel Brown, an ex-sergeant who had at one time been stationed in India. Cranford discovers this only after many weeks of thinking the Signor responsible for bizarre happenings in the neighbourhood. But he had been injured in a carriage accident and was an invalid for the entire time. At once the ladies of Cranford forget

their fears of “murderous gangs” and superstitions of “headless ghosts” and proceed to deluge Sam Brown, his wife, and daughter with Christian charity.

The knowledge of the Browns’ background makes this good will possible, for it demystifies the mysterious. Confronted by reality, *Cranford* can give up their preoccupations with their overwhelming fears of danger. And while they will continue to call the Browns the Brunonis because “it sounded so much better” (254), their knowledge and acceptance of the true nature of things enables their village to return to a normal life.

The advent of the Browns does truly signal a change in *Cranford*. For the first time the ladies forget their petty distinctions of rank and station to unite and tend to the needs of this struggling family: it was wonderful to see what kind feelings were called out by this poor man’s coming amongst us. And also wonderful to see how the great Cranford panic, which had been occasioned by his first coming in his Turkish dress, melted away into thin air on his second coming □ (255).

This charity is in sharp contrast to their reaction against Captain Brown’s act of carrying the poor woman’s dinner, and it is also much greater, for the ladies do not stop at the temporal needs of the Browns but welcome and adopt them into a community. The advent of the “Brunonis” into *Cranford* sets into motion events that will bring the other two men into the story. Mr. Hoggins has been the town’s surgeon for many years, and though the ladies “disliked the name and considered it coarse” (219).

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discouraged. This dismissal is based in pride, but the pride is not just Miss Jenkyns's. Mr. Holbrook's strong sense of pride prevents him from promoting himself. "Four or five miles from *Cranford*," Mr. Holbrook's:

property was not large enough to entitle him to rank higher than a yeoman; or rather, with something of the 'pride which apes humility,' he had refused to push himself on, as so many of his class had done, into the ranks of the squires. He would not allow himself to be called Thomas Holbrook, *Esq.*; he even sent back letters with this address, telling the postmistress at *Cranford* that his name was *Mr. Thomas Holbrook, yeoman.* (188)

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Mr. Holbrook re-engages with *Cranford* after unexpectedly meeting Miss Matty in a shop soon after the death of her sister. Coming over to express his sympathy for her loss, he invites Miss Matty, Mary Smith, and Miss Pole to visit him for the day. His home, a typical bachelor's establishment, surprises the ladies with its extensive collection of books. Mr. Holbrook's pride and joy, the books give him an alternate way to engage with the surrounding world.

Mary Smith notes Mr. Holbrook was always "repeating apt and beautiful quotations from the poets" (192), and in one particularly telling exchange, he tells her that Byron has given him the ability to appreciate the simple things of Nature, like the

color of “ashbuds in March,” which he had never noticed until “this young man comes and tells me . . . [though] I’ve lived all my life in the country; more shame for me not to know” (194).

While Gaskell’s choice of poet seems particularly apt Byron notoriously defied societal roles she does not exalt a view of the world which separates the individual from the community. After hearing an excerpt from Byron, Miss Matty naively associates his work with Dr. Johnson’s. At the time, this evaluation seems to be a purely humorous commentary on Miss Matty’s simplicity, but further events suggest that Gaskell might actually be doing something deeper. Mr. Holbrook’s passion for the beauty that the Romantic poets exult in gradually overwhelms his social responsibilities. When the ladies visit, they choose to sit in. Gaskell writes :

What Mr. Holbrook called the counting-house, when he paid his labourers their weekly wages at a great desk near the door. The rest of the pretty sitting room looking into the orchard, and all covered over with dancing tree-shadows was filled with books. They lay on the ground, they covered the walls, and they strewed the table. (192)

At first, the room’s description seems to picture geographically that Mr. Holbrook has achieved a happy harmony, harnessing his appreciation of the beauty of the world with his responsibilities, but subtly there is the threat that Mr. Holbrook’s love of beauty will overwhelm his sense of communal responsibility. This threat is realized when Mr. Holbrook decides to go to Paris. Having “always had a wish to go” (196), he schedules his visit between haying and harvest-time. He promises to see Miss Matty when he comes back, but when Mary returns to *Cranford* in the fall she finds that Miss Matty is ailing. Searching for an explanation, she turns to Miss Pole, who informs her that Mr. Holbrook is ill.



“The journey to Paris was quite too much for him. His housekeeper says he has hardly ever been round his fields since, but just sits with his hands on his knees in the counting-house, not reading or anything, but only saying what a wonderful city Paris was!” (197)

Always a secluded man, Mr. Holbrook’s ultimate retreat from the world and his responsibilities proves fatal. His death is Gaskell’s argument that complete separation from the community, however flawed it might be, is just as dangerous as actively acting against its strictures. While granting the great good that an appreciation of beauty and art does in providing recourse to those distant from a community, Gaskell suggests that it cannot ultimately establish a positive alternative to a life of interaction and participation in a community, and that it is the community alone which can provide the framework necessary to support this appreciation.

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The advent of the “Brunonis” into *Cranford* sets into motion events that will bring the other two men into the story. Mr. Hoggins has been the town’s surgeon for many years, and though the ladies “disliked the name and considered it coarse” (219), they “were rather proud of our doctor at *Cranford*, as a doctor” (254). A practical and forthright man, Mr. Hoggins will not play word games with the ladies. And when an outbreak of neighbourhood “robberies” takes place and the ladies identify him as a victim, he tells Miss Pole that she “must have heard an exaggerated account of some petty theft of a neck of mutton, which, it seems was stolen out of the safe in his yard last week,” a theft that he personally attributes to a stray cat (248).

The announcement of their engagement shocks the ladies of Cranford; Mary Smith tells of their reaction. We wished to ignore the whole affair until our liege lady, Mrs. Jamieson, returned. Till she came back to give us our cue argues about:

We felt that it would be better to consider the engagement in the same light as the Queen of Spain’s legs facts which certainly existed, but the less said about the better. This restraint upon our tongues for you see if we did not speak about it to any of the parties concerned, how could we get answers to the questions that we longed to ask? Was beginning to be irksome, and our idea of the dignity of silence was paling before our curiosity. (266)

The walls of *Cranford* elegance and discretion are beginning to topple, but for their complete overthrow an old resident of *Cranford* must return home. The brother of Miss Deborah and Miss Matty, Peter Jenkyns has been absent from *Cranford* for over three decades.

Gaskell's examination of performance in *Cranford* is not only her most obvious engagement with societal constructs but also her simplest depiction of individuals navigating the seeming division between self and participation in the community. Though she hints at the potential for self-abnegation in the performing, Gaskell refrains, for the most part, from dealing with the internal conflicts that stem from the external demands of following protocol. But Gaskell is not immune to the struggle to balance duty and desire, and it is in *North and South* that she will return again to the motif of performance and amplify it by appraising the motivations of individual actors as they perform in various and often conflicting roles.

Gaskell is often criticized for not offering solutions, for only bringing her reader's attention to social problems rather than suggesting explicit step-by-step solutions. For example, Bernard Sharratt writes that Gaskell's "reader has been manipulated into trying to solve Mrs. Gaskell's original problem *in her place*" (51-52).

Gaskell, however, never promised to offer economic or legislative solutions. Her action plan is for the *individual* that her reader may learn the complexities of societal ills and be persuaded to act with compassion toward others, especially toward the marginalized and the suffering. She presents the urgency of the downtrodden via a narrative voice that employs a variety of strategies.

In order to establish common ground with her readers, she claims limited knowledge and employs the first person singular and plural. Because of this earned trust, she is able to advocate for the working class and indict the middle class for its lack of charity and understanding. She also actively engages her readers via laments and use of the second person to create a sense of shared experience between the

reader and her characters. Let me first turn to Gaskell's own words regarding her knowledge of the social problems that instigated her writing.

Gaskell did not claim to offer a solution to the problems endemic in the manufacturing system. Nonetheless, she tackles them in both *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, claiming to be a truth-teller. She does this by portraying the truth of the matter as she knows it and by denying complete knowledge of her subjects.

In her writing, she was not necessarily seeking a solution, for, as she said, the system was not fully understood. Her conviction was to bring the plight of the working class to the light of day, exposing the moral dilemmas of the issues of masters and men with the tools of fiction. Correspondingly, *Mary Barton's* narrator exposes her own ignorance of particular aspects of the working class, especially its language, and she exposes this ignorance not through poor usage but, rather, by explicitly telling her readers about her knowledge gap.

As a holistic work, *Cranford* does not represent and suggest radical progressive movement, there are many progressive transitions. This change is type of Industrial Revolution, and therefore it separates itself from other patriarchal values. As shown in the previous argument, radical changes in technology, economic trade, social interaction, and national standards of identification and Cranford forward into progressive movement. Gaskell's successful model of progress in *Cranford* is marriage too. In the midst of developmental stagnancy in *Cranford*, characters representing some sort of marital and reproductive activity suggest ability to transition into the future. Still, like radical change, even traditionally accepted changes caused by marriage are suspected in bringing negative consequences to Gaskell's created societies.

This section shows that even though Gaskell allows for her characters to progress traditionally through marriage, she reveals herself to be doubtful if such progress actually yields dependable advantages. Gaskell seems to advocate taking extreme care in choosing one's partner in marriage, because like all change, marriage can incur negative consequences and loss for the individual.

### III. Value of Women-self in *Cranford*

Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Cranford* challenge nineteenth-century notions of what constitutes reliable, credible, and admissible truth claims. Gaskell challenges the protocols for judging truth that are emerging in the mid-nineteenth century in response to new epistemic conditions and protocols that threaten to silence female speakers, whether they are advocating on their own behalf.

*Cranford*, thus, creates a women's community capable of self-perpetuation, able to harness its store of secrets for community and to preserve, by conserving within the community, the sympathetic energy that keeps the town moving. *Cranford*'s conservation of sympathy also asks us to think more broadly about what's at stake in the idea of conservation for women. Conservation offers a way to conceive of alternative economies of generous giving for women without money, reconciling liberality of sympathy with the conservation of social structure.

It is, in a large sense, reactionary, a contrast to the forward-pressing mentality of the mid-nineteenth century. *Cranford*'s conservation draws imaginatively on cyclical time, rather than the future-tending progressivism of the 1851 Great Exhibition and pseudo-evolutionary theories. But the conservation of sympathetic energy is also remarkably progressive. By echoing contemporary theories in science and economics, it suggests that the mid-century project of finding and forging communities for surplus women takes up contemporary discoveries and concerns.

It also shows the centrality of sympathetic gifts to the blending of communal, economic, and industrial ideals. In its merger of old and new, conservation offers a useful language for thinking about the shape of sympathetic economies .

For Gaskell, storytelling was a pastime, and it was often how she passed her most enjoyable times with friends and family. Writing, however, was an imperative, and it was the way that she communicated her project of sympathy to the reading public. For her, writing had ethical responsibilities, and these responsibilities shaped the way she plotted her stories, characterized her heroines, and narrated her tales.

In Gaskell's social problem novels, the issues that Gaskell tackles were awkward and often unspoken social sins. For instance, how does one address the injustice done to the fallen woman when even opening such a discussion reflects poorly on one's character? How does one tell a story that is off limits? Such constraints resulted in Gaskell's crafting her own kinds of stories that allow female characters to speak and act credibly, to challenge authority, and to garner understanding.

By utilizing the quite male patriarchal ethos as court trials and cross examination like situations for her female characters in their regular lives, Gaskell demonstrates her perusing social decide that judgments are too immediately apportioned and verdicts mistakenly accepted, and she consequently advances thoughtful judgments of others, ladies particularly. In her fiction, she looks for equity for her courageous women, and, when that is unachievable, she has them look for perfect equity. To build up the validity of her champions, Gaskell utilizes a rich presentation of story gadgets to evaluate ladies' rambling capacities and to re-approve their representations of reality.

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