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**Cranford Serialization in
Household Words:
A Context for an Unpredictable Novel**

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Introduction

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, born Stevenson, and Charles Dickens, are two of the most important writers of the nineteenth century. The collaboration between them started pretty soon, in 1850, when the latter asked her to contribute to his newly founded weekly journal *Household Words*. After the delivery of her first story, *Lizzie Leigh*, their relationship lasted for thirteen years, when she saw her last publication in November 1863 in *All The Year Round*, the successor of *Household Words*. They first met at a dinner party given by Dickens on 12 May 1849 to celebrate the publication of *David Copperfield*. Thanks to this event she was eventually admitted into the inner circle of London literary society and helped her future establishment as a professional writer. What first attracted so much Charles Dickens was Gaskell's publication of *Mary Barton*, because it treated themes very dear to him, which were based on Britain's current social situation. First of all it deals with problems regarding the industrialist society, with the exploitation and the terrible conditions of the working-class, a subject of many of Dickens's works. Secondly there is the question of the fallen woman, seen as the victim of sex exploitation. Both authors worked their entire life on trying to help those who were suffering, in particular in the engagement with associations which supported their cause. Therefore they had a lot in common when Dickens founded *Household Words*.

Since the beginning of their collaboration she had been considered by him one of her most special contributors, because in a sort of way her publications were aligned to Dickens's aim "to show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out".¹ Within the newspaper not only serialized novels appeared, but more than everything importance was given to all those publications that dealt with current issues and several kinds of topics. In a sort of way *Cranford* contains in itself all *Household Words*'s needs and presumably this was one of the reasons why he appreciated it so much. Apparently one of the light-hearted works of Gaskell, reveals when further analyzed themes that

¹ Charles Dickens, "A Preliminary Word" in *Household Words* (1850), vol i, p. 1.

actually impressed but also entertained readers. It was partly made of travel issues, of boundaries with a celebrated past, of friendship, but also of enthralling events.

The aim my dissertation is therefore that of analyzing the serialization of *Cranford* in Dickens's magazine, taking into account the themes present in the novel and contemporarily those of the journal. One of the most important topics is the struggle of the protagonists of the story to remain attached to a past that is seeing its old way of living threatened by the incoming modernization. The representatives in the novel of these two attitudes are Miss Matty Jenkyns and Miss Mary, the narrator. The former symbolizes the heritage of the past, whilst the latter could represent a mediator between the two, the connector that could live both in the past and in the present. She embodied the new industrial life, due to the fact that she lived in Drumble, the fictional city symbol of the real Manchester, and that her father was a businessman; but also the past, towards which she felt particularly linked and whose boundary was hard to break. More than once she visits her friends in Cranford, because she loves their absurd and particular conduct, without ever criticizing them.

Miss Mary could also be close the author, Elizabeth Gaskell, seen as the voice of the author's point of view, who was strongly tied to the real Knutsford town, of which Cranford was the fictional representation. Knutsford was the town in which she spent her childhood, and which she always remembered with tenderness and affection. In fact every time she felt anxious or unable to write she went there and always came back restored. Contemporarily, as Miss Mary, she was witnessing the advent of industrialization because she moved to Manchester with her husband, and therefore could actually see the consequences of it, which she decided to describe in her novels, as Charles Dickens did.

Nonetheless this work is one in which the social issues have a secondary role in order to give more importance to the depiction of this little English village, inhabited mainly by women, ironically called by the narrator "the Amazons".² This women's community is hierarchical and every one must follow a certain "code of gentility" that permits them to be considered part of that exclusive society.

² Peter Keating (ed.), *Cranford and Cousin Phillis* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 39.

The entire narration is based on the actions and the adventures that characterise the lives of its protagonists, starting from usual habits to unexpected episodes, like the arrival of a robbing gang or the marriage between Lady Glenmire and Mr Hoggins.

The novel was serialized in Dickens's journal from December 1851 to May 1853. Initially it was meant to be composed of a single sketch, but Dickens admired it so much that asked Gaskell to provide further parts. The relationship between the two authors has always been troublesome, because while praising her works, at the same time he was demanding more. Those controversies depended also on the fact that between the instalment of April 1852 and that of January 1853 Gaskell did not provide any further piece. The reason presumably, or rather surely, laid in the fact that she was busy in writing her famous novel *Ruth*, which was eventually published in three parts in 1853.³ Soon after its release indeed, she delivered the last five episodes of *Cranford* in only four months. Eventually the complete novel was published by Chapman and Hall in June 1863, after several discussions with the publisher.

The novel was eventually adapted for a Television series for the BBC, released in 2007 and started to film in 2005. It was directed by Simon Curtis and Steve Hudson and it was a success so much so that has been nominated in 16 categories including the Programme of the Year, the best actress, the best actor and the best writer⁴. According to the scholar Thomas Recchio, the BBC adaptation extend the tradition of entertaining of the mass, sometimes also because readers are curious to see whether there are similarities or differences between the written text and the digital media⁵. Moreover if readers liked the digital version, they would deepen their knowledge by reading further works of that specific writer. It was transmitted in five parts in the United Kingdom by BBC One after a flurry of adaptations of Jane Austen's work⁶. The fact that it was released on television is a proof of her growing importance in the field of Victorian literary studies;

³ Winifred Gérin, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1976), p. 126.

⁴ Thomas Recchio, *Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford: A Publishing History* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), p. 234.

⁵ Peter Keating, op.cit., p. 237.

⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

furthermore new scholars are granting recognition to her intellectuality but above all her interest on social issues.⁷

My dissertation is made with the purpose of considering the various relations between the instalments of *Cranford* and those of *Household Words*. In particular I shall discuss why the editor chose to put precise episodes in exactly issues of the journal.

This work is divided into four chapters, each dealing with a different topic. The first chapter recounts the life of Elizabeth Gaskell, starting from her childhood to her collaboration with Charles Dickens. The episodes contained in her biography are analyzed in correspondence with her works, because the majority of them were inspired by real events, from the cheerful childhood spent in Knutsford to the loss of her brother and her commitment to social causes, with the help of her husband.

The second chapter investigates the major themes of *Cranford*, because they are relevant for the subsequent study of its serialization within the magazine. One of the most important ones is that of gentility, according to which all the women of the community behave. That is one of the measures adopted by the ladies to recognize whether a person could be admitted into their rigid society. Usually those who did not respect it were men, in particular Captain Brown and Mr Hoggins, who among all the other things talked about topics that were considered *ungenteel* by the townswomen, such as money. This led to another of the major themes of the novel which is the highly structured female society. Every men present in Cranford is generally depicted as vulgar and the ladies' consideration of them is never lofty, but rather modest. Nonetheless at the end they will be eventually accepted because the positive traits of their personalities will overtake their *ungenteel* and vulgar ways.⁸ The last theme analyzed in my dissertation is that of the dichotomy between industrialization and domesticity, which will be represented respectively by the ladies of the town and those who come from the outside world. Even this contrast is eventually solved, being Miss Mary the symbol of the possible reconciliation of the two divergent ways of living.

⁷ Jill L. Matus (ed.), "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 1.

⁸ Patricia A. Wolfe, "Structure and Movement in Cranford" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23, n° 2 (1968): 161-176. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2932367>.

The third chapter takes into account Dickens's literary career, in particular his journalistic one, because it was precisely to the one that he was more interested in. In fact he started to work as a reporter very early, at the age of about fourteen years old, when he was a simple contributor on actual crime facts for *The British Press*, a London morning paper. He eventually succeeded in becoming the aspired writer and journalist he wanted to be and as a matter of fact founded his two most important newspapers: *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

The closing chapter is the most critical one, because it investigates the serialization of *Cranford* within the journal, considering the reason why the editor decided to insert the various instalments in those precise issues. I present every instalment of the novel in relation to the number of the newspaper, analyzing the common themes and their association with actual social affairs.

Moreover I hope to demonstrate the relevance they have for the readers of Dickens and Gaskell's time, and their consistency to the journal and its aims, as exposed in Dickens's "A Preliminary Word".

CHAPTER I – Life of Elizabeth Gaskell

1.1 Childhood

As the biographer Winifred Gérin wrote, Gaskell was born Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson on 29 September 1810 at 93 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea⁹. Her father was William Stevenson, a progressive Unitarian, who attended Berwick Grammar School and at the age of 17 went to Daventry Academy in preparation for becoming a Dissenting Minister. He started his career as a tutor in 1789 first in Berwick and then in Manchester, but in 1796 he disengaged from his ministry and moved briefly to Scotland to return soon after in England in 1797 where he married Elizabeth Holland, the daughter of a farmer who lived near Knutsford, in Cheshire. She came from a family of more traditional middle-class rational dissenters, linked by marriage to the Wedgewood, Turner and Darwin families and this would influence Gaskell's religious beliefs.

The couple went to Scotland in 1798 where Mr. Stevenson took up farming, but after the birth of their son John they settled in Edinburgh where he became a tutor contributing to the journal *Edinburgh review* from 1803 onward. They afterwards moved to London and settled in Chelsea at Bellevue and there Elizabeth's father contributed to other periodicals like *Blackwood's* and began to work as a keeper of the Treasury Records after he failed to become Governor General of India.

When they were in London in 1810 Elizabeth Holland gave birth to Elizabeth Cleghorn who, a year later, was sent to her aunt's house in Knutsford, after her mother's death. In that town she found a protective environment, surrounded by loving relatives. Her aunt had a disabled daughter, Marianne, and she was the one who asked her mother to let Elizabeth live with them, assuring that she would not have been a problem because she had already thought and prepared everything.

My dear Mother, I was greatly shocked to hear from my Aunt Katie's letter of the death of my poor Aunt Stevenson. [...] Poor little Elizabeth! What will become of her? [...] Do you not think

⁹ All page-references to Elizabeth Gaskell's life are taken from Winifred Gérin, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1976)

she could come to us? If you have never for a moment thought of this plan, I dare say the mention of it will surprise you; but do not read my Letter too hastily, for I assure you my scheme will require your attention.¹⁰

While in Knutsford, more than once Aunt Lumb took Elizabeth with her to visit the ladies of the town, who loved to chitchat, gossip and tell stories. She always listened to them with curiosity, and it was such a happy place that that little town would later be the inspiration of the fictional city of Cranford.

Elizabeth was the youngest of eight children and the only one with her brother John to survive infancy. Although she did not live with her brother they had a strong relationship and he often visited her in Knutsford. Furthermore it seemed as if they shared the same need for affection after their mother's loss and thence they felt to belong to each other in a special way. This was further perceived in particular when he left for the navy. When she was twelve John was destined for the Royal Navy, like his grandfathers and uncles, but he had no entry and had to join the Merchant Navy with the East India Company's fleet. But throughout his numerous journeys he never left Elizabeth feel alone and sent her modern books like *Elizabeth* by S. Cottin and *Paul and Virginia* by Bernadin de St Pierre. He did so because he had already understood what a great writer she was going to become and what her capabilities were. For this reason and to inform her, he constantly sent accounts of his stays, descriptions of his life at sea and of his London activities and in one of his letters he suggested that she should keep a diary in order to have material for her letters to send him, therefore encouraging her to write.¹¹ Unluckily he went missing in 1828 during an expedition in India and this left a profound scar in Elizabeth's soul, so much so that this episode is recalled in her novel *Cranford*.

On the other hand the relationship with her father and her stepmother, Miss Catherine Thomson, to whom he got married in 1814, was pretty weak, as William Stevenson refused to see her daughter to favour the children he had with his second wife. She only was invited to stay in London at the age of nine, but she remembered that visit, like the others, to be not very pleasant.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 15.

She visited her father again in 1828 to nurse him because he had fallen into a deep depression after discovering that his son went missing. He eventually died after a stroke in 1829.¹²

1.2 Education

Elizabeth belonged to a Unitarian family, both from his father and her mother side. Before her formal education, her aunt and external tutors took care of her education; at her aunt's home there was a library composed of classics to which she had unlimited access. She was very fond of Jane Austen, William Cowper, Alexander Pope and Scott. Her beloved aunt also taught her sewing and household management, in addition to reading and writing.

Her father's second wife had a brother, Anthony Todd Thomson, whose second wife Katherine Byerley, together with her sister founded the Avonbank School, a boarding school located in Warwick, which in 1817 moved to Barford in a neo-classical mansion and in 1822 to Stratford-on-Avon, built on the ruins of an old priory and with lawns sloping down to the river.¹³ It could be for this familiar boundary that Elizabeth was sent to the Byerley School in 1821, and possibly allowing payment of reduced fees. Catherine Thomson had another brother, William John, who would later paint in 1832 the famous miniature portrait of Elizabeth in Manchester.

At Avonbank School she studied all the subjects that were proper to a young lady, such as arithmetic, dancing, English language, music, drawing, composition and reading. In 1825 she delivered her first music book, in which she transcribed music, lyrics and dance notes. She left the school in 1826, but she kept in contact with the schoolmistresses for more than 20 years. When she left school she went to her father's house where he taught her Latin, Italian and French. Probably the school environment and her family encouragements let her become the famous writer that she is today.

¹² Ibid., p. 36.

¹³ Susan Hubbard, *Writers in Warwickshire* (New York: Cosimo Publications, 2006), p. 9.

1.3 Married life

After her father's death, at the age of eighteen, Elizabeth paid a visit to William Turner and her daughter Ann, distant relatives from her mother's side in Newcastle. In 1831 she also travelled with Ann to Edinburgh, Liverpool, and Sandlebridge to return eventually in Manchester to stay with her relatives.

While in Manchester she presumably met her future husband, William Gaskell, the assistant minister at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, to whom she got married in 1832 in Knutsford. He was a Unitarian minister who influenced her social and religious beliefs and involved her in social, cultural and intellectual world and activities of his family.¹⁴

Together they moved to industrial Manchester, where she witnessed desperate working conditions, high unemployment, poverty and all this influenced her writings a lot, in particular *North and South* and *Mary Barton*.

Therefore she decided to help her husband with his social working assisting poor people and teaching in the Sunday School, a Christian educational institution that provided education to working children. They had always supported charity activities; for instance in 1852, from January to March, they held a series of compassionate initiatives on the behalf of an elderly impoverished author of Knutsford and the ailing prison reformer Thomas Wright.

In 1833 she gave birth to a stillborn girl, who she remembered in a poem called *On Visiting the Grave of my Stillborn Little Girl*,¹⁵ written after she visited the grave, three years after the death in 1836. In 1834 they had a girl, Marianne, named

¹⁴Winifred Gérin, op. cit., pp. 45-46

¹⁵“ I made a vow within my soul, O child,
When thou wert laid beside my weary heart,
With marks of Death on every, tender part,
That, if in time a living infant smiled,
Winning my ear with gentle sounds of love
In sunshine of such joy, I still would save
A green rest for thy memory, O Dove!
And oft times visit thy small, nameless grave.
Thee have I not forgot, my firstborn, thou
Whose eyes ne'er opened to my wistful gaze,
Whose suffrings stamped with pain thy little brow;
I think of thee in these far happier days,
And thou, my child, from thy bright heaven see
How well I keep my faithful vow to thee”. (Winifred Gérin, op. cit., p. 53).

after her lovely cousin prematurely died at the age of twenty-one. The baby birth helped her to overcome the sufferance from the loss of her first child and made her passionately attached to the newborn baby.

The following year she started writing *My Diary*, maybe after her brother's suggestion of years before, where she annotated all her daughter's progresses, her and his husband's role as parents and later the relationship between Marianne and her sister Margaret Emily (Meta) born in 1837. In that same year Aunt Lumb had a stroke and she decided to return to Knutsford with her daughters to take care of her, who eventually died on May of that year. They had three more children: Florence Elizabeth in 1842, William in 1844 and Julia Bradford in 1846. Unfortunately William died at the age of nine months of scarlet fever, and this was the catalyst for Elizabeth to write her novel *Mary Barton*, with the encouragement of her husband, who thought that concentrating in writing would sooth her grief. He was very supportive of his wife, he became her literary agent and the confidant of her writing works, and he also helped her with the dialect - as a matter of fact he was an expert of the Lancashire one – and edited also her manuscript. They had always been very fond of each other although they often spent periods apart, and their relationship was very solid, based as their social works on sympathy, encouragement and affection.

William Gaskell was also a prolific writer and poet; he wrote about religious matters and supported the working class cause, his aim was to succeed in combining literature and philanthropy indeed. As a result in 1839 *Temperance Rhymes*, a collection of poems characterized by sympathy and respect for the individual and written in plain language, with several portraits of working people in Manchester, was published anonymously.¹⁶

In 1850 they moved to a villa in Plymouth Grove, a large, rather imposing house outside the grimy manufacturing district, with a view of open fields. Elizabeth was thrilled with her new home, though a little worried for its size and cost, unnecessarily because it was always full of friends. She was very welcoming and loved to be surrounded by people, in particular writers and literary personalities. Among some of her visitors there was Charlotte Bronte, Mr. and Mrs. Howitt, Charles Dickens and John Ruskin.

¹⁶ *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* (United Kingdom: Delphi Classics, 2015), p. 125.

Unexpectedly in 1865 she died of a heart attack, while visiting a house she had purchased in Holybourne, Hampshire, leaving her loving husband and their four daughters.

1.4 Writing career

Elizabeth Gaskell has always been interested in writing, supported by her entire family, so much so that in 1835 she started writing *My Diary*, as has already been documented. In 1836 she published together with her husband *Sketches among the poor* in *Blackwood's Magazine*. In a letter sent in 1859 to the publisher John Blackwood, she thanked him for sending her a copy of *Adam Bede* and recollected the time when she had written the sketch.

Dear Sir,

As you would learn from my letter yesterday I received the copy of 'Adam Bede' which you were so kind as to send me quite safely; and I am very much obliged to you for it. [...] I do not remember the name of the article I wrote, and which you published long ago in 1835 or '36 I think. It was in the days of a very kind friend of mine who was then Editor, - Professor Wilson. My article was a poem on a character whom I subsequently introduced into 'Mary Barton'; and I remember it began [...] It was worth very little; but I was very much pleased, and very proud to see it on print.¹⁷

It was supposed to be composed of many little parts, but the project did not realize and so only one survived. It deals with poverty issues set in a natural world, where the pressure and the effects of the work in the industrial Manchester were felt by the poor working class citizens.¹⁸

In childhood's days, I do remember me of one dark house behind an old elm-tree,
By gloomy streets surrounded, where the flower Brought from the fresher air,
scarce for an hour Retained its fragrant scent; yet men lived there, Yea, and in

¹⁷ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), letter 417, p. 533.

¹⁸ J. A. V. Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 432.

happiness; the mind doth clear In most dense airs its own bright atmosphere. But
in the house of which I spake there dwelt One by whom all the weight of smoke
was felt.¹⁹

In 1840 Elizabeth contributed to Howitt's publications of *Visits to Remarkable Places* and *The Rural Life of England*, with respectively an account of Clopton Hall, a place near Stratford-on-Avon with an old ancestral house, and *Notes on Cheshire Customs*. The report on Clopton Hall was her first known publication, which was also eagerly accepted and which was the precursor of her later writings. It recounts the story of Charlotte Clopton, who is a former inhabitant of the hall which was buried in the vault that the narrator later meets while visiting the haunted rooms.

Subsequently in 1847 she started publishing under the pseudonym of Cotton Mather Hill for *Howitt's Journal* with her *Libbie's Marsh Three Era* and *The Sexton's Hero* and in 1848 *Christmas Storms and Sunshine*, using the pen name for the last time, following therefore Howitt's suggestion: "But it seems to me that as you will write (I trust many) other works, it would be as well for them to be known as the works of a lady. I think they would be more popular".²⁰ In a letter sent on 7 December 1848 she promptly accepted it:

I am very much obliged to you by your note; and for the friendly and just manner in which you write about my annoyance respecting my name being known. [...] I have thought it better simply to acknowledge the truth, in order to put a stop to all these unpleasant manifestations of curiosity.²¹

For what concerns the use of the pseudonym it seems to be referred to the factories of the Lancastrian landscape where she lived, but also to the Puritan minister Cotton Mather, who in the seventeenth century wrote tales dealing with witchcraft, which really enthralled Gaskell. These have influenced her writing, in particular those tales concerned with the supernatural exploiting narrative techniques of mystery, suspense and melodrama. Those short stories underline the supernatural hidden underside of female identity, domestic relations and male authority. Therefore the writer, in the

¹⁹ Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, *Sketches Among the Poor* (University of Oxford Text Archive, 1836), iBooks, p. 6.

²⁰ Winifred Gérin, op. cit., p. 83.

²¹ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 34, p. 65.

collection of these stories published between 1851 and 1861 mostly in *Household Words* and in Dickens' subsequent periodical *All The Year Round*, explores the themes of oppression, hatred, and general human cruelty using her intense and beautiful prose.²²

On 25 October 1848 she published anonymously one of her most famous novels, *Mary Barton*, which was well acclaimed by the critics for its truthful portrayal of working class people and its sympathetic tone. Many conjectures had been made on the authorship, in particular Emily Winkworth, sister of Catherine Winkworth, who together with Emily, took lessons from William Gaskell at Cross Street Chapel, wanted to know who the author was and Marianne Darbishire suggested that it could have been Mrs Weeler, wife of a clergyman, who wrote *The Cotton's Lord* in 1842. Mrs Gaskell was very satisfied with this theory, saying in one of her letters destined to Catherine Winkworth: "Marianne gave me many proofs which I don't think worth repeating, but I think were quite convincing".²³ Eventually in a letter written in reply to Mary Ewart, the daughter of the British politician William Ewart, friend of Rev. William Gaskell and one Elizabeth's closest friend, in the late 1848, acknowledged she was the author.

My dear Miss Ewart, I cannot tell you what a surprise your letter was to me last night; but I will throw myself on your honour and confess the surprise was simply occasioned by the intelligence that 'Mary Barton' was so much read, and that you had guessed (*I cannot imagine how?*) that I had written it. I did write it, but how did you find it out?²⁴

The novel was published in two volumes in 1848, although Edward Chapman, her editor, had the manuscript since 1847 and he paid her £100 as we acknowledge from the letter written in replay to him in December 1848: "My dear Sir, I acknowledge, with many thanks, the first half of the 100£, due to me for the MS of 'Mary Barton'".²⁵

²² Shirley Foster, "Elizabeth Gaskell's shorter pieces" in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L. Matus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 118.

²³ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op.cit., letter 30, pp. 61-62.

²⁴ Ibid., letter 36, p. 67.

²⁵ Ibid., letter 34, p. 65.

In 1849 she changed the genre of her publications and wrote two non-fiction articles: *The Last Generation in England* that appeared in the *American Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, and *Hand and Heart* that appeared in *The Sunday School Penny Magazine*. The latter is a typical evangelical children's story, which brought their hero and heroine to spiritual perfection throughout emotional and physical struggle. The former on the other hand was the depiction of an old town and its inhabitants that would later be the background inspiration for her novel *Cranford*.²⁶

From 1850 onwards Elizabeth Gaskell started publishing for Charles Dickens journal's *Household Words*. The first story that appeared in the magazine was *Lizzie Leigh* followed soon after by *The Well of Pen-Morfa*, *The Moorland Cottage*, *The Heart of John Middleton* and *Half a Lifetime Ago*, which was revised after being previously published in *Sartain's Union Magazine* with the different title of *Martha Preston*.

In 1851 she published anonymously *Mr. Harrison's Confession* in three instalments in *The Ladies' Companion and Monthly Magazine*, who was considered the prequel of *Cranford* and depicts the life of a doctor in provincial England, a story that seems to evoke an episode from her life, when she often travelled with her uncle, who was a doctor, to the countryside to visit his patients²⁷. In the same year she contributed again to Dickens's magazine publishing *Disappearances* (story that belongs to the gothic genre), *Ruth* and the first instalment of *Cranford*, of which subsequent instalments continued until May 1853.

The second tale of the gothic line *The Old Nurse's Story* was published in *Household Words* in 1852, although Dickens was not satisfied with the end, and in the same year *Bessy's Trouble at Home* appeared in *Sunny School Penny Magazine*.²⁸

The following year she started writing *North and South*, but ran into several controversies with Charles Dickens concerning the title and the length of the section as deduced by a letter she sent him in 1854:

²⁶ Winifred Gérin, op. cit., p. 122.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²⁸ Jill L. Matus, op. cit., p. xvi.

[...] I dare say I shall like my story, when I am a little further from it: at present I can only feel depressed about it. [...] It is 33 pages of my writing that I send today. I have tried to shorten & compress it, both because it was a dull piece, & to get it into reasonable length, but there were a whole catalogue of events to be got over: [...], but, *if you will keep the MS for me, & shorten it as you think best for HW* I shall be very glad. Shortened I see it must be. I think a better title than N. & S. Would have been “Death and Variations”. There are 5 deaths each beautifully suited to the character of the individual.

[...] I shall direct the batch of the MS to the Office. Don’t consult me as to the shortenings [;] only please yourself.²⁹

Actually Dickens’s suggestion for the title was well suited because it perfectly represented the discrepancies between the middle-class manufacturers of the North and the country gentry of the South. Eventually on 2 September the first instalment of *North and South* was finally published in *Household Words*, without taking into account any of Dickens’ suggestions except from the title.

On 14 February 1855 *Harper’s Magazine*³⁰ published a two-volume version of the novel and in March also Chapman and Hall published it, after having received a revised and expanded version.

From 1855 to 1856 she started gaining information to write the life of Charlotte Brontë, under the request of her father Patrick Brontë.³¹ To have a truthful version of it Elizabeth travelled with her daughter Marianne to the village of Haworth and spoke with many of her friends to know more. It was the first time a female writer was asked to provide a biography of another novelist, and after being published several times, the result was pretty satisfying, because the majority of the reviewers accepted it with praise.

²⁹ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 220, p. 323.

³⁰ *Harper’s Magazine*, born as *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in June 1850, was an American magazine of literature, politics, finance and arts that initially reprinted material pirated from English authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters.

³¹ Winifred Gérin, op.cit.. p. 162.

In 1858 the publication of gothic stories continued in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, first with *The Doom of the Griffith* and then with *An Incident at Niagara Falls*. The other ghostly tales were published in *All The Year Round* from 1859 to 1863.

During the years 1859 and 1860 she started to look for the background of her next novel *Sylvia's Lovers*, which would be published in 1863, after having travelled to Whitby with Meta and Julia. As a matter of fact that place would later be the real inspiration for the fictional town of Monkshaven in which the tale is set. It took so long to write because the subject was difficult and because she wanted to be, as usual, scrupulous about adhering to true facts the best she could.

In the same year *Cousin Phillis* was serialized in *Cornhill Magazine* beginning in the November issue and running until the February number of 1864. It was written after she returned to Knutsford to see it changed. There had been the disruption of the local life brought by imported labour and the construction of the railway station, an event that affected the old rural community so dear to her. The book version was published by *Harper's* in 1864.

This year saw also the serialization of *Wives and Daughters* again in *Cornhill Magazine*, which was supposed to be concluded by 1866. The novel has been a struggle to her, because on the one hand she wanted to finish it as soon as possible and on the other hand because she was suffering from constant health problems as she underlined in a letter sent to George Smith in 1865: "I have had such bad aches, (before I went to Fryston), - that I am behindhand with *Wives & Daughters*." ³² As a consequence she died of a sudden heart attack in 1865, without concluding the last chapters. Fortunately almost every one of her acquaintances knew how she would have liked to end the novel and therefore allowed *Cornhill's* editor Frederic Greenwood to write a final note to conclude the story in the January 1866 issue. The work was published in book form by publisher *Smith & Elder*

³² J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 575a, pp. 936-937.

later in 1866, and the first American version had been published ten days before with an ending provided by Meta.³³

1.5 Gaskell's collaboration with Dickens

According to the biographer Winifred Gérin, Dickens first acknowledged Mrs. Gaskell after she wrote *Mary Barton*, which was published by *Chapman and Hall* in October 1848.³⁴ He admired her work from the moment of the publication, but their meeting had not taken place until her visit in London in 1849. They first met at a dinner party given by Dickens on 12 May to celebrate the publication of his famous work *David Copperfield*. The impression of Mrs. Gaskell about the dinner was conveyed in a letter she wrote to her friend Anne Green on 13 May 1849, where she depicted the house and the people who were sitting and coming there, without taking into account Dickens's nature.

Must I begin at the beginning? Well! We got up; that was the first thing; and we dressed[;] that was the second; and then we cabbed it to Mr Monckton Milnes', meeting Mr Procter [...] We were shown into Mr Dickens' study; this is the part, dear Annie, I thought you would like to hear about.

It is the study where he writes all his works; and has a bow-window, is about the size of Uncle Holland's drawing room. There are books all round, up to the ceiling, and down to the ground; a standing-desk at which he writes; and all manner of comfortable easy chairs. There were numbers of people in the room.³⁵

Thanks to this dinner she could be admitted into the inner circle of London literary societies and it seems that it was after this party that Dickens started to think about having her work for his weekly journal *Household Words*, which appeared for the first time on 30 March 1850.³⁶

³³ Jill L. Matus, op. cit., p. xx.

³⁴ Winifred Gérin, op.cit., p. 90.

³⁵ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 45a, pp. 827-829.

³⁶ Winifred Gérin, op.cit., p. 101.

Both Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens were preoccupied with questions of social transformation and social justice. In particular they were interested in the relationship between labourers and masters and in the question of the fallen woman. For this reason, he and Angela Burdett-Coutts set up an asylum for women and girls working the London streets as prostitutes, called Urania Cottage. It was a refuge for homeless women who wanted to be helped, located in Shepherd's Bush, where the residents were rehabilitated and prepared to be sent as domestic servants in Britain's expanding colonies.³⁷ Knowing that, Elizabeth Gaskell decided to write him asking to help Pasley, a 16 year old girl who was incarcerated in New Bailey prison. She was the daughter of an Irish clergyman, who died when she was two and abandoned by her mother. After being dismissed from an apprenticeship, she led a miserable life, ending stealing and therefore in prison. Mrs. Gaskell had visited her there and found a sweet looking girl, and decided to ask Dickens to provide her out in a good ship to emigrate to Australia or to host her at Miss Coutts' refuge for female prisoners.³⁸ He promptly answered her that it was impossible to host her, because "Miss Coutts would not think it expedient to consign your protégée to either place, unless she first come into the Home, and enable us to form a personal knowledge of her from our own observation [...] but may get abroad without her help".³⁹ As we acknowledge from a letter sent to Gaskell's friend, Eliza Fox, under Miss Coutts' suggestion she had been able to find a family with whom Pasley would later have sailed to the Cape:

My and your girl is going on well as yet in the Refuge where Agnes Ewart and I got to see her, and my letter to Dickens induced a very wise suggestion one from Miss Coutts to him, on which I acted, and have found a man and his wife going to the Cape, who will take loving charge of her; and sail in February. I have got Mr Nash the ragged school master to take care of her up to London when the

³⁷ Jenny Hartley, *Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women* (London: Methuen, 2009), p. 3.

³⁸ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op.cit., letter 61, pp. 98-100.

³⁹ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, *The letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. VI (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 6-7.

ship is ready to sail and have found out a whole nest of good ladies in London, who say they will at any time help me in similar cases.⁴⁰

Charles Dickens was so impressed by Gaskell's commitment to this young lady and by her novel *Mary Barton*, who in a letter sent on 31 January 1850 asked her to contribute to his journal, assuring that all the publications would remain anonymous:

[...] but as I do honestly know that there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in preference to the authoress of *Mary Barton* (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me), I venture to ask whether you can give me any hope that you will write a short tale, or any number of tales, for the projected pages.

No writer's name will be used – neither my own, nor any others – every paper will be published without any signature.⁴¹

He also thought that Gaskell's themes would have suited pretty well the aim of the journal which was “the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social conditions”.⁴²

She accepted her invitation and sent him *Lizzie Leigh*, the story of the seduction of an innocent country girl who was sent to work in Manchester, and whose plot seems to have been inspired by the real story of Pasley. He admired the tale so much that he decided to include the first part in the first issue of his weekly journal, on 27 March 1850; the other two parts were published soon after respectively on April 6 and April 13 of the same year.⁴³

He really appreciated the story, so much so that he wrote her a letter on 7 July 1850 demanding for another one: “My Dear Mrs. Gaskell. This is a brief letter, but – if you only knew it! - a very touching one in its

⁴⁰ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op.cit., letter 63, p. 101.

⁴¹ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit., pp. 21-22.

⁴² Ibid., pp.21-22.

⁴³ Jill L. Matus, op.cit. p. xv.

earnestness. Can't you – want you – don't you ever mean to – write me another story? I should be better pleased.”⁴⁴

She hadn't been able to provide a story until the end of the year due to the fact that she hadn't had any manuscript with her but also because she was facing several domestic issues, like finding a new house and taking care of her daughters. Actually she managed to find a compromise between domesticity and writing and between November and December three tales were sent to Dickens.⁴⁵ The first one was *The Mill of Pen-Morfa*, the second one *The Moorland Cottage* and the last one *The Heart of John Middleton*, that throughout a morbid plot, powerful in execution, deal with the theme of redemption by suffering.

In the following year in June a non-fiction article, called *Disappearances*, written by Gaskell, was published in *Household Words* under Mr. Dickens's request. The article is an account of missing people involving mystery, ghosts and sensationalism that the author claimed to be true. She always believed in ghosts and was also certain to have seen one, as she underlined in a letter written to her friend Eliza Fox two years before.⁴⁶ This topic is also seen in other works of hers, so that nowadays they have been assembled into collections. Dickens was pretty fascinated with Gaskell's ability of short story-telling as he told her in a letter he sent on 25 November 1851: “My Dear Scheherazade - for I am sure your powers of narrative can never be exhausted in a single night, but must be good for at least a thousand nights and one.”⁴⁷

At her time the majority of the tales that shared the gothic and supernatural element, had been published in Dickens's journals, first in *Household Words* and then, after it ceased existing due to a breach with publishers Bradbury and Evans, in *All The Year Round*, founded four weeks after the closure of the former in 1859.

⁴⁴ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit., p.121.

⁴⁵ Winifred Gérin, op.cit., pp. 108-109.

⁴⁶ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 48, p. 80.

⁴⁷ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit., p. 545.

The first fictional gothic tale centred round the supernatural is *The Old Nurse's Story*, which was published in the Christmas issue of *Household Words* in 1852. The story is set in a mysterious atmosphere in the isolated manor house in Northumberland. The second one, *The Squire's Story*, was published after a year in the same weekly journal. It is a work typical in its exploitation of the borders between fact and fiction. It recounts a murder from the point of view of the killer, who recreates the terrible sequence of the brutal death.⁴⁸ In a letter sent on 6 November 1852 Charles Dickens suggested that she should modify the last two pages of the manuscript, having first praised her story:

My Dear Mrs. Gaskell,

A very fine ghost-story indeed. Nobly told, and wonderfully managed. [...] What do you say to this? If you don't quite and entirely approve, it shall stand as it does. If you do quite and entirely approve, shall I make the necessary alteration in the last two MS pages, or will you? It is a grand story and the very thing for the Xmas No.⁴⁹

As a matter of fact she did not approve and the tale ended as she wanted.

The third is *Half a Lifetime Ago*, which is a tale rewritten for *Household Words* in 1855, previously published in 1850 in *Sartain's* entitled *Martha Preston*. The modified version is bitterer and the female protagonist is depicted stronger and harder than in the previous one, where she was more optimistic and happier.

The following year *The Poor Clare* was released in December in three parts and while it recalls the female centrality in a male society dealing with the supernatural, it also describes the revenge of a girl who has seen her dog being murdered. All the people loved by the killer will disappear after she utters a spell upon him.

The last two tales to be published in *Household Words* are *The Sin of a Father* (27 November 1858) and *The Manchester Marriage* (7 December

⁴⁸ Jill L. Matus, op.cit., p. 120.

⁴⁹ Jenny Hartley, *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 247.

1858). In the latter the theme of disappearance is taken up again: the believed lost husband of the protagonist comes back to find with disappointment that her wife has remarried and so, for the grief, he throws himself into the Thames.⁵⁰

The former is equally concerned with topics of violence and mystery and recounts of a son who has just discovered that his father was a murderer. It was later renamed *Right at Last* when it was reprinted in 1860 by Samson Low in *Right at last, and Other Tales*, of which a copy was given to her husband with a lovely inscription.

After the closure of *Household Words*, Elizabeth Gaskell continued to write for Dickens, but this time for his new periodical *All the Year Round*, which is considered the successor of the former.

All her contributions in *All the Year Round* are gothic tales, and among them the most powerful is *Lois the Witch*, published in three parts in October 1859. It is an account of the Salem witch trials in America that deals with the voyage of an English woman to Salem to live with her Puritans aunt and uncle after her parents' death. When she refuses her cousin's proposal she is accused of witchcraft and hanged in front of the community. This story seems a real fact because Mrs Gaskell wrote it after having read several American witchcraft accounts, because she has always being obsessed with authenticating stories and adhering to the truth.⁵¹

Two months later *The Ghost in the Garden Room* was seen in the journal.⁵² Like *The sin of a Father*, also this novella was reprinted in *Right at Last and Other Tales* in 1860 and renamed *The Crooked Branch*⁵³ It is a dramatic mysterious narration of a lonely farm which is attacked by robbers. The climax of the story will reach its maximum when the beloved son of the owners of the farm is recognized during the trial as the leader of the thieves.

The last two gothic stories published in *All the Year Round* are *The Grey Woman* and *A Dark Night's Work* published respectively in three parts

⁵⁰ Shirley Fosters, "Elizabeth Gaskell's shorter pieces" in *The Cambridge companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L. Matus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 120.

⁵¹ Jill L. Matus, op.cit., p. 123.

⁵² Ibid., p. 121.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 121.

in January 1861 and in nine parts between January and March 1863. The first one is a story of robberies, escapes and revenge. Its opening reminds the readers of a fairytale set in the past and not in the present, to give a relative distance between the fiction and the nineteenth century reality.⁵⁴ The second one was initially supposed to be just *A Night's Work*, but Charles Dickens published it like *A Dark Night's Work*, without her permission maybe because he wanted to heighten the melodramatic element. She talked about her disappointment in a letter sent to her daughter Marianne on 1 June 1863: “[...] I said when I saw that he had gone against my distinct desire, & called a night's work a dark night's work, that I wd never publish with him again; & this confirms me. I do not think he ought to have done it.”⁵⁵ Moreover he wanted the work to be no longer than six instalments, despite Gaskell's reluctance because she thought that it would not have been enough.⁵⁶ At the same time she received an offer from the publisher Verlag Tauchnitz to have the story in one single unit, as she firstly intended it. Soon after in a letter written to him on 24 April 1863 from Italy she apologized and decided to take Dickens's side reaching a compromise and publishing it in 9 parts, “I am very glad that *A Dark Night's Work* has reached you safely. I am afraid that it is rather short for one volume. I am very sorry, but alas! I had no more to say about them”.⁵⁷

Almost all her gothic tales were published during Christmas time, in winter. In this time of the year, the climate is cold and the days are shorter and there are fewer people in the streets for the freezing weather. The surrounding of Gaskell's stories represents quite similarly the actual setting and readers feel as if what happened in the tale could have happened to them. Moreover it was very attractive telling ghost stories round the fire, and this was an activity pretty dear to the writer. She was an able storyteller

⁵⁴ Kate Watson, *Women Writing Crime Fiction: 1860-1880* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2012).

⁵⁵ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op.cit., letter 524, p. 703.

⁵⁶ Shirley Foster, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 149.

⁵⁷ Alan Shelston and J.A.V. Chapple, op.cit., p. 254.

so much so that during a visit, Charlotte Brontë asked her to stop because she was afraid of being kept awake all night by it.⁵⁸

Her ability of storytelling does not only concern mysterious narrations, but also historical stories and others that are inspired by her travels around Europe.

In 1853 in his journal Dickens published *Cumberland Sheep-Shearers*, a depiction of a warm summer day which represents a break from the austerity of the present in a natural environment, looked with nostalgia by Gaskell, as she always underlined in her letters, as in that sent to William and Mary Howitt in May 1838:

I was brought up in a country town, and my lot is now to live or rather on the borders of a great manufacturing town, but when spring days first come and the bursting leaves and sweet hearty smells tell me that "Somerset is ycomen in", I feel a stirring instinct and long to be off into the deep grassy solitudes of the country, just like a bird wakens up from its content at the change of the season and tends its way to some well-known but till then forgotten land.⁵⁹

Her hold of Knutsford memories is present also in *Morton Hall*, published in November 1853. It recalls episodes from the past moving chronologically from the seventeenth century to her present, exploring the social developments of a small country and analyzing also the feminine role within the British society.

In the same year in December in *Household Words* two more historical short stories were to be seen. The first one, *The French Master*, is a story of a noble who has moved to England to become a tutor to the narrating character and her sister. He succeeded in moving out from his native country rightly before getting involved into the atrocities of the French revolution, to return there when Louis XIII is restored to the throne and to witness with dismay the many changes that have occurred during his absence. The second one, set in French too, is *Traits and Stories of the*

⁵⁸ Jill L. Matus, op. cit., p. 109.

⁵⁹ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 8, p. 14.

Huguenots, which recounts in a documentary form the background and traditions relating to the Huguenots in Europe and in America.

Still written in a documentary form are *Company Manners*, released on 20 May 1854 in *Household Words* and *An Accursed Race*, published the following year on 25 August. These two too are related with French history, but as Duthie says in her book, Gaskell here, differently from her previous works, is not interested in giving truthful background information, but rather on being primarily a narrator.⁶⁰

On the other hand *My lady Ludlow*, published between June 19 and September 25 1858, is focused on English history. The protagonist, Lady Ludlow, is a conservative widow who represents the old aristocracy that does not want the lower classes to gain an education. She believes that letting them be educated could lead to revolution, but actually she is on the side of anarchy in opposing to this. At the end of the novel she is defeated and the story seems a foresight of W. E. Foster's Education Act of 1870.⁶¹

In Dickens's journals there are not only short stories, but also full-length novels that made her known as a Victorian writer. The first one is *Cranford*, of which the first instalment was published on 13 December 1851. It was supposed to be a single sketch describing a small rural community with its activities and its inhabitants' way of life. It had such a massive success that Dickens asked her to provide more chapters and as a result the serialization of this novel took place.

The other one is *North and South* and during its publication the editor and the author more than once argued about it. The story recounts the new life of Margaret Hale, who settles in the fictional industrial city Milton and there she witnesses the poor conditions of the mine labourers and their masters' cruelty. The set of characters are of no particular interest to the ones in the tale, as she underlined in a letter written to William Fairbairn in 1855, after having received his commentary on the novel.

⁶⁰ Enid L. Duthie, *The Themes of Elizabeth Gaskell* (London: Macmillan Press, 1980), p. 197.

⁶¹ Jill L. Matus, op. cit., p. 80.

I agree with you that there are a certain set of characters in 'North and South' of no particular interest to any one in the tale, any more than such people would be in real life; but they were wanted to fill up unimportant places in the story, when otherwise there would have been unsightly gaps.⁶²

This witnesses the troubles she had in writing it under Dickens' pressure; she understands the novel was not that good as she wished, already during the drafting and in fact she reports her disappointment in a letter sent to her editor in December 1854.

My dear Sir,

I was very much gratified by your note the other day; *very* much indeed. I dare say I shall like my story, when I am a little further from it; at present I can only feel depressed about it, I meant it to have been so much better.⁶³

As has already been discussed the first problem was the title, and secondly the length. She had not that capacity of hurrying typical of the serialization, despite the already experienced publication of *Cranford*. As a matter of fact, after the first instalments of it, the drop in sales of *Household Words* was dramatic and he blamed Gaskell for it as he said in a letter written to Wills, his assistant editor.⁶⁴ She found it very difficult to create suspense or fear in such a long novel, as she preferred to depict the mood of her characters and their surroundings, without writing under compulsion. Actually she succeeded in finishing it in just half a year from September 1854 to January 1855, receiving then unexpectedly Dickens' approval. From this on anyway their later collaboration and confidential correspondence started to loosen and in their letters we started to see how they relate to each other with formality and stiffness. Despite this, she continued to work for him until 1863 when she delivered the last story that he would publish in his periodical *All The Year Round*.

⁶² J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), letter 249, pp. 352-353.

⁶³ J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard, op. cit., letter 220, p. 323.

⁶⁴ Winifred Gérin, op. cit., p. 153.

This short story is *The Cage at Cranford*, which is a little sketch of the Cranford life centred round the absurd behaviours of the inhabitants of the little town provoked by the arrival of a cage sent from France to Miss Pole. The characters are the same as the ones of the novel but they are seen and depicted ten years later, with Gaskell's peculiar humour and cheerfulness.

Chapter II – Cranford

2.0 Introduction

Cranford was serialized in Dickens's *Household Words* between 1851 and 1853. The novel was not meant to be composed of more than one unit, but after being praised by the editor and the readers Gaskell provided eight further parts and the final book form was released on 17 June 1853.

It recounts the activities, the customs and values of the inhabitants of a small fictional town called Cranford, which represents the actual town of Knutsford, where Gaskell settled during her childhood. Gaskell has always felt nostalgia for that country, because she spent pleasant days there, surrounded by her Holland relatives, who loved her as their own child.

The age she wrote the novel was one of social transformation, where rural countries were witnessing the first industrial installations. She therefore decided to depict a small community untouched by this phenomenon and to explore their dying way of life.

The background for this novel is based on two works that Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in 1849 for *Sartain's Union Magazine* and in 1851 for *The Ladies' Companion and Monthly Magazine*.⁶⁵ The first one is a non-fiction article called *The Last Generation in England*, which was published in *Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art* in July 1849. It was conceived after she saw that Southley had proposed himself to write a "history of English domestic life".⁶⁶ As Southley did not succeed in his plan, she decided to:

put upon record some of the details of country town life, either observed by myself, or handed down to me by older relations; for even in small towns, scarcely removed from villages, the phases of society are

⁶⁵ Nancy Henry, "Gaskell and social transformation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. Jill L. Matus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 155.

⁶⁶ Peter Keating (ed.), *Cranford and Cousin Phillis* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), p.319.

rapidly changing; and much will appear strange, which yet occurred only in the generation immediately preceding ours.⁶⁷

Some of the material present in the essay would be later reused in the novel employing the fictional narration. As a consequence many episodes of the two works are similar. The first one is that which concerns “paying calls” conveyed in *The Last generation in England*: “Before a certain hour in the morning calls were never paid, nor yet after a certain hour in the afternoon”⁶⁸ and in *Cranford* the same is said for visits: “Then there were rules and regulations for visiting and calls; and they were announced to any young people, who might be staying in the town”.⁶⁹ In this last sentence is displayed also the focus on the interest that the old generation manifest on young people in order to carry on their tradition as a confirmation of the fact that society is changing and they are afraid of losing their habits. The second episode is the humorous one on the flannel-cow. In both stories a cow belonging respectively to Mrs Grundy⁷⁰ in *The Last Generation of England* and Miss Betty Barker⁷¹ in *Cranford* has fallen into a lime-pit and lost her hair, which afterwards was dressed in a flannel waistcoat and drawers. Soon after she recounted merrily in both the works the story of a cat which ate a muslin lace that was washed in milk and so the owner to regain it, gave to the cat a small dose of tartar emetic and the following day the lace returned to view. The joyful way of depicting these incidents is proper to Gaskell’s narrating technique, which permits the readers to estrange from their contemporary changing reality. Reading *Cranford* and *The Last Generation of England* the audience could feel cheerful but at the same time reflect on the lost values that at the time were vanishing. More than everything Gaskell wanted to underline the light tone of the subject, in fact in 1865 she wrote a letter to Ruskin saying:

And then again about Cranford. I am so much pleased you like it. It is the only one of my own books that I can read again; but whenever I am ailing or ill, I take

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 319.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 321.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 320.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 43.

Cranford and – I was going to say enjoy it, but that would not be pretty, - laugh over it afresh. And it is true too, for I have seen the cow that wore the grey flannel jacket, and I knew the cat that swallowed the lace, that belonged to the lady, that sent for the doctor, that gave the emetic &c &c.⁷²

Everything she is saying in the letter represents her experience, the one who always sought to entertain her readers, but also to recount facts that really happened in order to be the truthful ever. Although they are fictional characters and episodes, in a sort of way she wanted to depict them as if they were real, so as to encourage readers' amusement.

Another common fact between *The Last Generation of England* and *Cranford* is the *Amazonian* aspect of the town,⁷³ question that will be further analyzed in the following chapters. Gaskell underlines that the fictional towns are “in possession of the Amazons”,⁷⁴ which means that the majority of the inhabitants are spinsters, widows or that every man living there is not as important as women are. Moreover the latter will often have parties in turn, where they will play card games, drink tea and have conversations, still keeping men apart.⁷⁵

In her works it is possible to find also social hierarchy for in *The last Generation of England* she takes into account the various working activities, whilst in *Cranford*, even if there is not an explicit categorization, many references to class distinction are made throughout the voice of the characters. Although the citizens seem to show kindness towards poor people, at the same time they are judging their conditions. When Lady Glenmire was known to marry Mr Hoggins, the local surgeon, suddenly the widows started to speculate on the couple.⁷⁶ This happened because Lady Glenmire is socially superior to the surgeon, despite his being rich and very pleasant-looking.⁷⁷ At the time, being a doctor was not considered an eligible

⁷² Alan Shelston and J.A.V. Chapple, *Further letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 268.

⁷³ Peter Keating (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 322.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁷⁶ Borislav Knezevic, “An Ethnography of the Provincial: The Social Geography of Gentility in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*,” *Victorian Studies* 41, n° 3 (1998): 413.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3829342>

⁷⁷ Peter Keating, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

profession,⁷⁸ for it was more important to be a priest, in fact in *Cranford* the father of the Jenkyns sisters, the former rector of the town, held a respectful position. He was admired by every inhabitant of the parish, as underlines Mrs Fitz-Adams in the novel when she speaks with Miss Smith about Miss Matty's financial problem:

Miss Matty! That I thought was such a fine young lady, when I was nothing but a country girl [...]; and I thought it such an honour to be spoken to in that pretty way by the rector's daughter, who visited at Arley Hall. I have loved her ever since, though perhaps I'd no right to do it. And my brother would be delighted to doctor her for nothing – medicines, leeches, and all. I know that he and her ladyship – (my dear, I little thought, in the days I was telling you of, that I should ever come to be sister-in-law to a ladyship!) – would do anything for her. We all would.⁷⁹

Mrs Fitz-Adam is recounting this to Mary Smith, who is the narrator of the novel. She is a middle-class citizen, about whom we do not know almost anything until we carry on reading, when her name is eventually revealed. We only learn that she is the young daughter of a businessman who moved from the country town to Drumble, a fictional industrial city which is considered to be the representation of the actual Manchester.

The scholar Robert Gilmour takes into consideration the important relation between middle-class citizens and aristocrats in the Victorian novels and in Britain, because he found out that this contrast was one of the predominant themes of many works of the nineteenth century, which reflected the actual situation of their country.⁸⁰ During the years 1840 and 1880 the middle-class citizens, highlights the scholar, were growing as a new class and wanted in a certain way to established themselves over the old land-owning aristocracy.⁸¹ As he says “The man of noble birth, or of good family, was a gentleman by right (this is what the word ‘gentle’ in its original sense means), as was the Church of England clergyman, the army officer, the member of

⁷⁸ Enid L. Duthie, op. cit., p. 46.

⁷⁹ Peter Keating (ed.), op. cit., p. 194.

⁸⁰ Robert Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Parliament”.⁸² Moreover between the different social classes lays the assumption that to be gentleman was a question of moral and not of categorization.

The same consideration is expressed through the words of the lady of Cranford, witnessed by the depiction given with irony by the narrator: “some people having no idea of their rank as a captain’s daughter”,⁸³ or again “although some might be poor, we were all aristocratic”.⁸⁴

A further theme of the novel is the contrast between the city and the countryside, which are explored throughout the novel and the narrator represents the link between the new, which is the industrial Drumble and the old, represented by the rural Cranford.⁸⁵ She seems to be the one who witnesses this social transformation but who is able to adapt and to live within these two worlds. Moreover this suggests that young people are more apt to conform to changes, while aged people tend to maintain their habits while trying, at the same time, to bequeath them to further generations. One instance comes from *Cranford*, when Mr. Holbrook hosts Miss Smith and Miss Matty. The dilemma derives from the way they should eat peas and whilst Mary “survived” by trying to shovel them up with her knife as Mr. Holbrook did,⁸⁶ Miss Matty left them apart. The second example is given soon after the aforesaid dinner, when the owner of the house invites the girls out for a walk. Mary is the only one to accept the invitation because “the elder ladies were afraid of damp, and dirt; and had only very unbecoming calashes to put on over their caps; so they declined”.⁸⁷

As has already been mentioned, the ladies of Cranford represent the old and young people look at them with astonishment for their particular appearance. For instance when the mistresses go to Miss Baker’s house wearing calashes, a group of children get closer to see what they are because “this kind of head-gear always made an awful impression on the children in Cranford”.⁸⁸ Their clothes were considered out of fashion in any town outside Cranford, in particular Miss Baker’s, but in the

⁸² Ibid., p. 3.

⁸³ Peter Keating, op.cit., p. 59.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸⁵ Alyson J. Kiesel, “Meaning and Misinterpretation in Cranford,” *ELH* 71, n° 4 (2004): 1008.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029954>.

⁸⁶ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 75.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

little town she was believed to “dress finer than any lady in Cranford” although she “was wearing out all the bonnets and caps, and outrageous ribbons, which had once formed her stock in trade. It was five or six years since she had given up shop: so in any other place than Cranford her dress might have been considered *passee*”.⁸⁹ But at the same time they are aware of their not being young any longer and most of the time this renders them sad and make them feel nostalgic as happened to Miss Matty: “probably the remembrance of her youth had come very vividly before her this day, and she was annoyed at finding that golden times so far away in the past”.⁹⁰ In this passage she regrets for not having let herself enjoy the pleasures of love and for this reason, disobeying the code of gentility of the community, permits her maid to have follower, in order not to suffer as she did: “I did say you were not to have any followers; but if you meet with such a young man, and tell me, and I find he is respectable, I have no objection to his coming see you once a week. God forbid that I should grieve any young hearts”.⁹¹

Significantly all the narration of both *The Last Generation in England* and *Cranford* is centred round women and their feeling, and as a proof the narrators of the stories reflect this characteristic in being female.⁹² As a matter of fact Elizabeth Gaskell gives much importance to the mistresses, although sometimes the depiction she gives is of absurd and cynical characters. Despite this, they anyway make the readers joyful with their unique actions and funny behaviour. Talking about them demonstrates that the writer gives much attention to these little communities and to their strong friendship and mutual support. Any time one is in danger or in difficulties the others do the best they can to help and to support, proposing also solutions, like Mary Smith did when Miss Jenkyns lost her money due to the failure of her bank.⁹³

Another theme dear to the author is the opposition between country and industrialization. As has already been mentioned Cranford and Drumble, representing respectively Knutsford and Manchester, are emblems of this antithesis. On one side there is the little town, a portrayal of the past, almost untouched by

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 106.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 82.

⁹² Enid L. Duthie, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 184-185.

innovation, firm on its opinions and its way of living. On the other side there is Drumble, the new arising commercial city, which Cranford is trying to keep at bay.

The second background work for *Cranford* is the novella *Mr. Harrison's Confession*, which was serialized in three instalments in *The Ladies' Companion and Monthly Magazine* between February and April 1851.⁹⁴ It recounts the story of a doctor who has gone to Duncombe to practice and whilst there he bumped into several vicissitudes. He is at the centre of a number of hilarious and absurd episodes, typical of Gaskell's narrating style. The setting is clearly similar to that of *Cranford*: it is a fictional rural town called Duncombe, inhabited by women, mainly spinsters or widows who try to settle their daughters. Differently from the novel, here we have a first person narrator who is a man and therefore the observer of his own life. According to the critic Enid Duthie, the choice of Elizabeth Gaskell to use of a female and personal narrator helped the writer to be closer to the readers, but also to make them have a familiar relation with the novel. Moreover Gaskell wanted them to be emphatic towards the characters of her work. In agreement with Enid Duthie, we have the feeling that the protagonist is too much involved in the story to look at it with detachment, therefore we see that Mary Smith, who comes from the outside, is absorbed into the narration, and more than everything play a significant role in the lives of the ladies of Cranford.⁹⁵ Borislav Knezevic has the same impression of Enid Duthie because he too underlines the necessity of the narrator to have outsiders involved in the story to better understand their "strange" way of living.⁹⁶ Furthermore the presence of a first person narrator, who comes either from the outside or from the inside, does not mean that it is automatically involved in the story. As the scholar Boris Knezevic indicates, Mary Smith seems to work as an ethnographer in describing Cranford society, because she analyzes the history of the town and what happens there with method.⁹⁷ But the narrator also describes it in order to have her audience involved into the novel to understand why they are acting in that precise kind of way. As a matter of fact she succeeds in it also because the same is happening to her, as she is becoming part of the story. The same happens for

⁹⁴ Jill L. Matus, op.cit., p. 115.

⁹⁵ Enid L. Duthie, op.cit., p. 190.

⁹⁶ Borislav Knezevic, op.cit., p. 408.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 408.

the narrator of *Mr. Harrison's Confession*; both of them participate in the events that occur in the towns, in particular the former, who at the end will play an essential role in Miss Matty's life for what concern both the finding of her brother and her economic situation. *Mr. Harrison's Confession* differs from *Cranford* also because in the latter the focus is on the activities of the ladies of the town, while in the former the attention is centred round the life of the protagonist and his loving affairs.

In 1858 Elizabeth Gaskell wrote *My Lady Ludlow* for *Household Words* and this work is considered to be linked to *Cranford* for it depicts the life of two single women: the widowed Lady Ludlow of Hanbury and the spinster Miss Galindo, who care in their turn for other girls and women on their own. The common theme to the works is the reaction of the protagonists to the social transformation that they are witnessing. Due to the fact that the protagonists are a representation of the past, they look with dismay at the present with its changes and its new way of life. The ladies are not feeling comfortable with what they are seeing, and for this reason the writer, throughout the voice of the narrator, is able to depict a part of this English provincial life with its inhabitants, in order to let them last throughout time.

The question of gentility has been extensively studied by scholars, in particular by Robert Gilmour, who stresses in his work *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* how the concept of gentleman has increasingly changed from the eighteenth century until the end of the First World War.⁹⁸ Initially, as is depicted in *Cranford*, to be a genteel was a cultural goal, but during the centuries the necessity of a classless society spread and therefore the old notion of gentleman begins to vanish.

2.1 Industrialization and domesticity

Throughout the novel many references to the new social and economic way of life are present. *Cranford* seems to be a town which has not experienced yet the social transformation that goes on in the major cities, although its inhabitants have witnessed the advent of modernization, through detachment and indifference. From the beginning of the work readers understand that the story is set in her contemporary time: "[...] Cranford [...] the week in the great neighbouring commercial town of

⁹⁸ Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 2.

Drumble, distant only twenty miles on a railroad”⁹⁹ and “neighbouring railroad”¹⁰⁰. The English railway system is the oldest in the world and it appeared around the year 1830 with the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, which relied entirely on steam. Although Knutsford did not have a railway until 1842, Gaskell had already experienced it while living in Manchester. Moreover when she was writing *Cranford*, she saw a boom of this kind of means of transport.¹⁰¹ In addition, in the narration are present references to Charles Dickens, and this is a further confirmation of the fact that she talks about current, fictionalized episodes. In the second part of the instalment there is also a dispute between the older sister Jenkyns and her new acquaintance Captain Brown on whether it is better towards between Dr. Johnson or Charles Dickens.

Have you seen any numbers of the Pickwick Papers?” said he. (They were then publishing in parts.) “Capital Thing!” Now, Miss Jenkyns was the daughter of a deceased rector of Cranford; and, on the strength of a number of manuscript sermons, and a pretty good library odd divinity, considered herself literary, and looked upon any conversation about books as a challenge to her. So she answered and said [...] “I must say, I don’t think they are by any means equal to Dr Johnson.”¹⁰²

Of course Miss Deborah, influenced by her father’s convictions, is persuaded that Dr. Johnson is superior to Dickens, symbol of modernity and therefore contrary to Miss Jenkyns’ ideology. Moreover in this short passage is underlined the fact that serialization was becoming a pretty common system of publication,¹⁰³ probably to draw the readers’ attention on the work.¹⁰⁴ Deborah Jenkyns on the other hand does not agree with Captain Brown as she considers “it vulgar, and below the dignity of literature, to publish in numbers.”¹⁰⁵ Coherently to her principles, she could not accept that man’s intrusion into their little community with his too modern

⁹⁹ Peter Keating (ed.), op.cit., p. 39.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.42.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 340.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁰³ Borislav Knezevic, op.cit., p. 423.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 423.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Keating (ed.), op.cit., p. 48.

philosophies, in fact she does not long to change her mind, and neither does she want to listen to his motivations.

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.'"¹⁰⁶

Except for his literary opinions, which she does think not suitable to hers, in a kind of way she admires his generosity towards the fellow citizens and his care towards his daughter's illness. For instance he was the one who suggested that Miss Betty's cow should be dressed in flannel to be kept alive,¹⁰⁷ or when he helped a poor old woman to carry her baked mutton and potatoes safely home because he "noticed her precarious footing".¹⁰⁸ But more than everything he always had an eye on his daughters, in particular on his ill one, in fact at church he helped her unfold her umbrella, relieved her of her prayer-book and waited until she had taken up her gown to walk through the wet roads.¹⁰⁹

Initially the ladies of the town were not sure whether to accept him or not, because 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"¹¹⁰ and because of "his masculine gender"¹¹¹ and because he had the courage to talk about his being poor, a thing absolutely criticized by the ladies of Cranford. They have their particular code of behaviour, and considered talking about money a very shameful activity.¹¹² But a year later, as the narrator tells us, seeing how much he cared for other people made them change their mind, and what is more they started to invite him to their almost exclusive parties and they also ended to confer him an extraordinary place as authority among them. The greatest event that struck the ladies was when Captain Brown saved a child from being hit by a train, losing his own life. They felt so desolate for the loss that tried their best to support his poor daughters.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

¹⁰⁷ Alyson J. Kiesel, op. cit., p. 1006.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹² Borislav Knezevic., p. 410.

Even Miss Deborah, with whom the Captain had a critical relationship, felt very sorry for him, and immediately she acted as the most relevant person of the town, deciding what to do to soften the pain and to help the Brown. When the terrible news has been heard, the little town was tumultuous and initially they were not sure if it was real or not. Therefore Miss Deborah wanted to know the truth and sent Jenny to inquire, who came back soon after saying: “Oh, ma’am! Oh, Miss Jenkyns, ma’am! Captain Brown is killed by them nasty cruel railroads!”¹¹³ Here again the scepticism towards modernization and the transformation of the town is revealed. The character blames the speed of the present as the unique responsible for the Captain’s death. As previously said, in the novel is present the dichotomy between industrialization and domesticity. The railroad represents the former and Jenny’s words embodied the old criticising the present; the ladies of Cranford want to remain in their presumed idyllic place. They like the environment they live in and for them it is inconceivable to transform it, in fact the narrator gives many hints that support this thesis. Every time something unusual occurs there or to the inhabitants, suddenly there are episodes that bring back the previous state of things. For instance Miss Matty’s working as a tea seller, an exceptional circumstance for a woman of Cranford, does not last long as she returns to be what she previously was, thanks also to her brother’s return. Being a shopkeeper was badly seen by her and by her fellows as we know from their comments on Miss Jessie’s Brown uncle being a shopkeeper in Edinburgh.¹¹⁴ They had been very annoyed by her saying this, and the narrator, who witnesses the discussion, underlines that the *Cranfordian* ladies were trying to keep it hidden, but Miss Jessie continued mentioning it. Having lived outside Cranford, she did not understand their code of behaviour, and so she thought it normal speaking about jobs and business. As I have already said, talking about money and in particular making references to the commercial world was inappropriate for the little town society. Also when Miss Matty starts selling tea, it takes Mrs Jamieson, one of the most respectable ladies of the community, several days’ consideration to accept her new activity, and this recalls the theory of Robert

¹¹³ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 55.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

Gilmour previously cited.¹¹⁵ This again underlines the close nature of the town, who wants to remain isolated and not altered about what is happening outside it. In fact Cranford resists modernization with relative success because its way of life is not entirely remade by industry as, on the other hand, it happened to Drumble.¹¹⁶ They tried to exclude everything coming from the industrial world, and if it happened they immediately would act, even unconsciously, to restore their familiar order. For instance also the narrator, who does not belong to the little community, is taken aside, despite being an influent character on their life. She takes part in the events that occur there, but she is never fully involved in them, she will never be a fellow citizen. This is because she is the daughter of a businessman who therefore belongs to the modern world. The Cranford ladies, but strongly Miss Matty, let her enter their lives and be a witness of that happens there but never considers the possibility of having her stay there definitely. On the other hand this is not what the narrator wants because she acts as a reporter of facts and as a link between the two worlds.¹¹⁷ The voice of her narrator underlines the historical change as the rapid pace of modernity renders even more visible the dichotomy between the world of the past and that of the present. What is more is that Cranford community does not want to get involved in what happens in the city, in fact there is indifference towards the exigencies of commerce and trade that dominate there.¹¹⁸ They are happy in their fictional world, and they are convinced that they are able to survive without any help, whether it comes from the world of men or from the industrial city. When Miss Matty sees the failure of the bank, she is not as preoccupied as the narrator is, actually she is the one who looks for a solution and who ends up with the proposal of selling tea. AS Borislav Knezevic underlines for them money are not the means through which acquire social prestige, because it depends on belonging to the class which is sustained by a previously accumulated capital.¹¹⁹ Therefore they are not connected with social classes that have they income dependent on labour or enterprise. Despite this they were pretty conscious of class distinction in fact, after Captain Brown's death, Miss Jessie did not have any income left and the ladies started thinking about

¹¹⁵ Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 6.

¹¹⁶ Borislav Knezevic., op.cit., p. 417.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 409.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 406.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 414.

what they could do to help her. Having a mentality forged upon the business world, Miss Jessie suggested that she could work as a housekeeper or as a saleswoman, but Miss Jenkyns was pretty disagreeing with this solution, because she was the daughter of a Captain and told to herself that “some people having no idea of their rank as a captain’s daughter”.¹²⁰ And quite obviously the solution given by the respectable lady was to marry a gentleman and as a matter of fact he appeared soon after the conversation. He was Major Gordon, an old acquaintance of Miss Brown, who proposed, and eventually they got engaged and left the town together. This is another example of the fact that whoever is foreign to the little community departs, leaving the community unchanged. The only time Cranford witnesses an alteration is after Miss Deborah’s death, when her sister, starting to feel disoriented, begins to accept what she had previously considered indecorous, such as letting her maid have a lover or like going to her former suitor’s house.

2.2 Gentility

Through the words of the narrator the readers of the novel understand from the beginning that the town is guided by ladies that have their particular code of behaviour which is based on the observance of the *code of gentility* and hierarchy. Has as already been said, they have rules in their minds acquired by their ancestors for what concern visiting, calls and topics of discussion. It was inconceivable for them to talk about money and therefore poverty, also because they considered themselves above a certain rank in fact “although some might be poor, we were all aristocratic”.¹²¹ The breaker of this rule was, as one can image, Captain Brown, the first male presence in the novel, who did not consider improper to talk about his poor financial situation. As Robert Gilmour reports when he analyzes Trollope’s work, differently from Dickens and Thackeray who believe that the position of a gentleman is made possible by money, he “saw the traditional system of rank as a defence

¹²⁰ Peter Keating (ed.), op. cit., 59.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 41.

against the encroachment of money-worship”,¹²² similarly to what the narrator of Cranford states.

The women saw with abhorrence the topic of money as well as that of death, considering it impolite and vulgar and not strictly connected with their code of gentility. In fact they tried to apologize for everything that could be related with poverty, like “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”.¹²³ For them gentility was a claim related to aristocratic connection and therefore a snobbish mechanism of differentiation that serves to the maintenance of their system,¹²⁴ despite their recognition of being “people of very moderate means”.¹²⁵ Their way of relating to money seems sometimes absurd for they would like to be considered to belong to high ranks but at the same time accepting their modest condition.

As has previously been said in the introduction, when reporting Robert Gilmour words, to be gentleman means to have singular characteristics that make it admired by the other citizens and for what concern this century, by the new ascending middle-class ones. Robert Gilmour reports that: “Its appeal lay in the special position the gentleman occupied in the traditional social hierarchy, a position - or rank – which shared in the prestige of landed society”.¹²⁶ As the ladies of Cranford, the gentry is seen by the middle-class citizens as run by old-fashioned rules, which make them envy that class even more.

For what concerns money, important is the theory of the scholar Borislav Knezevic, who says that: “Money talk is prohibited in Cranford society, because the society sees itself free from economic necessities, like the leisure class it emulates”.¹²⁷ The same is expressed by Robert Gilmour, who underlines that the exclusiveness of the traditional gentleman was based on the fact that he “should not only be able to live ‘without manual labour’, but also without too visible an attention

¹²² Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 152.

¹²³ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 42.

¹²⁴ Borislav Knezevic, op. cit., p. 413.

¹²⁵ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 42.

¹²⁶ Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 6.

¹²⁷ Borislav Knezevic, op. cit., p. 410.

to business, for it was leisure that enabled a man to live to cultivate the style and pursuits of the gentlemanly life”.¹²⁸

It is not a coincidence if the narrator reports that the ladies acted following the rules of *elegant economy*, as they believe spending money vulgar. They do sort of things that would sound strange to people living outside the small society, but that they regard as useful and good. As the narrator underlines “every one has his own individual small economies, any disturbance of which annoys him more than spending shillings or pounds on some real extravagance”.¹²⁹ The real extravagance on the small economies of the ladies of the city lies in the kinds of actions that permit savings. Many times in the novel are recounted particular actions of the ladies, who do singular things only to save some money. For instance, Miss Mary’s foible is strings and as she herself understands they are “ready for uses that never come”¹³⁰ or Miss Matty’s on the other hand is candles. But this latter renders the activities of the nights, like reading or knitting, pretty unpleasant and tough.

Nonetheless the inhabitants of Cranford, in particular Miss Matty, are very economical but they do not value money as much as other things, because they believe that there are qualities more important than this, such as friendship and generosity.¹³¹ For instance when a note from the Town and County Bank was rejected to a customer in a shop where Miss Matty and Mary were looking for a gown, the former felt very sorry for the gentleman and decided to change his notes with five sovereigns in order for him to buy the shawl for his family. She had preferred to make him happy rather than purchasing the gown herself. In that moment Mary knew that the lady was making a mistake, because Mary’s father had advised her that there were unpleasant reports on the Bank in the city. Mary in fact after it, felt quite guilty for not stopping her, but that could depend on the fact that the writer wanted to underline the good spirit of her protagonist and to leave Cranford unchanged by what is happening outside. Elizabeth Gaskell wanted to stress the close character of the town, which is not affected by the external world and whose conduct is based on internal rules, which could be considered illogical by

¹²⁸ Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 10.

¹²⁹ Peter Keating, op.cit., p. 83.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

¹³¹ Boris Knezevic., op.cit., p. 410.

those that do not live there, but that are acknowledged by all its inhabitants.¹³² Many times is remarked on the text the following of that rules, starting from the time of visiting, the calls, and the manifestation of feelings. The breaking of the rule of visiting occurred several times in the novel and each of those are linked with unexpected and critical moments. The first one is connected with Mr Holbrook's illness and Mary went to Miss Pole's to know what was happening without respecting the time of visiting, in fact "I went to see Miss Pole the next day, and took her completely by surprise".¹³³ During that time Mary received a letter from Martha, Miss Matty's maid, saying that the mistress was not feeling good, and that was because his former lover, to whom she had to get married was almost dead. She was suffering and feeling uncomfortable because actually she has always loved him, but due to strict code of behaviour of that little society she could not marry him. Despite her being sorry for the situation, she suggested that was all God's will and that this led her having many kind friends.¹³⁴ Moreover Miss Pole considered herself and Miss Matty lucky to have escape marriage, because for her it makes people credulous and therefore marriage was a risk, because they should always be careful and alert to everything that happens around them.¹³⁵ They seemed quite odd and contradictory, because when the rumours of a robbing gang spread, they immediately believed it and moreover accused the new-arrived in town Mr Brunoni. The second break of the visiting rules occurs when Miss Betty Barker comes to Miss Jenkyns' to invite her at a party at her house. Miss Matty was so agitated with the sudden visit that she forgot to have put on her head one cap on top of the other.¹³⁶ As a matter of fact it was important for them to be prepared for visits, so that they could prepare themselves in the most proper and genteel way. In fact Miss Matty had a cap with yellow ribbon that she worn every time she was expected to be seen and moreover made in imitation of that of Mrs Jamieson, the most honourable lady of the town. This latter was the most prominent woman of Cranford, of whom everyone wished to have the approval. For what concern Lady Barker on the other hand, she was the daughter of an old clerk, who together with her sister, after having been good maids, set up a

¹³² Boris Knezevic., op. cit., p. 417.

¹³³ Peter Keating, op.cit., p. 80.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 158.

¹³⁵ Patricia A. Wolfe, op.cit., p. 170.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

milliner's shop. The curious thing is that their shop was supposed to serve only the aristocratic elite of Cranford, and they would not "sell caps or ribbons to any one without a pedigree"¹³⁷. When the moment of the invitation of Miss Matty to her tea-party came, she found at her home also Miss Mary and she could not escape inviting her too. Miss Barker was a little bit hesitant because she feared that Mary's father had been involved into the cotton trade, thing seen with abhorrence by the ladies, as it would have downgraded the young lady's family. As has already been said, for the inhabitants of Cranford trade and commerce were badly seen because they were the symbols of the new world, of the gradual social transformation which the cities were starting to witness. In fact, as Robert Gilmour reports, while talking about Trollope's work through the words of Miss Murrable: "She had no doubt whatever that when a man touched trade or commerce in any way he was doing that which was not the work of a gentleman".¹³⁸

Despite this, the Lady Bakers were fond of Miss Mary and started to consider her part of their little community. Moreover they have always been good people, ready to help those who were in needs, as all the ladies of the town always did.

The third moment of breaking the rules happened when Miss Pole went to Miss Jenkyns all of a sudden to tell her the news of the marriage between Lady Glenmire and Mr Hoggins. She knew that she was violating the code of gentility, but it was such an upsetting announcement that she could not wait to report it at the convenient time. She was disconcerted not only because the couple belonged to different social classes, but also because the news was heard in a grocer's shop, "in the hearing of shopmen", letting "feminine delicacy"¹³⁹ apart. They started then to discuss and ended up guessing that the only reason why a woman like Lady Glenmire should have accepted is "for an establishment"¹⁴⁰. Moreover they were afraid of Mrs Jamieson's reaction, being her sister-in-law and having considered that man vulgar and inadmissible to the Cranford society, criticizing more than once his behaviour and his conduct, not for what concern his work, but his manners.¹⁴¹ For instance she condemned him for his way of sitting, because "he crossed his leg as he

¹³⁷ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 105.

¹³⁸ Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 152.

¹³⁹ Peter Keating, op.cit., p. 166.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁴¹ Boris Knezevic., op. cit., p. 424.

sat still on the chair”¹⁴², and this was regarded as not genteel. But at the end of the story, when Mr Peter did the same thing and furthermore on the floor, she started to change her mind and became more tolerant towards the little changes that were occurring in Cranford after his arrival.

The next break of rules is the secret meeting that occurred at Miss Pole’s house to reveal to Miss Mary their decision to help Miss Matty after the failure of the bank. As we read in the book “Miss Pole herself was in solemn array, as if to receive visitors, although it was only eleven o’ clock”,¹⁴³ and everything was prepared in such a solemn way that it seemed some grand event. During their meeting the topic of gentility was touched again by Miss Pole, who underlined again that it was not money that renders people rich and appreciable: “I imagine we are none of us what may be called rich, though we all possess a genteel competency, sufficient for tastes that are elegant and refined, and would not, if they could, be vulgarly ostentatious”.¹⁴⁴

Another break of the rules occurred when Miss Matty and Miss Mary went to the market before the accepted hours as “it is not etiquette to go till after twelve, but then, you see, all Cranford will be there, and one does not like to be too curious about dresses and trimmings and caps, with all the world looking on” because “It is never genteel to be over-curious on these occasions”.¹⁴⁵ Therefore they are not going at the expected time to follow that code of gentility which dominates the ladies’ entire life. For them the most important thing is not money but to be genteel and to behave in a way that makes them respectable within their society.

Gentility means also not to betray emotions;¹⁴⁶ you are not allowed to show your feelings in presence of others, and in particular outside your house. As the narrator says of Miss Jessie, after her father’s death:

Yet she came back almost calm, as if she had gained a new strength. She put off her mourning dress, and came in, looking pale and gentle; thanking us each with a soft pressure of the hand. She could even smile – a faint, sweet,

¹⁴² Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 212.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 190.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Recchio, op. cit., p. 214.

wintery smile – as if to reassure us of her power to endure; but her look made our eyes fill suddenly with tears, more than if she had cried outright.¹⁴⁷

Or again when the sorrowful ladies were at Miss Pole's to help Miss Matty: "Even Miss Pole cried, who had said a hundred times that to betray emotions before anyone was a sign of weakness and want of self-control"¹⁴⁸. Another example is taken from the passage in which Miss Matty is still incredulous about the failure of the bank and Miss Mary says:

but I could not tell how much of it was real or assumed, with that self-control which seemed habitual to ladies of Miss Matty's standing in Cranford, who would have thought their dignity compromised by the slightest expression of surprise, dismay, or any similar feeling to an inferior in station, or in a public shop.¹⁴⁹

Conversely, when the ladies are in front of each other they do actually feel that it is possible to reveal the emotions, although it is not wisely encouraged. But when feelings surpass respectability, only at that moment the ladies are justifiable to express them. This happened when the women gathered to help Miss Matty or again when this latter and Miss Mary read the old letters of Miss Matty's family round the fire. During these narrations for the first time the ladies have let their feeling emerge, not being afraid anymore to break the rule of gentility. It was more important to help their friend rather than thinking about how to behave properly, and the same happened when Miss Matty was reading the old letters of her family. She was alone with Miss Mary and she was feeling so much nostalgia that let her emotions overflow.

Another element that permits to classify gentility is to analyze the place and the furniture and its disposition in the house and how the inhabitants hold parties. For instance the house of Mr Holbrook is depicted as unusual by Miss Mary, who says that "the room in which we were expected to sit was a stiffly furnished, ugly apartment", but on the other hand the sitting-room was admired also because it was

¹⁴⁷ Peter Keating., op. cit., pp. 57-58.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

filled with books, which pleasantly surprised both the narrator and Miss Matty. During their visit another reference to gentility is present and is related to Miss Matty's uncertainty of whether it is improper to dine with a bachelor. The answer is not present, in fact none of the guests reply to Miss Matty's question, leaving the readers in doubt, as the subject moves to the number of dusty books owned by Mr Holbrook.

The same commentary on gentility occurs when the ladies are invited at Miss Betty Barker's. As this latter is not born blue-blooded, she does not know how she must behave in order to be considered of their same class. Therefore when the tea-tray is brought out, immediately Miss Mary remarks: "The tea-tray was abundantly loaded. I was pleased to see it, I was so hungry; but I was afraid the ladies present might think it vulgarly heaped up. I know they would have done at their own house; but somehow the heaps disappeared here".¹⁵⁰ Mary comes from outside Cranford and so she is acquainted with the changing way of life of the cities, where gentility issues were not the main matter. For this reason she is able to see the differences between the old and the new and she is also able to report them accurately to her contemporary readers that are not conscious of it as if she was a reporter.¹⁵¹

Gentility could be expressed also throughout external appearance, which means throughout dresses and caps, similarly to what Gilmour says about Beau Brummel, the first acknowledged dandy: "one of his general maxims was, that the severest mortification which a gentleman could incur, was to attract observation in the street by his outward appearance".¹⁵² When Miss Matty was unsure whether to accept Mrs Jamieson's invitation, Miss Pole suddenly went at the former's house to see if they also had received the invitation. After a rapid discussion, Miss Pole convinced Miss Matty to go, in particular because she wanted to show her "smart cap",¹⁵³ forgetting all of a sudden every angry word that she was told. They recognize every new invitation as a manifestation of their gentility and as Miss

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁵¹ Borislav Knezevic, op. cit., p. 407.

¹⁵² Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁵³ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 119.

Barker once said: “the ladies of Cranford always dressed with chaste elegance and propriety”.¹⁵⁴

Soon after this sentence the readers acknowledge that to be genteel means also to speak about the right topic with the right person, and it is a thing that aligns to the actual thought of how a gentleman, in this case a gentlewoman, should behave, and following Gilmour’s report:

The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; - all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. He has his eyes in all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topic which may irritate.¹⁵⁵

In the same way, when the narrator recounts the meeting with Lady Glenmire, Mrs Jamieson’s widowed sister-in-law, she emphasizes the importance of choosing and talking about highly enough subjects, in order not to disappoint the ladies’ expectations. They understood that talking about money and the rise of the price of sugar in particular would not be a right choice; therefore the bravest of the women, Miss Pole, thought she had selected the right topic speaking about court: “Has your ladyship been to Court lately?” she asked and then gave a little glance round them, half timid and half triumphant, as much as to say, “See how judiciously I have chosen a subject befitting the rank of the stranger”.¹⁵⁶ Shortly after she had been disappointed because actually Lady Glenmire was not so rich as they initially believed and said “I never was there in my life”.¹⁵⁷ Despite this, they eventually discover that she was a very respectable and pleasant woman, who did not care about her rank, but only of being appreciated by the community in which she then started to live.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Gilmour, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Keating, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 123.

To be genteel means also not to behave in an improper manner, and this is clearly explained by Robert Gilmour who says, reporting Hopkins words, that “to be a gentleman is but on the brim of morals and rather a thing of manner than of morals properly”.¹⁵⁸ For the ladies of Cranford this means not to beg for food, not to be over-curious or indiscreet. These last two aspects are connected with Miss Mary, because she herself understands that her character is a little bit different from theirs, but she is clearly excused due to her living outside the community. Anyway she tried to adapt to their way of behaving and for the first time she “was determined to prove herself a model of prudence and wisdom”¹⁵⁹ and decided not to reveal her hint on the identity of Aga Jenkyns as being the lost brother of Miss Matty.

For what concern her brother, Miss Matty recounts that his manners were not genteel, in particular she was sure of her sister’s opinion on this topic because she “never laughed at his jokes, and thought him *ungenteel*, and not careful enough about improving his mind”.¹⁶⁰ Peter was a very funny and joking guy, who left for many years after having disappointed his father. One reason for his departure lies in the fact that he presumably did not fit the code of gentility of Cranford society, behaving in improper ways that ashamed his entire family except for Miss Matty. As a matter of fact he comes back when his father is dead and when Cranford has undergone several improvements and has become more tolerant.

What I have said about gentility has not taken into account the value and the pride that the inhabitants of Cranford confer to it. They are satisfied with their living and do not want to change it for anything in the world. After all that has happened there, they still do not want to get away, neither do they want to modify their manners. They consider their city a: “honest and moral town, that it had grown to fancy itself too genteel and well-bred to be otherwise, and felt the stain upon its character at this time doubly”.¹⁶¹ Here the narrator is recounting the thoughts of the ladies after the rumours about a robbing gang, and they are so proud of their town that they highlight: “the robberies could never have been committed by any Cranford person; it must have been a stranger or strangers who brought this disgrace upon the

¹⁵⁸ Robert Gilmour, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 139.

town”.¹⁶² This underlines also the communal character of the citizens who would do anything to protect each other and to help whenever one is in need.

2.3 The female society

From the first lines of the novel we do understand that the main characters of the novel are women, in fact “in the first place, Cranford is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses, above a certain rent are women”.¹⁶³ If any man is present, he is not in the little town;¹⁶⁴ he is supposed to be in Drumble, standing for Manchester, and therefore the symbol of commerce, economy and trade, towards the women felt a sort of repulsion for.¹⁶⁵ They are either in the industrial city or away in ships, or in wars, and the only one to be in the country is the doctor, who sleeps in the town, but has his round of thirty miles and therefore is not constantly present. As the narrator says: “the ladies of Cranford are quite sufficient”¹⁶⁶ and consequently they think they do not need the presence of men, and do so acting as men within the society.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless as the narration goes on we understand that they actually would not survive without their help,¹⁶⁸ and would not have success, although they “were already rather moaning over the invasion of their territories by a man and a gentleman”.¹⁶⁹ Moreover they consider men are not examples of gentility, but rather of vulgarity, which is what Mrs Jamieson think of Dr Hoggins. The absence of men in the town could be explained also by the fact that the eldest of the Jenkyns sisters resembles the opposite sex in her manners. It is not a coincidence that Captain Brown died while she is still alive and that her brother Peter returns after her death.¹⁷⁰ This means that the town had already her male presence while Miss Deborah was there;

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁶⁴ Alyson J. Kiesel, *Meaning and Misinterpretation in Cranford* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 1011.

¹⁶⁵ Boris Knezevic, op. cit., p. 409.

¹⁶⁶ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁶⁷ Helen Kuryllo, *A Woman's Text in the Wild Zone: The Subversiveness of Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford* (Penn State University Press, 1989), p. 103.

¹⁶⁸ Patricia A. Wolfe, op.cit., p. 161.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁷⁰ Alyson J. Kiesel, op. cit., p. 1004.

she had a very strong character¹⁷¹ and in a sort of way it could be said that she embodied both the masculine and the feminine traits. She could be considered as a man for her strong character and her way of dressing but at the same time she wanted to behave as the most genteel woman on earth. Nevertheless she is also a contradictory character because when she highlights the superiority of women to men, she is wearing male clothes: “Miss Jenkyns wore a cravat, and a little bonnet like a jockey-cap, and altogether had the appearance of a strong-minded woman; although she would have despised the modern idea of women being equal to men. Equal, indeed! She knew they were superior”.¹⁷²

For her vigorous nature and her rigid code of behaviour, she is highly dreaded and respected by her younger sister, who in more than one occasion stresses her supposed lack of knowledge of the right conduct when Miss Deborah is not with her. Miss Matty has always looked at Miss Deborah with deference and has always considered her the most judicious person within the society and even after her death she never wanted to disappoint her.¹⁷³ There are several examples in the narration that underline this feature of Miss Matty, for instance, when she was invited to Mr Holbrook house she was not sure of going because “she did not think that Deborah would have liked her to go”¹⁷⁴ but despite this, encouraged also by Miss Pole and Miss Mary she eventually accepted. According to Helen Kyrullo’s essay, that could depend also from the fact that their parents have always seen the eldest daughter as the cleverer, the one that had the best thoughts and the most proper behaviour.¹⁷⁵ In fact when *your ladyship*, alias Lady Glenmire, came in town, the ladies of the town did not know how to appellate her, and quite obviously Miss Matty said that: “Deborah would have known in a minute”.¹⁷⁶ That depends also from the fact that Miss Deborah has always been acknowledged as the favourite in her family, after Peter disappointed their father, and therefore this turned Miss Matty into an insecure woman, who needed the others’ support and opinions to be guided. For instance, when she had to choose the gown, it was the first time she had to decide for herself

¹⁷¹ Patricia A. Wolfe, op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁷² Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁷³ Patricia A. Wolfe, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁷⁴ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁷⁵ Helen Kuryllo, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 115.

“for Miss Jenkyns had always been the more decided character, whatever her taste might have been; and it is astonishing how such people carry the world before them by the mere force of will”.¹⁷⁷ She is such a naive person that would do anything to be regarded as genteel, but more than anything to help people who are in need, without taking into account her own necessities. Her devotion to her sister is seen in particular when she is starting to acknowledge that there are problems involving their bank and when Mary states that her father, who is acquainted with financial matters in the city of Drumble do not have any shares in the above-mentioned bank, Miss Matty replies:

Oh, no! I remember. He objected very much to Deborah’s buying any, I believe. But she was quite the woman of business, and always judged for herself; and here, you see, they have paid eight per cent, all these years. [...] She in fact, as has already been said held one of the main positions in her family, and sometimes her father relied on her “when there was letter-writing, or reading to be done, or anything to be settled.”¹⁷⁸

We understand her role within the female society thanks to Miss Matty and Miss Mary’s words; it seems that she is also the one who, together with Mrs Jamieson, has one of the most respected positions in it.

Hierarchy therefore is another important aspect of their little society, and the ranks within it were defined also according to their fathers’ position¹⁷⁹ and also the quantity of maids present in the house. When Misses Jenkyns lived in the rectory with their family, they had “three maids and a man”,¹⁸⁰ but after their father’s death, they had to move to a smaller house and with the help of just one maid, but as Miss Matty reports “we have always lived genteelly, even if circumstances have compelled us to simplicity”.¹⁸¹

Miss Matty has never displayed her upper-class origin, as on the other hand Mrs Jamieson tended to do,¹⁸² in particular in presence of Mrs Fitz-Adam, so much

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 173-174.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁸² Borislav Knezevic, op. cit., p. 410.

so that she “used to show how honourable she was never seeing Mrs Fitz-Adam, when they met at the Cranford parties”.¹⁸³ Moreover being conscious of her stand she could behave as she liked wherever she was. For instance at Miss Betty Barker’s party, she fell asleep on an armchair, but the other ladies present at the party whilst disapproving her, witnessed the owner of the house feel gratified by Mrs Jamieson’s action: “very gratifying indeed, to see how completely Mrs Jamieson feels at home in my poor little dwelling; she could not have paid me a greater compliment”.¹⁸⁴ This is a proof that the other women of the community acknowledge her standing at a higher rank and respected it without complaining, not even when she had the privilege of reading the newspaper *St James’s Chronicle* before them. Even Lady Gordon, Captain Brown’s daughter writing to Miss Matty, acknowledged her predominance, named: “she hoped and begged to be remembered to Mrs Jamieson (named first, as became her honourable station), Miss Pole, and Miss Matty [...]”.¹⁸⁵ Despite this little remark, all the ladies anyway belonged to a class that was higher than that of the shopkeepers and actually when they attended Mr Brunoni’s show they had the privilege of sitting in the first two rows while the latter “huddled together on the back benches”.¹⁸⁶ Also Martha, Miss Matty’s maid, recognized their superiority as when she apologized her fiancé’s way of speaking because “he’s dazed at being called on to speak before quality”.¹⁸⁷

Despite his being a man, he feels not at the same level as her girlfriend’s mistress, and this still underlines the fact that Cranford women are self-sufficient and every male presence is erased and not even taken into account.¹⁸⁸ However the men are not willing to live there either, because they have always been afraid of the ladies, for their singular behaviour.¹⁸⁹ The one who felt this more than anyone was their rector of the time Mr Hayter, about whom we do not know anything. The only thing reported by the narrator is that he is an old bachelor, whose approval is important to the ladies of Cranford not because he is a man, but because he represents the Church. Every time he encountered any of the ladies, he “would rush

¹⁸³ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 110.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 188.

¹⁸⁸ Helen Kuryllo, op. cit., p. 103.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 106.

into a shop, or dive down an entry”.¹⁹⁰ Moreover the few men present in the community wanted also not to ruin their status and therefore when the rumour of a robbery gang spread and that Mr Hoggins was said to be one of its victims, he refused to admit what happened to him. As the narrator underlines he “is too much of a man to own that he was robbed last night”¹⁹¹ and after this episode the ladies of the town longed to prove themselves superior to the opposite sex, also after their bravery of having crossed Darkness-lane,¹⁹² a street believed to be dangerous. Their supposed courage is questioned when Miss Pole begs for one of Mr Hoggins’ hat and hung it up outside her lobby, because in her opinion the gang would not have entered her house if they had believed that a man was living there.

Another passage in which the superiority of women to men is shown is when Peter is missing and his family is looking for him. While his father was despairing, her mother was the one who was supporting him, and who was confident that they would have eventually found him. Here the stereotype of the father as the strongest member of the family is questioned and the mother takes the leading role. Unluckily she did not survive to see her son return, but he acknowledged how much she and her father loved him.

For what concerns Peter, he was the only man who could ever survive in their close community and who was not only accepted, but also praised by the ones who would have never been believed to ever do so.

¹⁹⁰ Peter Keating, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Capitolo III – Household Words

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will take into consideration the journalistic career of Charles Dickens, from his contributions as a reporter at the age of fourteen, to his collaborations with several newspapers of the time, until the foundations of *Household Words* and *All The Year Round* respectively in 1850 and in 1859.

The first paragraph analyses the role of the writer as a journalist, taking into account the several newspapers to which he was either a founder or a contributor and it is also analyzed his role within them considering his firmly point of view on current issues.

The second paragraph treats *Household Words* from the perspective of its contents and the reason for its establishment, considering the various contributors and the earnings of its owners. It will be moreover studied why Dickens decided to found precisely this kind of publication and its following consequences.

The third one, on the other hand, explores the aims of the periodical according to Dickens's inaugural article, dwelling on its characteristic and on the readers' reception he would like to obtain.

3.1 Dickens as a journalist

Since Charles Dickens was young he was sure his ambition was to become a writer and already from the age of eighteen years old he started to work as a copyist and soon after as a parliamentary reporter. Anyway his career started some time before, at the age of fourteen years old, when he was appointed contributor on crime facts for *The British Press*, a London morning paper.¹⁹³ Between these early years and 1829 he worked as a solicitor's clerkship and John Henry Barrow, who was

¹⁹³ John M. L. Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 6.

Dickens's uncle, taught him shorthand. This latter in 1828 launched a weekly paper called *The Mirror of Parliament*, whose publications included printing verbatim reports of the speeches given in both Houses of Parliament.

Charles Dickens wanted to be a contributor, but as he was not much acquainted with this kind of writing in 1830, he set up as a freelance shorthand writer and he trained himself in several ecclesiastical and Admiralty courts, sitting also in the college better known as "Doctor's Common".¹⁹⁴ After several months he was able to eventually enter the galleries of the old Houses of Parliament and was therefore able to record discussions on national issues.

These years influenced him as demonstrated by many references in a variety of his later works, as in *Pickwick Papers*, *Master Humphrey's Clock* and *David Copperfield*.

From 5 March 1832 he started working as a contributor to the *True Sun* magazine, which was known to be the most radical London evening newspaper,¹⁹⁵ in which Dickens was recognized to be one of its most influential and reliable reporters. From his correspondence we have not got any references to the newspaper, neither to Dickens's work in it and therefore it is presumable that he ended his work in conjunction with the closing of the Parliamentary section on 16 August.¹⁹⁶ During those years he published anonymously his first sketch called *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, which appeared in *Monthly Magazine* in 1833. It was then republished under the title of *Mr. Minns and his Cousin* and included in *Sketches by Boz*, which is a collection of Dickens's early stories, printed in various periodicals.

In 1834 he started to work for the *Morning Chronicle*, the rival to *The Times* and the Whig party's most important reporting magazine, which supported its strongest controversial measures. This seems to be one of Dickens's best influences, as it conveys many of the writer's later topics of his works and moreover they represent also his view on current issues, like the Poor Law Bill and the child labour problem. While working with this periodical he continued to send tales to the *Monthly Magazine* and to other magazines, but by this time he started to sign them under the name of Boz, which derived from his younger brother Augustus's through-

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

the-nose pronunciation of his own nickname, Moses. He started to compose street sketches under that signature from the fifteenth of August of the same year and they were sketches made by a reporter who travelled around the city, witnessing contemporary scene normally kept discreet in newspaper columns.¹⁹⁷

Moreover Dickens contributed to the periodical with theatre reviews and accounts of visits to public amusements, and he was so well acclaimed that additionally he started to work for the tri-weekly evening offshoot of the *Chronicle*, called *Evening Chronicle*.

The sketches were so highly praised that he was asked by Chapman and Hall to supply texts to match Robert Seymour's engraved illustrations in a monthly letterpress that would be later collected in *The Pickwick Papers*, one of his most famous works. The success, which came after the publication of the last episodes, was huge and so he started to detach from his collaboration with the *Chronicle* and in 1836 he severed his connection with it, although he continued to submit articles and letters to newspapers for the remainder of his life.

His will of being a journalist did not stop after the triumph as a writer and so in 1836 he accepted a proposal from Richard Bentley to become the editor of his magazine *Bentley's Miscellany*. The bid was hard to refuse because Bentley offered “twenty pounds a month to edit the edit the new monthly periodical of six demy octavo sheets (about 96 pages), of which one sheet (16 pages) was to be Dickens’s own work, for which a further twenty guineas would be paid”.¹⁹⁸ For the periodical he edited 26 numbers in two years, between the years 1837 and 1839, which comprehended travel writings, biographical reviews, fictional sketches and serial works, and papers on theatre in an ironic narration to align to the journal’s conduct. In *Bentley's Miscellany* he also serialized from February 1836 until April 1839 his famous novel *Oliver Twist*.¹⁹⁹ It was an unimaginable success for both the editor and the owner of the newspaper. Unluckily Bentley and Dickens underwent several discussions concerning editorial and financial issues, so much so that Dickens did not

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁹⁹ Paul Schlicke (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 438.

even want to deliver in October an episode of *Oliver Twist*.²⁰⁰ Eventually he dismissed in February 1839, after having published the last instalment of the novel, despite his previous intention. William Harrison Ainsworth replaced him as the new editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*.

In 1840, looking for editorial autonomy, he decided to establish a weekly magazine with Chapman and Hall and called it *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Its name derives from the fictional Master Humphrey's Clock club, which was made of a group of friend, who gathered around the owner's grandfather's clock to read manuscripts hidden there. The first number was launched on 4 April 1840, and was supposed to be composed of sketches, essays and tales. The first issue was a triumph, but after some time the sales dropped and so he decided to be the only contributor to the magazine.²⁰¹ Soon after he serialized within the journal *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*, and the sales of it arose again. During that time he was wishing to leave for America and as a matter of fact he resigned his position at the journal and departed with his wife on 4 January 1842 to return only in late June of the same year. Immediately after they took residence in Italy and as he was positively impressed by these experiences he decided to record the memories of their journey, and *American Notes and Pictures from Italy* saw their released respectively in 1842 and in 1846.²⁰²

From 1841 onwards he started to publish some of his later works in serialized form, such as *A Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes* and *The Cricket on the Heart*.

In 1846 together with Joseph Paxton and the publishers Bradly and Evans he started a new weekly magazine called *The Daily News* as another rival to *The Times* because he was a supporter of the liberal party and therefore wanted to found something that could oppose it. In the first issue that was launched on 21 January 1846 Mr Dickens addressed his readers saying:

The Principles advocated by *The Daily News* will be Principles of Progress and Improvement; of Education, Civil and Religious Liberty, and Equal Legislation; Principles such as its Conductors believe the advancing spirit of the

²⁰⁰ John M. L. Drew, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 60.

time requires, the Condition of the Country demands, and Justice, Reason, and Experience legitimately sanction. Very much is to be done and must be done, towards the bodily comfort, mental elevation and general contentment of the English People.²⁰³

There were many people working under Dickens's guide lines and among them there were his father and his father-in-law, who was appointed to write on music issues. Of particular interest to Dickens were the foreign affairs and this was influenced by his travel in America and consequently he was one of the main contributors of this kind of articles in the newspaper. For what concerns the launch of the first issue, all the contributors to the magazine put their best efforts and the result was pretty satisfying as ten thousand copies were sold. But that was not enough to compete with *The Times*, whose sales reached 25 thousand copies.²⁰⁴ Moreover Dickens was again not appeased of his colleagues and his managers, and blamed them for the low number of issues sold.²⁰⁵ Together with his wish to write a new book, this was one of the reasons why he left his editorial duties to Foster, and this is testified in a letter he sent to Emily de La Rue on 16 February 1846:

I am again a gentleman. I have ended over the Editing of the paper [...] to Foster, and I am contemplating a New Book. The Daily News is a great success [...]. But I am not quite trustful in, or quite satisfied with, some of the people concerned in its mechanical and business management, which is a very important part of such an undertaking. Therefore, I confine myself to writing, which is much more agreeable.²⁰⁶

Between his dismissal from *The Daily News* and the foundation of *Household Words* in 1850, he worked as a reviewer for *The Examiner*, a weekly paper founded by Leigh and John Hunt in 1808 whose main articles dealt with politics, domestic economy, and theatre reviews.²⁰⁷ He was to collaborate with them for almost the first fifty years of its publication. In 1828 Albany Fonblanque took over the newspaper as

²⁰³ James Grant, *The Newspaper Press: its Origin, Progress and Present Position* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871), vol. II, p. 6.

²⁰⁴ John M. L. Drew, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 82.

²⁰⁶ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit., p. 498.

²⁰⁷ Nicholas Mason, *Literary Advertising and the Shaping of British Romanticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), p.130.

the editor, but the topics discussed in it were still the same. From 1848 and 1849 the magazine was then edited by Forster who provided articles on public affairs and contemporary news which were aligned with Dickens's interests.²⁰⁸ In particular he contributed with pieces dealing with crime, sanitary matters, education and then with essays reviews. Working for this journal helped him realize that he was more capable of writing weekly rather than daily and for this reason immediately after, in 1850, he launched the weekly *Household Words*, whose issues were released until 1859, when he founded *All The Year Round*.

3.2 *Household Words*

Household Words was a weekly journal that started in 1850 with Charles Dickens as his editor and William Henry Wills as his sub-editor. The first issue was launched on 30 March 1850 and its aim was to “live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers”.²⁰⁹

The weekly magazine was dated on Saturday, but usually published on Wednesday. It was composed of 24 pages per issue and typographically speaking each page was divided into two columns of small type on relatively thin and acidic paper and moreover there were neither advertisements nor illustrations.²¹⁰ On the front of each page there is the motto “Familiar in their mouth as HOUSEHOLD WORDS”,²¹¹ which is taken from Shakespeare's play *King Henry V*.²¹² It recounts Henry's speech before the Battle of Agincourt, where he is encouraging his soldiers to fight with faithful and supportive words. He promises glory and inspires them saying that their names will be remembered in future, and that they will be praised forever. The fact that Dickens chose to put this sentence on the head of the page is meaningful. He presumably wants to be King Henry for his readers; he aims to comfort them and to be regarded as an inspiration for further social developments. In fact in a letter written to Elizabeth Gaskell in January 1850 he underlines that: “all

²⁰⁸ John M. L. Drew, op. cit., p. 93.

²⁰⁹ Charles Dickens, “A preliminary word” in *Household Words* 1, n°1 (1850), p. 1.

²¹⁰ Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (ed.), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Gent: Academia Press, 2009), p. 292.

²¹¹ Emma Smith (ed.), *King Henry V* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 193.

²¹² John M. L. Drew, op.cit., p. 109.

will seem to express the general mind and purpose of the Journal, which is, the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition".²¹³ He supposedly wanted to be an example to the readers of the newspaper and for this reason he wisely selected its contributors in order to have them aligned with the conduct of the journal.

One of the most prominent contributors, who he absolutely wanted in his periodical, was Elizabeth Gaskell and among the others there were George Augustus Sala and Henry Morley.

The establishment of the magazine was due in part to Dickens's journalistic upbringing and in part because he wanted to create something new that diverged from the contemporary works. He aimed at every class of readers, and the miscellaneous content of the papers addressed a miscellaneous target of audience, in particular the affluent middle class. His introductory article reflects this intent:

We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look. We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time.²¹⁴

The cost of the newspaper was decided according to the target of readers, and therefore they reached the conclusion that two pence were the most suitable price and affordable by middle-class readers. The cheapness of the form and of the cost of the journal did not correspond to the cheapness of its contents, because Dickens had always been accurate in the choice of the articles.²¹⁵ Among its contributors there are important writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Henry Spicer and many others who were delighted about this new experience of weekly serialisation. On the contrary George Eliot was not enthusiastic about participating because she was afraid

²¹³ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit., p. 22.

²¹⁴ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 1.

²¹⁵ Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens's Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (Berlington: Ashgate, 2008), p. 1.

of this kind of publication and refused Dickens's invitation. As Anne Lohri underlines in her book:

Of the established group of writers who contributed mainly non-fiction prose, some wrote on subjects on which they were well informed by reason of their background, as Capper on Ceylon and India, Lang on India, Wreford on Italy. Some wrote on subjects related to their experience and professional training: Costello had been in the army, Hannay in the navy; Hunt and Morley were both licensed medical men; Morley, in addition, had been a schoolmaster, and became, in 1857, a King's College lecturer in English language and literature. On subjects of their special knowledge, these writers, and others of comparable background or experience, wrote with some authority.²¹⁶

One of the main reporters remains, in reality, Charles Dickens, who serialized within the magazine *Hard Times*, *A Child's History of England*, *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices* and several articles of different kinds.

So when Dickens opened this new magazine, he did not think about its title; it seems that for him the most important problems concerned the content. As a matter of fact when he wrote to Elizabeth Gaskell to invite her to work for him, he did not even mention the title, because he did not have one by that time. Shortly after instead, in the letter he sent to Forster probably on 2 February 1850, he suggested some titles, but he was not pretty satisfied:

I really think if there be anything wanting in the other name, that this is very pretty, and just supplies it. THE HOUSEHOLD VOICE. I have thought of many others, as – THE HOUSEHOLD GUEST. THE HOUSEHOLD FACE. THE COMRADE. THE MICROSCOPE. THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE. THE LEVER. THE ROLLING YEARS. THE HOLLY TREE (with two lines from Southey for a motto). EVERYTHING. But I rather think the Voice is it.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Anne Lohri, *Household Words: A Weekly Journal 1850-1859 Conducted by Charles Dickens — Table of Contents, List of Contributors and Their Contributions Based on The Household Words Office Book in the Morris L. Parrish Collection of Victorian Novelists* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 30.

²¹⁷ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit., p. 26.

The following day he reached a conclusion and wrote to Forster again: “HOUSEHOLD WORDS. This is a very pretty name”.²¹⁸ Therefore when he finally opted for the final one he straightforwardly contacted Angela Burdett-Coutts to tell her about his decision in a letter written on 4 February 1850:

I was going to consult you about names for the thing, the other day – but forgot it. What do you think about the proposed one, which I write underneath? Is it the profoundest secret and most mighty mystery, except to you and Mrs. And Mr. Brown.

“Household Words”
A Weekly Journal
Designed for the instruction and entertainment of all classes
of readers.
Conducted by Charles Dickens.
“Familiar in their mouths, as Household Words”
Shakespeare²¹⁹

This was revealed to Miss Burdett-Coutts, but in a letter he sent afterwards to Frederick Mullett Evans, his publisher, on 15 February 1850 he said: “If you have not yet begun to print the name, don’t do so, without first communicating with me. I am still trying to hammer out a better one; and though it does not seem likely to present itself, I want to have a chance to the last”.²²⁰

Therefore when he finally was sure that *Household Words* was the most suitable title for his journal he started to look for collaborators and among them there were the Howitt’s, and in the letter he sent them on 19 February 1850 for the first time the publication was known.

Dear Mrs. Howitt,

I address this note to Mr. Howitt, no less than to you. [...]

You may have seen the first dim announcements of the new cheap literary weekly Journal I am about to start. Frankly I want to say to you that if

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

you ever would write for it you would delight me, and I should consider myself very fortunate indeed in enlisting your assistance.

I propose to print no names of contributors, either in my own case or any other, and to give established writers the power of reclaiming their papers after a certain time. I hope any connection with the enterprise would be satisfactory and agreeable to you in all respects – as I should most earnestly endeavour to make it – and I should be proud to give you, personally, any explanation you might like to have”.²²¹

In the letter sent to them he also underlines the cheap character of *Household Words*, because his aim is again the rise of quality of economical press including serialized literary works, poetry, informational articles and several other topics.

One month before the choice of the title the group had to decide the site for the periodical and under Dickens’s specification in January they moved in a bow-windowed office-cum-apartment at 16 Wellington Street North in Covent Garden.²²²

Under the title there is written “conducted by Charles Dickens”²²³ and this sentence reflects the nature of the writer as someone who does influence the writing of its contributors, in particular in the relation to the journal’s non-fiction prose. Usually they are the first articles of the issues and deal with various topics, like current affairs, sanitary matters, foreign affairs and business questions. The most pressing ones among them are social issues and public healths, which are also Dickens’s favourite themes he dealt with in his works as *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*. For what concerns the articles on current matters, he would explore them and investigate their impact on the society rather than simply reporting events as they stand. He took therefore into account the audience he was referring to, hoping to raise in them social awareness that could lead them to the improvement of their conditions.

It therefore inaugurated a way of looking at things that changed impressively the social and cultural life of England, also because eventually a magazine was available even to the poor people, who likewise wanted to be informed on actual matters.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 39.

²²² John M. L. Drew, op. cit., p. 108.

²²³ Charles Dickens, op.cit., p. 1.

During Charles Dickens's era, commodity culture started to become one of the major requests among the citizen and straightforwardly the author satisfied this necessity.²²⁴ Inside the periodical articles on this subject were provided, in particular biographies of second-hands or pawned goods, spun from advertisements, process articles describing visits to manufactories, tales of the flaneur and of those residual or marginal economies in which waste is recycled could be found.²²⁵

Within its 24 pages the journal usually includes three main kinds of articles which can be divided into those related with social issues, those that are mainly informational and material for entertainment.²²⁶ For what concerns informative articles, the majority deal with a wide range of subjects, which comprehend articles on science and natural resources, on fashion and domestic economy. Among them the most important ones are those on travel writing in which the contributors witness achievements on technological discoveries, but they show at the same time differences between England and foreign countries, for example describing life in the colonies.

Relevant to Dickens were also social matters, and one of *Household Words's* aims was to reveal the current situation in order to help to improve the bad social conditions of the time. The leading articles dealt with the establishment of free and elementary industrial schools for the poor, the reduction of factory's incidents and reforms in the field of armed and civil service.²²⁷

For what concerned the earnings, by 1850 Dickens and his group drew up a business plan and a contract. According to it, Dickens would receive an annual salary of £500 and would own one half of the business plus proportional payments for his articles. Bradbury and Evans agreed on receiving a quarter share, Forster and Wills only one eighth of it each.²²⁸ Moreover Dickens, in addition to his Editor salary, received a personal profit share after a year of over £850 which rose to £1100 in the

²²⁴ Catherine Waters, "Trading in Death: Contested Commodities in Household Words," *Victorian Periodical Review* 36, n° 34 (2003) p. 314. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20083971>.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

²²⁶ "The Victorian Web," Philip V. Allingham, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/hw.html>.

²²⁷ Paul Schlicke (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 286.

²²⁸ John M. L. Drew, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

third year.²²⁹ The contributors on the other hand would receive a guinea for a two-column page, which was the stated rate of payment for prose contributions.²³⁰

This situation lasted for nine years, when a rumour concerning Dickens's personal life spread out. He married in 1835 Catherine Hogarth and their marriage lasted until 1857, when a scandal about an adulterous relationship with a teenage girl, Ellen "Nelly" Ternan, came out. He wanted to prove that this was false and in the issue of *Household Words* on 12 June 1858 he signed a statement of his innocence:

I most solemnly declare, then—and this I do, both in my own name and in my wife's name—that all the lately whispered rumours touching the trouble at which I have glanced, are abominably false. And that whosoever repeats one of them after this denial, will lie as wilfully and as foully as it is possible for any false witness to lie, before Heaven and earth.²³¹

He asked also Bradbury and Evans to publish the news in their magazine *Punch*, but they refused and consequently he decided to leave *Household Words* and to end his relationship with the publishers.²³² The last issue of Dickens's periodical was released on 28 May 1859, four weeks after the commencement of *All the Year Round*. This time he decided to have no publishing house and he, in collaboration with Wills alone, he moved to a new office, near the old one, at n°26 Wellington Street North. The first number was launched on 30 April 1859 and as for *Household Words*, the choice of the title comes from a work of Shakespeare, but this time from the *Othello*.²³³ The contents of this periodical are almost the same of the previous, as essays, informational articles, this time more space is given to serialized works, in fact the first issue of the first number is *A Tale of Two Cities* written by Charles Dickens. It is an historical novel which recounts the plights of the French Revolution in Paris and parallels it with life events in London in the same years. Except for Edmund Ollier, Albert Smith, Bryan Waller Procter and Walter Thornbury all the articles within the inaugural number are written by Charles Dickens and Wilkie

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

²³⁰ Anne Lorhi, op. cit., p. 21.

²³¹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. xvii, n° 429, p. 601.

²³² "Dickens Journals Online," Harry Stone, accessed August 26, 2016.

<https://www.djo.org.uk/indexes/articles/personal.html>.

²³³ John L. M. Drew, op. cit., p. 140.

Collins. Again Dickens is the predominant contributor of the magazine and thanks to this many copies were sold. It is not presumption to say so, but a matter of fact, because when the magazine saw a decrease on sales, Dickens immediately acted to solve the situation and published *Great Expectation* and again the sales rose. The first number sold one hundred and twenty thousand copies, helped also by the great publicity masterminded by Dickens and managed by Wills.²³⁴

The journal was read also in America and was very popular with an estimated number of readers of around three millions.²³⁵ In the periodical more emphasis is given to serialized works and to non-fiction articles on international affairs and culture whilst those on education and industry diminished. Despite this is considered to be a worsening, its success was extremely huge until it started to decline during the 1860s. One reason of the decline could lie in the fact that the contributors were not satisfied with the payments anymore, also due to the boom in magazines publications,²³⁶ and another could be because Dickens did not supply as many articles as he did before. For this reason from 1863 he made Wills responsible of *All the Year Round*, also if he continued to watch over his business. In 1868 in the 492 number on 26 September he declared:

On the completion of the present Twentieth Volume, on the Twenty Eighth of November, in the present year, I shall commence an entirely NEW SERIES of ALL THE YEAR ROUND. The change is not only due to the convenience of the public (with which a set of such books, extending beyond twenty large volumes, would be quite incompatible), but is also resolved upon for the purpose of effecting some desirable improvements in respect of type, paper, and size of page, which could not otherwise be made. To the Literature of the New Series it would not become me to refer, beyond glancing at the pages of this Journal, and of its predecessor, through a score of years; inasmuch as my regular fellow-labourers and I will be at our old posts, in company with those younger comrades whom I have had the pleasure of enrolling from time to time, and whose number it is always one of my pleasantest editorial duties to enlarge. As it is better that every kind of work, honestly undertaken and discharged, should

²³⁴ Paul Schlicke (ed.), op. cit., p. 10.

²³⁵ John M. L. Drew., op. cit., p. 138.

²³⁶ Paul Schlicke (ed.), op. cit., p. 11.

... speak for itself than be spoken for, I will only remark further on one intended omission in the New Series. The Extra Christmas Number has now been so extensively, and regularly, and often imitated, that it is in very great danger of becoming tiresome. I have therefore resolved (though I cannot add, willingly) to abolish it, at the highest tide of its success.²³⁷

He moreover decided, after improvements on the quality of the paper and of the print,²³⁸ to appoint his oldest son Charley as the new sub-editor and after having become editor in 1870, because of his father's death, he kept running it until 30 March 1895, when the last issue of the journal appeared.

3.3 *Household Words* first issue

As has already been mentioned the first issue of *Household Words* was released on Saturday 30 March 1850. This number, similarly to the followings, consists of twenty-four pages, for a total sum of twenty-two thousands words divided into two columns. The range and quality of the articles within it represents the wide range of subjects that commonly characterized the successive publications.

The inaugural piece opens with an editorial article written by Charles Dickens and called "A Preliminary Word" in which he outlines the directions of the periodical and its themes. It is followed by the first of the three parts of Gaskell's short story *Lizzie Leigh*. Then we find an article written by Charles Dickens in collaboration with Wills on mail-sorting technology called "Valentine's Day at the Post Office" and the religious poem "Abraham and the Fire Worshipper" by James Henry Leigh Hunt. Immediately after there is another article by the editor "The Amusements of the People", in which he criticized the bill of fare at popular theatres, a biographical episode by George Hogart named "An Incident in the Life of Mademoiselle Clairon" and the lyric "The Wayside Well" by William Allingham. At page nineteen of the issue there is another joint article "A Bundle of Emigrants' Letters" by Charles Dickens and Caroline Chishom, a piece on foreign agriculture "Milking in Australia"

²³⁷ Charles Dickens, "New Series of All The Year Round" in *All The Year Round* vol. Xx, n°492, p.1.

²³⁸ Paul Schlicke (ed.), op. cit., p. 12.

by Samuel and John Sidney and finally an anonymous scientific article “Metal in Sea-Water”.

The striking thing is that many of them are written by the editor and this is a proof of his will of attracting the highest number of potential readers ever. In part he was right because the first issue sold over one hundred thousand copies.

In “A Preliminary Word” he defines the aims of the periodical, in particular that of “living in the Household affections” and this is underlined by the fact that “the name that we have chosen for this periodical expresses, generally, the desire we have at heart originating it”.²³⁹

In his opinion it was possible to have both good social condition, but also industrial improvement, and maybe reading his journal could have led to those social and industrial progresses. Moreover when he speaks about material things he underlines that they are important because they are alive and that is the reason why he treats them in the periodical:

The mightier inventions of this age are not, to our thinking, all material, but have a kind of souls in their stupendous bodies which may find expression in Household Words. The traveller whom we accompany on his railroad or his steamboat journey, may gain, we hope, some compensation for incidents which these later generation have outlived [...]²⁴⁰

In the present passage is also taken into account another of Dickens’s ambition which is the will to instruct and entertain the readers, in order to light their worries on their present time. Moreover he wanted to stress that he did not have any utilitarian claims and consequently his initial thought was not to publish works in serialized form, so that no one would have to buy the newspaper on purpose: “No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh tone to our Household Words”.²⁴¹ What really mattered to him was to soften the sorrow of people and in fact he wanted all his contributors to maintain a joyful tone in every publication, both those that were dedicated to young people and those to the old: “In the bosom of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would

²³⁹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. I, n° 1, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1.

tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast”.²⁴² As one of them, Percy Fitzgerald, reports when talking about *Household Words*: “The writers were compelled, owing to the necessity of producing effect, to adopt a tone of exaggeration. Everything, even trial, had to be made more comic than it really was. This was the law of the paper”.²⁴³

When Charles Dickens talks about young and old and poor and wealthy, he is communicating his desire to transcend all social boundaries and to create a single little community, where there are no rank differences and everyone is treated in the same way. As Elizabeth Gaskell did in her preface to *Mary Barton*, Dickens underlines the importance of the community value of romance. In his preliminary word in fact Dickens wanted “To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out”.²⁴⁴ The word “Romance” here has to do with the complexity of subjective experience in all conditions of life.²⁴⁵ Moreover he explains that they will not touch only current issues, but talk also about the past and usually in every number there is at least one contribution on events of the past: “Our Household Words will not be echoes of the present time alone, but of the past too”.²⁴⁶ In addition he manifests his intention of treating articles dealing with foreign affairs and foreign countries and this echoes the relationship between Great Britain and other nations: “Neither will they treat of the hopes, the enterprise, triumphs, joys, and sorrows, of this country only, but in some degree, of those of every nation upon earth. For nothing can be a source of real interest in one of them, without concerning all the rest”.²⁴⁷ In a sort of way Dickens, within his periodical, is handling themes that are the representation of Britain’s policy, as he lived in an age in which the country witnessed its greatest colonial expansion, and therefore the readers of the paper wanted to be informed about it so that they could confront their nation in relation to the others.

In his foreword he also criticizes the other newspapers of the time that for him were not appropriated to enter within the familiar circle, due to their light-

²⁴² Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴³ Daniel Tyler (ed.), *Dickens’s style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 255.

²⁴⁴ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. I, n° 1, p. 1.

²⁴⁵ Thomas Recchio, op. cit., p. 38.

²⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. I, p. 1.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

hearted contents, and in doing so he invited readers to buy his journal instead. This is presumable from his saying:

Some tillers of the field into which we now come, have been before us, and some are here whose high usefulness we readily acknowledge, and whose company it is an honour to join. But, there are others here – Bastard of the Mountain, dragged fringe on the Red Cap, Pamders to the basest passions of the lowest natures – whose existence is a national reproach. And these, we should consider it our highest service to displace.²⁴⁸

With “bastard of the Mountain” he is criticizing George Reynolds’s policy, who was a Chartist and therefore an opponent to Dickens’s liberal ideas. In fact this latter wanted to develop social sympathy not through political discussion, but through the engagement of fancy and romance, which for him are the only ways in which improvement could be reached avoiding utilitarianism.²⁴⁹

He thence aspired to instruct and amuse the readers but in order to do so they had to purchase the journal and he is conscious of this difficult task, also because he wanted to be well perceived by the community. He tried to make it possible by promoting faith in humanity and by praising his audience and underlined the friendly character of *Household Words*’ contents and of its contributors:

We have considered what an ambition it is to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness; to people the sick room with airy shapes ‘that give delight and hurt not’, and to be associated with the harmless laughter and the gentle tears of many hearts.²⁵⁰

He has understood that the time in which they were living was tough from the social perspective and consequently he tried to provide the readers a newspaper that could soften their preoccupations and let them be cheerful also if only for the little time in which they were reading it. Nothing was more important to him than this and indeed he pointed it out even in his introductory note:

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁴⁹ Elaine Ostry, *Dickens and the Fairy Tale* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 110.

²⁵⁰ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p.1.

We know the great responsibility of such a privilege; its vast reward; the picture that it conjures up, in hours of solitary labour, of a multitude moved by one sympathy; the solemn hopes which it awakens in the labourer's breast, that he may be free from self-reproach in looking back at last upon his work, and that his name may be remembered in time to come, and borne by the dear objects of his love with pride. The hand that writes these faltering lines, happily associated with some Household Words before to-day, has known enough of such experiences to enter in an earnest spirit upon this new task, and with an awakened sense of all that it involves.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

Chapter IV – *Cranford* serialization in *Household Words*

4.0 Introduction: A trending thread running through the serialization

Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens started their collaboration, as has already been mentioned, on 27 March 1850, when *Lizzie Leigh* was published in the first issue of *Household Words*.

He chose Elizabeth Gaskell because when he read *Mary Barton* he understood that her way of writing was very similar to his and that the themes treated in it resembled pretty much his own fields of interest. Both the authors were concerned with the bad conditions of the society in which they were living, and therefore decided to treat those themes in their work to try to raise in the readers a social awareness that could lead to an improvement of their situation.²⁵² Even the scholar Thomas Recchio underlines Dickens attitude towards Elizabeth Gaskell saying that he:

singles Gaskell out as the one ‘living English’ author who could best represent through her most ordinary work – her ‘reflection and observation in respect to the life around’ her – Dickens’s goal to work toward ‘the general improvement of our social condition’.²⁵³

Moreover the authors wanted to create in the readers this social attention through the voices of their characters providing them with knowledge, but also giving them pleasure.²⁵⁴ Elizabeth Gaskell was able to depict the situation of the working middle-class thanks to the charitable activities in which she was involved together with her Unitarian husband.²⁵⁵ What associated the author with the editor was in fact their involvement in the social cause, in particular for what concerns Dickens, with the question of the fallen woman. As has previously been mentioned he worked with

²⁵² “The Victorian Web,” Andrzej Diniejko, accessed October 4, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/diniejko.html>.

²⁵³ Thomas Recchio, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

Angela Burdett-Coutts to try “to reclaim prostitutes to a life of virtue by the foundation of Urania Cottage as an asylum”²⁵⁶ for them. As Thomas Recchio underlines “it was during the years immediately preceding and after the establishment of *Household Words* that Dickens was most concerned with the fate of fallen women”²⁵⁷ and as a matter of fact Elizabeth Gaskell’s work *Lizzie Leigh* was published in the launching issue of the newspaper. The treating of the question of the fallen woman, which functions as a leitmotif in Gaskell’s work *Mary Barton*,²⁵⁸ was presumably one of the reasons why Dickens appreciated so much this novel, together with its depicting of the condition of the working-class labourers and their relationship with the masters. The choice of treating these themes by the two authors was made to inform the Victorian public opinion about the poor condition of the labourers, depicting the disorder, the squalor and the human misery of a modern industrial city.²⁵⁹ The works of both Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens were thence aimed to working-class and middle-class readers, in order to aid social-reformist causes.²⁶⁰ The majority of the articles of the journal in fact treated actual themes, in particular those concerning child labour, poverty, bad housing and poor sanitary conditions. Although at first sight the novel of Elizabeth Gaskell seems to have nothing remarkable from the point of view of the plot, when carefully read all comes to the eye. It represents the way of thinking of many people living in the Victorian Age, which is the oscillation between nostalgia for the past and impulses towards the future, criticizing at the same time the bad conditions of the present.²⁶¹ The ladies of Cranford look at the past as the best way of living compared to that of the present, as it was explained in the previous chapters of my dissertation. They look askance at industrialization in the fictional city of Drumble, and when anything comes from there they try to distance from it, although at the end they will understand that without it their lives are inconceivable.

²⁵⁶ Tom Winnifrith, *Fallen Women in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (London: MacMillan Press, 1994), p. 95.

²⁵⁷ Thomas Recchio, op. cit., p. 39.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁵⁹ “The Victorian Web,” Andrzej Diniejko, accessed October 4, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/diniejko.html>.

²⁶⁰ William Baker and Kennet Womack (eds.), *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (London: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 5.

²⁶¹ Paolo Bertinetti, op. cit., p. 187.

What my thesis wants to show is that the installation of the novel within the newspaper is critical to the understanding of it in all its aspects. Many articles are set in particular position inside *Household Words* in order to strengthen the meaning of the particular instalments of *Cranford*.

It will be also shown that the articles are complementary to the understanding of the novel and that the choice of the editor to put the instalments in precise numbers is not casual. What he wants to do is to reinforce the meaning of *Cranford*, giving actual examples and proofs of what Elizabeth Gaskell narrates. This is again to follow his thought that to employ fiction to talk about current issues could make readers aware of their condition best.

The main purpose of this chapter is to underline the common thread that run throughout the serialization of *Cranford* within the newspaper, taking into account the themes of the novel compared to those of the journal. It will be demonstrate that the instalment of the novel should be read in the context of the other pieces coming before and after every instalment.

Usually every contribution of every issue was connected to a specific principal subject, and therefore Charles Dickens carefully chose in which number insert the several episodes sent by Elizabeth Gaskell.

The first instalment of *Cranford*, called “Our Society”, was published on 13 December 1851. It presents the protagonists of the story, their little community and their way of living. It could be seen as an anchor for the issue number ninety of *Household Words*, because in the instalment there are themes that would be further analyzed and enlarged in the newspaper. This way of relating the two works will be later demonstrated to be true for every following piece of narration. The second instalment is “A Love Affair at Cranford”, which was released on 3 January 1853 and recounts of an event belonging to the past, that is the recounting of Miss Matty’s suitor. The third is “Memory at Cranford” of the 13 March 1852. It is all centred round memories from the past towards which Miss Matty feels nostalgic. In the following instalment “Visiting at Cranford” of the 3 April 1852, the narrator goes back to the present time. Its description of past episode and present episodes seems to reflect the conduct of *Household Words*, which was clearly exposed in “A Preliminary Word”. “The Great Cranford Panic” was divided into two instalments,

one on 8 January 1853 and the other a week later on 15 January. It narrates of a robbery in the city and the sudden appearance of a man of dubious provenience; and as a coincidence the issues of the journal deals with murders and travelling to foreign countries. “Stopped Payment at Cranford” is the next episode and it is included in the number of the 2 April 1853 and both treated the subject of payments and of discussion of topics concerning social issues. The second to last is “Friends in Need at Cranford” published on 7 May 1853. At first sight, reading this number of the newspaper and the instalment of *Cranford*, there seem to be no analogies between the works, but when analyzed carefully all comes to the eyes. The last one is “A Happy Return to Cranford” and recount of the reappearance of the lost brother in town. It was released on 21 May 1853.

The following paragraph will analyze in details the analogies and the differences between the *Cranford* instalments and the various issues of the newspaper and will try to explain the reason why Dickens chose to put that precise episode of the novel within that particular number of *Household Words*.

4.1 Our Society: An Anchor for *Household Words*

Cranford: Chapters I/II – *Household Words*: December 13, 1851, vol. IV, n° 90

- 1) “Our Society at Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 265-274.
- 2) “The Merchant Seaman’s Fund”, James Hannay – pp. 274-277.
- 3) “A Child’s Prayer”, author unknown – p. 277.
- 4) “Household Crime”, Richard H. Horne – 277-281.
- 5) “The story of a Nation”, Henry Morley – pp. 281-285.
- 6) “Chip: Pork Insurance”, William Blanchard Jerrold – p. 285.
- 7) “A Beginning and an End”, Anna Mary Howitt – pp. 286-288.

The first instalment was published within the number 90 on 13 December 1851. Elizabeth Gaskell provided the story one year after he had asked her to collaborate on 31 January 1850. The author wrote it after being in Knutsford for a visit of recuperation, six weeks before its publication. That return in her old familiar

environment made the creation of *Cranford* possible, and made Dickens more than positively impressed. Elizabeth Gaskell saw the town as a “spiritual refuge ever since her marriage”,²⁶² the place where she went every time she needed to be restored. As her biographer Winifred Gérin says:

the flight to Knutsford, the quietness of Church House, the company of old friends, had their usual healing effect on her health and overstretched nerves, and apparently refreshed and revived her to such extent that the scenes and sentiments of girlhood all came flooding back.²⁶³

As a consequence, the first instalment of *Cranford* was delivered to Charles Dickens six weeks after her visit and many references to the town are clearly visible in it. The editor was positively impressed by Gaskell’s narration and indeed wrote her a letter on 5 December 1851, expressing his contentment while at the same time noticing her the modification he had made: “I was so delighted with it that I put it first in the n° (not hearing of any objection to my proposed alteration by return of Post) and the n° is now made up and in the Printer’s hand”.²⁶⁴ After having acknowledged the alterations made by the editor she immediately asked him to withdraw the story, but he could only reply:

I write in the great haste to tell you that Mr. Wills, in the utmost consternation, has brought me your letter, just received (four o’clock), and that it is too late to recall your tale. [...] I cannot possibly take the tale out – it has departed from me.

I am truly concerned for this, but I hope you will not blame me for what I have done in perfect good faith. Any recollection of me from your pen cannot (as I think you know) be otherwise than truly gratifying to me ; but with my name on every page of Household Words there would be – or at least I should feel – an impropriety in so mentioning myself.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Winifred Gérin, op. cit., p. 121.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 123.

²⁶⁴ Jenny Hartley, op. cit., p. 239.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 240.

The alteration of which he is talking about is the modification of the title of the book that Captain Brown is reading, unaware of the train approaching. The book was *Pickwick Paper*, but Dickens as an editor did not like to be self-promoted as he underlines in the letter and therefore change it into *Hood's Poems*. Probably the editor's choice of replacing his name with that of Hood derives, as the scholar Thomas Recchio acknowledges, from the fact that Gaskell had already used Hood's works for the mottos of chapters three and seven of *Mary Barton*.²⁶⁶ Dickens therefore had to change not only the title of the book that Captain Brown was reading, but also that of the book left on the table by Miss Matty to Miss Flora. In the current work we have *Christmas Carol*, one of Charles Dickens's most famous stories, but in the instalment in *Household Words* it was replaced with *Miss Kilmansegg and her Golden Leg*, a comic poem written by Hood.²⁶⁷ While informing Elizabeth Gaskell of his modifications, he seems to apologise for his choice using praising words:

I would do anything rather than cause you a minute vexation arising out of what has given me so much pleasure, and I sincerely beseech you to think better of it, and not to fancy that any shade has been thrown on your charming writing, by

The unfortunate but Innocent.²⁶⁸

The instalment was therefore published in *Household Words* following Dickens's disposals but then afterwards printed in the volume edition according to Elizabeth Gaskell's initial intention.²⁶⁹

The instalment is composed of chapter one and two of the actual novel and was put in the first page of the issue to presumably give it relevance. It was soon followed by "The Merchant Seaman's Fund", which was an article written by James Hannay, a Scottish novelist, journalist and diplomat, which dealt with the foundation of a nautical institution to help seamen, which:

²⁶⁶ Thomas Recchio, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁶⁷ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 342.

²⁶⁸ Jenny Hartley, op. cit., p. 240.

²⁶⁹ Catherine Delafield, *Serialization and the Novel in Mid-Victorian Magazines* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 166.

authorised the erection of a Hospital for ‘sick, maimed, and disabled mariners’; granted relief to such seamen by pensions or gratuities, and to the orphans and widows of such as were ‘killed, slain, or drowned’. It was also granted to all out-ports in England and Wales to form separate corporate bodies, with all the privileges conferred by the Act on the Society in London.²⁷⁰

But as the taxes for the institutions were very high, agitations started to arise and the Act “turned out a complete failure”.²⁷¹ The ideas on which the plan was based were positive, but their realization a flop. The article was inserted immediately after the instalment of *Cranford*, probably because, according to Dickens’s opinion, they were strictly connected from the thematic point of view. In fact carefully reading both the works, it is impossible not to link Captain Brown with the financial support supposed to be given to those who risked their lives for the nation. He is a *half-paid* captain, which means that he is an army officer retired from active service but who remained on the reserve at half of his normal pay.²⁷² He left his children without any pension, where instead he should be rewarded for his service. On the other hand the general idea that lies underneath the article is valid, although tough to implement, and embodies the sympathetic character of the representatives of the country.

The same sensitive trait could be found in the protagonists of *Cranford*, in this particular case in Captain Brown, who would do anything to support her sick daughter and who gave his life to save a child from getting hit by a train. In fact this was one of the reasons that made him accepted by the ladies of Cranford, who initially looked askance at him for his being a man and coming from outside their community.

The article that follows is a poem called “A Child’s Prayer”, which is connected with Miss Brown’s sufferance. Reading the poem is impossible not to link it with Captain Brown’s love and care towards his ill daughter. This was one of the reasons why eventually the women of Cranford accepted him. But Captain Brown’s humanity was also what made him lose his life. When he died, the ladies of the town

²⁷⁰ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. IV, n° 90, p. 275.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 275.

²⁷² Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 340.

immediately acted to help Captain's Brown's daughters, to express in this way their solidarity towards such a kind man. Firstly they tried to comfort the oldest sister, who thought it better not to tell her sister in her death-bed that her father was not with them anymore. The ill Miss Brown knew she would not survive longer and therefore started to think about her life. The only thing she blames was of not having told her father how much she loved him: "But, oh, Jessie! Tell my father how I longed and yearned to see him at last, and to ask his forgiveness. He can never know how I loved him – oh! If I might but tell him, before I die!"²⁷³ And her sister replied: "Would it comfort you, dearest, to think that he does know – would it comfort you, love, to know that his cares, his sorrows - Mary! He has gone before you to the place where the weary are at rest. He knows now how you loved him".²⁷⁴ In the poem there is the same religious belief, according to which to believe in God soften the grievance and that if a person behaves right she will find peace in Heaven.

He kindly hears me thank him now
For all that he has given,
For friends, and books, and clothes, and
food:
But most of all for Heaven,

Where I shall go when I am dead,
If truly I do right;
Where I shall meet all those I love,
As Angels pure and bright.²⁷⁵

The mention of angels is evoked also in the novel, when Miss Brown named her dead parents and two brothers before lying calm and still, dying: "Father, mother, Harry, Archy".²⁷⁶ The presence of the poem within the newspaper is functional to the understanding of Miss Brown's sufferance because it reinforces the feeling in the readers, as if to make them feel more empathy towards the sympathetic character. It is not mere coincidence if the poem is put soon after the article on the seaman's fund.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁷⁵ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 277.

²⁷⁶ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 59.

It seems that the editor wants to create a sort of escalation in the mind of the readers, who initially understand the unfair condition of Captain Brown, to reach eventually the climax when getting into the poem. First they feel empathy for the poor Captain, who is depicted as a lone father who has to take care of his two daughters, and then their feeling is reinforced by the presence of a sad poem that could not be read without thinking about the ill Miss Brown.

The article that follows is “Household Crime” and takes into account deaths by arsenic poisoning. There are explained the several ways in which arsenic can be bought and used, together with an explanation on how it works in the body of the victims. Its connection with *Cranford* could lie in the fact that in the town nothing like that can ever happen, because the behaviour of the ladies is dominated by honesty and generosity, and it is unconceivable for them to hear about murders. This aspect of the ladies will be further analyzed in the following paragraph, entitled “Cranford Panic”, when the rumour of a murderous gang spread.

What Charles Dickens probably wanted to promote, putting the chapter of Elizabeth Gaskell and the article on “Household Crime” together in this precise issue, is the opposite situation, which is the non-presence of crime in their little community.

The successive article is the second chapter of “The Story of a Nation”, an article divided in two parts and written by Henry Morley. He was one of the most prolific contributors of the periodical and since he studied medicine, he usually wrote on sanitary matters, also if he provided pieces on a wide range of subjects. In this case he is recounting the history of the Hungarians, who are opposing Austrian, Russian and Serbian empires. There are few connections with *Cranford*, presumably one could be with Captain Brown, because he was an army officer who fought in the *Plumed Wars* with an old friend of Mrs Jamieson’s husband, Lord Mauleverer.²⁷⁷

“Pork Insurance” is the subsequent piece and belongs to those articles call “Chips”. They are short news story, often used as fillers. This one in particular deals with a pork which is associated with a flourishing Pig Insurance Society. It “is the property of a worthy agricultural labourer”²⁷⁸ which he treats like no other common pigs. Miss Betty Barker in *Cranford* treats her cow in the same way. Both episodes

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁷⁸ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 285.

are pervaded with humour, and are recounted ironically. Whilst Miss Barker's cow is "clad in dark grey flannel"²⁷⁹ the pig has "long, flapping ears; his taper snout decorated with a metal ring; his slender pretensions to a tail; his popular trotters; and his broad, flat sides"²⁸⁰. The article ends with the owner of the pigs who understands that a insurance, whether it is for animal or human, is something really important, but unluckily not everyone is capable of recognizing it.

The closing article is called "A Beginning and an End" and was written by Anna Mary Howitt, after having been praised by Charles Dickens in 1850. The article describes the christening of a Princess, the daughter of Prince Luitpold of Bavaria²⁸¹ and the funeral of the Duchess of Leuchtenburg, who died after a short illness.²⁸² The funeral of the duchess could be related to the three deaths present in the novel, but mostly with Miss Deborah's. She was one of the principal characters of the story, to whom in particular Miss Matty, referred for almost every uncertainty. Even Dickens at the end of the chapter added a sentence, probably to underline her strong behaviour: "Poor, dear Miss Jenkyns! Cranford is Man-less now".²⁸³

On the other hand the christening could be associated with the birth of a new life, which could be either that of Miss Matty, who feels lost without her sister, or that of Cranford, who has to restart without such an imposing figure.

The Christening and the funeral could also be seen as a contrast between the young and the old, similarly to what Elizabeth Gaskell did through the voice of the narrator, while comparing the little old community with the new emerging industrial city of Drumble. Moreover the same dichotomy of young and old could be represented by the death of Miss Deborah and the visit in town of Flora, the young child of Miss Brown and Major Gordon.

²⁷⁹ Peter Keating (ed.), op. cit., p.44.

²⁸⁰ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 285.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 286.

²⁸² Ibid., p. 287.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 274.

4.2 “A Love Affair at Cranford”: Travelling abroad

Cranford: Chapters III/IV – *Household Words*: January 3, 1852 – Vol. IV, n° 93

- 1) “Pearls From the East”, Loader – pp. 337-341.
- 2) “What I call Sensible Legislation”, Henry Morley and James Knox – pp. 341-344.
- 3) “Going Circuit at the Antipodes”, Archibald Michie and Henry Morley – pp. 344-348.
- 4) “A Wassail for the New Year”, George Meredith – pp. 348-349.
- 5) “A Love Affair at Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 349-357.
- 6) Chips: “My Uncle” and “My Aunt” – p. 357.
- 7) Chips: “Anecdotes of Monkeys”, Thomas Satchell – p. 357.
- 8) “The Roving Englishman: A Masked Ball”, Henry Morley and Eustace Clare Grenville Murray – pp. 358-360.
- 9) “Advertisements” – p. 360.

The second instalment of *Cranford* comprehends chapter three and four of the novel and was published in the fourth volume, in the number 93 on 3 January 1852.

Almost the entire issue provides articles on foreign countries and on travels around the world. In *Cranford* too, many references to different cultures are present, in particular to the Oriental one. The connection between the newspaper and the novel lies in fact in the treating of subjects that deal with the other, with the foreign.

When Charles Dickens received Elizabeth Gaskell’s second instalment, he was very enthusiastic and indeed wrote to her to express his feeling in a letter sent on 21 December 1851: “My Dear Mrs Gaskell, if you were not the most suspicious of women, always looking for soft sawder in the purest metal of praise, I should call your paper delightful, and touched in the tenderest and most delicate manner. Being what you are, I confine myself to the observation that I have called it ‘A Love-Affair at Cranford’, and sent it off to the printer”.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Jenny Hartley, op. cit., p. 241.

In the newspaper, before the piece sent by Gaskell, he added an introductory sentence to underline his content with the work: “I am tempted to relate it, as having interests me in a quiet sort of way, and as being the latest intelligence of Our Society at Cranford”.²⁸⁵

The first article of the journal is called “Pearls from the East” and its writer is unknown. It opens with “WHO knows anything of Hindu mythology, or who, indeed, does not shudder at its very name?”.²⁸⁶ This sentence reveals the fear of the unknown, but at the same time that there was also the will of acknowledging a culture that differs from one’s own. The ladies of Cranford, as the citizens living in England during its age of maximum colonial expansion, experienced towards the “other” both a feeling of repulsion and attraction, theory supported by the scholar Edward Said. As he said: “Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment”.²⁸⁷ The same feeling was felt by Miss Matty when her cousin came to visit her. First of all she did not know how to behave because she was aware of the contrasting way of living of their relatives and as the narrator explains “she was sadly fluttered”.²⁸⁸ Secondly the depiction that she gives is of “quiet, unpretending people enough when they did come; languid, as all East Indians are, I suppose”.²⁸⁹ The fact that she puts that “I suppose” testifies the recognized thought of the time that almost nothing was known about that far away population. Nonetheless at the same time there was a strong curiosity towards those different people, as the narrator reports when depicting the reaction of Martha, Miss Matty’s maid: “Martha had never ended her staring at the East Indian’s white turban and brown complexion” or again when the ladies saw her cousin’s “Hindoo body-servant”.²⁹⁰

Within the article in *Household Words* the writer wants to suggest that it is not necessary to be afraid of this new world, in particular of its religion, because “The Hindu mythology has some exquisite passages, to the full as lovely as the

²⁸⁵ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 349.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 337.

²⁸⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 7.

²⁸⁸ Peter Keating, op. cit., p.68.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

loveliest of the Greek”,²⁹¹ and goes on making comparison between Greek gods and goddess and Hindu ones.

Another reference to the Oriental is present when Miss Matty talks about her former lover, Mr Holbrook who is Miss Pole’s cousin, who spent 30 years in India to return changed. Mr Holbrook in the novel expresses also the will of knowledge of other countries and this is supported by his desire to go to France, which will eventually be the cause of his death.

The following article is “What I call Sensible Legislation” and it is a critic made by an Edinburgh publisher on Dickens’s work. The only link that could be found between it and *Cranford* lies in the fact that the article is a list of legislations and that Miss Matty provides a sort of rules on the right conduct of a servant and on household duties. “She was forbidden, by the articles of her engagement, to have ‘followers’”,²⁹² and “we had always wine and dessert; but the decanters were only filled when there was a party [...]. The dregs were often given to the poor [...]. Then as our dessert, Miss Jenkyns used to gather currant and gooseberries”.²⁹³

Moreover in the article, when the Scotchman criticized Dickens’s *Household Words* he listed all the material present in the newspaper and the context in which *Cranford* was published.

“Going circuit at the Antipodes” is the piece supplied by Henry Morley that follows and deals with travelling. The countries touched by the narrator are New Zealand and Australia. It is not mere coincidence if the author analyses life in Australia, because it was the place where many convict were sent instead of being sentenced. Moreover under Queen Victoria colonialism saw its maximum expansion, and for this reason many articles contained in the periodical supplied information on new discovered countries, in particular on India, of which the Queen was proclaimed Empress in 1876.²⁹⁴ As Edward Said explains, from Eighteen century the Orient started to be explored more profoundly and acknowledgments about it spread thanks also to the increasing influence of travel literature.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 350.

²⁹² Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 65.

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 66.

²⁹⁴ Paolo Bertinetti, *English Literature. A Short History* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2010), p. 187.

²⁹⁵ Edward Said, op.cit., p. 117.

In the novel in fact this seems to be acknowledged by Miss Mary's words when talking about Peter's voyage: "his ship had gone to the Mediterranean, or somewhere down there, and then he was ordered off to India, and there was no overland route then".²⁹⁶ At that time the safe overland route to India was via the Red Sea, because the route through the Suez Canal did not open until 1869. The route through the Red Sea improved also social communication²⁹⁷ and that was the reason why Peter was able to receive all the letters from his parents but also the most important from Mary. Another element that makes the reader understand that the Orient was well accepted by the community was the fact that they had many goods coming from the East, in particular Mrs Jamieson, who had imported tea-chests decorated with Chinese drawings.²⁹⁸

More than everything there was Miss Matty who started to sell tea, although initially reluctant, and "be an agent of the East India Tea Company",²⁹⁹ which was founded in 1600, whose monopolistic powers were restricted in 1834, after having seen an explosion from the middle of the eighteenth century.³⁰⁰ In this passage it is revealed also her generous character as she before starting selling tea, inquired Mr Johnson whether her work would compromise his:

Miss Matty, as I ought to have mentioned before, had had some scruples of conscience at selling tea when there was already Mr Johnson in the town, who included it among his numerous commodities; and, before she could quite reconcile herself to the adoption of her new business, she had trotted down to his shop, unknown to me, to tell him of the project that was entertained, and to inquire if it was likely to injure his business.³⁰¹

That could happen only in Cranford, because something like that would be unimaginable in the industrialized city of Drumble or elsewhere. For what concern the link with *Household Words* it could lay in the fact that even in Australia there is the presence of goods coming from India; the tenants who had rent

²⁹⁶ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 101.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 347.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 354.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 200.

cottages on the bank of Australian rivers are provided with “small patches of Indian corn, wheat, barley, potatoes, and tobacco”.³⁰²

The piece that follows, “A wassail for the New Year”, is a hymn to young fellows, which could be connected with the encouragement of Miss Matty towards her maid Martha not to waste her life, as it happened to the Miss. It is an exhortation to young people and to countries to become better, because past is gone, but the future could be changed.

The only apparent connection between the subsequent piece of “chips” called “My Aunt and My Uncle” is that with Miss Jessie Brown’s uncle. This article is an evocation to the piece “My Uncle” presented in number eighty-nine of *Household Words*.³⁰³ In the latter, the uncle of the protagonist is praised in the same way Miss Jessie Brown appreciates her own uncle, feeling proud to be the niece of a shopkeeper, thing that, on the other hand, is blamed by the ladies of *Cranford* which consider this specialization *ungenteel* and therefore contrary to their way of living.³⁰⁴ As Robert Gilmour reports, not every kind of trade could let you enter into the gentry class, but only that of “a wealthy merchant, who had in any case escaped from the office and bought himself a landed estate”.³⁰⁵ Therefore the prestige was made possible only in relation to the ownership of the land.

On the successive passage the protagonist of the story “The Roving Englishman” is considered awkward by the Austrian guests of a masked ball, in the same way the ladies of *Cranford* consider Miss Jessie’s uncle *ungenteel*. The roving Englishman is a man who travels, in this particular case to Vienna, who can be the editorial representation of Mr Holbrook, who in the novel leaves for Paris, another European city. The Englishman is at a party where there are a lot of women, who have “their faces hidden behind elegant little black silk masks” and whose voices resemble “the penetration proper to a sex which seems to be made up of Blue Beard wives”.³⁰⁶ The reference to Blue Beard is not casual as in *Cranford* Miss Matty refers to her cousin citing precisely him. The impression she has of him is of someone who is not what he appears to be and this fact pretty frighten her, as if he was hiding

³⁰² Charles Dickens, *op.cit.*, p. 346.

³⁰³ Catherine Delafield, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

³⁰⁴ Peter Keating, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³⁰⁵ Robert Gilmour, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁰⁶ Charles Dickens, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-359.

something, not clear to her. In the article of the periodical the protagonist has a secret “or two” that seem to be “locked up in his bosom”,³⁰⁷ in a way that is impossible not to think of Miss Matty’s cousin or even of Blue Beard, who hid her murdered wife in his castle.³⁰⁸

The closing article is a list of advertisements, probably translated by Dickens from local Austrian newspaper, that publicize announcements for wives and husbands in search for love. Contrary to the advertisements, in the novel the main character, Miss Matty, is not looking for a lover, but she regrets the loss of the only one who could have loved her. For this reason she encourages her maid to live that love, if she has one, not to feel as bad as her mistress is.

4.3 “Memory at Cranford”: A Context for Peter’s Life

Cranford: Chapters V/VI – *Household Words*: March 13, 1852 – Vol. IV, n° 103

- 1) “A Sleep to Startle us”, Charles Dickens – pp. 577-580.
- 2) “Guns and Pistols”, Harriet Martineau – pp. 580-585.
- 3) “From a Settler's Wife”, Frances George and Henry Morley – pp. 585-588.
- 4) “The Use of Flowers”, Harper – p. 588.
- 5) “Memory at Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 588-597.
- 6) “Chips: The Fine Arts in Australia”, Charles Dickens – p. 597.
- 7) “Chips: A Sea-Coroner”, William Henry Wills – p. 597.
- 8) “If This Should Meet His Eye”, Edmund Saul Dixon – pp. 598-600.
- 9) “Advertisements” – p. 600.

“Memory at Cranford” is the third instalment of the novel in *Household Words* and comprehends its chapter five and six. It was published in number 103 on 13 March 1852.

It recounts of the contents of the old letters of Miss Matty’s family and narrates the story of her lost brother Peter.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 358.

³⁰⁸ Thomas Recchio, op. cit., p. 52.

The articles present in the newspaper in this case seem to be related to the entire life of Peter, from his childhood to his travel to India. Their context is that of domestic matters and imperialism, and Peter embodies in himself both.

The first article is called “A Sleep to Startle us”, written by the editor, and recount of several visits to the first ragged school to witness whether there were improvements during the years or not. The first impression of the author is that of “a very discouraging Institution”,³⁰⁹ where “the air was bad; the dark and ruinous building, with its small close rooms, was quite unsuited to the purpose; and a general supervision of the scattered sleepers was impossible”.³¹⁰ The conditions of the ragged school were really miserable and reflected perfectly the status of the place in which the school was located. This theme is one of those very dear to Dickens, who has worked his entire life to try to improve the bad state of wretched people.

Dickens’s journal contains many articles on social issues, on the ills of the industrial society which he is criticizing. He believed that with literature it was possible to raise human attention to those problems, and could be possible to lead the public towards social awareness on it. As a matter of fact many of his works, together with his journalistic career, deal with the social analysis of the time in which he is living. In particular *Nicholas Nickleby* is the most aligned with the present article, because here too there are depicted the conditions of schools where unwanted children were maltreated and starved.³¹¹

Also Mrs Gaskell in *Cranford* underlines the presence of poor in the country, in particular when the narrator reports that Miss Matty’s mother constantly kept her husband up to date “about the poor in parish; what homely domestic medicines she had administered; what kitchen physic she had sent. She had evidently held his displeasure as a rod in pickle over the heads of all the ne’er-do-wells”.³¹²

For what concerns the pupils who went at the school in the article, they “sang, fought, danced, robbed each other; seemed possessed by legions of devils”³¹³ similarly to Peter’s conduct as a child: “the sole honour Peter brought away from

³⁰⁹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 578.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 578.

³¹¹ “The Victorian Web,” Andrzej Diniejko, accessed October 4, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/diniejko.html>.

³¹² Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 89.

³¹³ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 578.

Shrewsbury, was the reputation of being the best good fellow that ever was, and of being the captain of the school in the art of practical joking”.³¹⁴

The subsequent article “Guns and Pistols” is on the history of weapons and particularly on their use in wars and on their manufacturing. The question of war and therefore of guns is present in the novel when Miss Mary is questioning Miss Matty on what her brother was doing when sailed. Miss Matty’s answer is “Oh, there was some great war in India – I forget what they call it – and we have never heard of Peter since then”.³¹⁵ Probably the war to which Matty is referring was the first Burmese War, who took place between 1824 and 1826, fought between British and Burmese empire.³¹⁶ Britain captured Rangoon city in 1824 and two years after the former’s victory, the Burmese empire had to sign a commercial treaty, losing moreover many cities. This reference to the Burmese war is very important for Mrs Gaskell, because her brother in the real life has participated in the capture of Rangoon and reported it to her in a letter he sent on December.³¹⁷ Contrarily to Peter, John Stevenson never returned home.

The third article “From a Settler’s wife”, written again by Henry Morley, is a depiction of New Zealand from the point of view of a British wife who moved there with her husband, who was a lawyer. She really admired the new city and in fact listed all the good qualities of it, from its environment to the cost of life. It seems like an exhortation to migrate and probably also a way of demonstrating that the “other” should not be feared.

“The Use of Flowers” is a poem on friendship throughout a metaphor of flowers. Friendship, as has already been said, is one of the main themes of *Cranford*, and in these chapters is embodied in the relationship between Miss Matty and her brother. Flowers are the symbol of this familiar bond, in fact when their mother died, they put “some white violets on her breast”.³¹⁸

The following piece is “A Sea-Coroner” and explores shipwrecks of British vessels at sea. It is also a critic to the government, because those accidents could be prevented very easily and if they happen they should “be as rigidly investigated as

³¹⁴ Peter Keating., op.cit., p.93.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 103.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 347.

³¹⁷ Graham Handley, op. cit., p. 14.

³¹⁸ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 102.

the cause of violent death or of a fire ashore”.³¹⁹ The connection with Peter lies in the fact that he sailed because he wanted to become admiral and that his family, not having heard from him for years, thought he died during one of his voyages.

The final piece of writing is on a travel to Cornwall, called “If this should meet his eye” and was written by Edmund Saul Dixon, who was the rector of Intwood and a priest. It is not by chance if in the article there is a high number of celestial figures.

4.4 Visiting at Cranford: The Cheerful Narration

Cranford: Chapters VII/VIII – *Household Words*: April 3, 1852 – Vol. V, n° 106

- 1) “Drooping Buds”, Charles Dickens and Henry Morley – pp. 45-48.
- 2) “Northern Lights and Shadows”, Henry Morley – pp. 48-51.
- 3) “British Cotton”, John Capper – pp. 51-54.
- 4) “The Growth of Good”, unknown author – pp. 54-55.
- 5) “Visiting at Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 55-64.
- 6) “Sledging”, Anna Mary Howitt – pp. 64-66.
- 7) “A Tower of Strength”, unknown author – pp. 66-68.

The fourth instalment of *Cranford* comprehends chapter seven and eight of the novel. It describes the visiting of the ladies to Miss Barker and their reaction to the arrival of Mrs Jamieson’s sister-in-law. It is such an unpredictable event that they have to gather to decide how to behave when in her presence.

This narration is included in number 106 of *Household Words*, which was released on 3 April 1852. Differently from all the other publications, this time there is not a central theme which connects every article. Neither there are particular links with *Cranford*, also because this instalment is one of the most cheerful, whereas in the periodical articles on social issues are predominant.

The first one is “Drooping Buds” which analyses the healthcare system situation, underlying the failing conditions of hospitals, in particular those for sick

³¹⁹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 597.

children. First of all the authors of the article, Charles Dickens and Henry Morley, wanted to highlight that the other Eastern countries had already provided support for those patients with appropriate clinics, criticizing at the same time the first English one. Secondly they described a failing hospital, which was among all the other things, situated in an area that was “very far out of the way”.³²⁰ Within the facility there were children dying and while saying through the words of one of them “until the infection that could not be stopped, was brought here from those poorer house not far off”,³²¹ they are also criticizing the bad conditions of the poorest area of the city. This again testifies Dickens’s commitment to the social cause, contributing significantly to the emergence of public opinion which was gaining an increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities.³²²

The second article is a more pleasant one, probably to align with the mood of the *Cranford* instalment, and deals with superstitions from remote regions. It would have been more appropriated to have this article together with the next chapters, because in those ones, which recount of Mr Brunoni, many references to the supernatural occur.

The following article “British Cotton” was written by John Capper, who was a journalist living in Ceylon, connected for almost forty years with the press in Ceylon and in India. It was a critic on the commerce of cotton, badly seen by almost the entire country, except quite obviously the rich businessmen, who saw in it an increase for their profits.

During Victorian England, Britain saw an explosion of the manufactory industry, in which such a great production of goods permitted the country to become the most powerful industrial power of the world. Many improvements were made in particular in the field of cotton, thanks to new discoveries but also to massive population growth and urbanisation that led to the disciplining of labour.³²³

The question of the cotton trade is touched also by Mrs Gaskell in *Cranford*, when Miss Barker is afraid of Miss Mary’s father being involved in it. For their genteel

³²⁰ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. v, p. 46.

³²¹ Ibid., p. 46.

³²² “*The Victorian Web*”, Andrzej Diniejko, accessed October 4, 2016, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/diniejko.html>.

³²³ “BBC,” Pat Hudson, accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/workshop_of_the_world_01.shtml.

community, to be associated with the commercial trade of the city meant to be “dragged down out”³²⁴ of the aristocratic society and therefore excluded from their *exclusive association*. The reason could lie in the fact that during that age the aristocratic land-owning class continued to dominate in government, and therefore a compromise between the new-rising industrial class and the old land owners could never be reached,³²⁵ and this is what Elizabeth Gaskell probably wanted to underline.

Before providing the following chapters to Dickens, Mrs Gaskell left him waiting for almost a year, but the result was one of her best creations.

4.5 The Great Cranford Panic - Chapter I: The Question of the Man

Cranford: Chapters IX/X – *Household Words*: January 8, 1853 – Vol. VI, n° 146

- 1) “My Man. A Sum”, George Augustus Sala – pp. 385-388.
- 2) “Silk from the Punjab”, Henry Morley – pp. 388-390.
- 3) “The Great Cranford Panic”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 390-396.
- 4) “The Dirty Old Man. A Lay of Leadenhall”, William Allingham – pp. 396-397.
- 5) “Tit for Tat”, Edmund Saul Dixon – pp. 397-399.
- 6) “Black-Skin A-Head!”, Samuel Rinder – pp. 399-404.
- 7) “A Child History of England”, Charles Dickens – pp. 404-408.
- 8) “Advertisements” – p. 408.

The reason why Elizabeth Gaskell delayed the supply of the next chapters presumably laid in the fact that she was absorbed in the production of her famous novel *Ruth*. It is a portrayal of a fallen woman, who works in a sweatshop that fell in love with the aristocratic Henry Bellingham. After being discovered by her superior, she is dismissed and starts to live a mischievous life. The novel was eventually

³²⁴ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 106.

³²⁵ “BBC,” Pat Hudson, accessed October 4, 2016,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/workshop_of_the_world_01.shtml.

delivered to Chapman by 20 December 1852 and published in three parts on 24 January 1853.³²⁶

Whilst the main protagonist of *Ruth* is a woman, in this instalment of *Cranford* for the first time, its narration is centred round a man, named Mr Brunoni. He is a magician who performs in their town and many suppositions about his life are made. While he was there the rumour about a robbery gang spread and the ladies conjectured that Mr Brunoni is the chief of it. At the end of the chapter it will be revealed that the gang has gone away and that their suspect was actually a common man, called Samuel Brown, who has lived for many years abroad.

The issue in which the instalment is included is number 146 and was published on 8 January 1853. It is not mere coincidence if the central theme that links all the articles is the question of man.

In the first article, written by George Augustus Sala, there is a fictional depiction on how a man must spend his day, taking into account his hours of sleep, what he should eat, how he should dress and how many hours he must spend to wash himself. That set of his day is given in order to see how many hours there will be left “to allow him to turn to useful and profitable account”.³²⁷ It must be taken into consideration the age in which he was living; therefore the useful time he is talking about is the time spent working. Those were years of social transformation in which was given more importance to industrial activities rather than focusing on the health of the labourers. They were exploited to the limit without considering how painful it was to work so many hours without interruption and more than everything in desperate unsanitary conditions. Therefore what the author of the article wanted to underline was that men should have their days organized so that they could have time to restore from the hard work and to enjoy the moments they have for themselves.

The next piece is called “Silk from the Punjab”, written by Henry Morley and analyses the silk trade in the Asiatic regions in comparison with the English one. The way of working in the Asian continent is different from that in England, as the majority of the labourers do not work in factories, because there are none, but in their homes and each has a specific task to perform. As the author says, in Punjab “the

³²⁶ Winifred Gérin, op. cit., pp. 137-138.

³²⁷ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. vi, p. 385.

cost of the manufacture is not great, and if the cost of the raw silk were lessened by the introduction of silkworms, a very valuable branch of trade might be promoted which would help to keep the fingers of the people out of border frays”.³²⁸ It was difficult for Punjab to trade, because there were many duties which impeded the exportation, to favour the English one. Despite this, the quality of the material was good enough to compete with Britain’s and moreover even in Punjab “the first gentleman gave full employment to the local weavers”.³²⁹ There were not so many differences between the oriental and the occidental world for what concerned the possibility of employing as many labourers as possible, and therefore it would have been useful to have a competitor for England. The references to the oriental silk is present even in *Cranford* and moreover it is seen, in particular by Miss Matty, with enthusiasm, so much so that she demanded Miss Mary to bring one the next time she would be in Drumble. But Mary’s reason for not having bought the so admired turban laid in the fact that she did not want Miss Matty to be disfigured by it in a town that looked at the *foreign* with such preoccupation. Probably to see turbans in a city like Drumble, which has witnessed industrialization and therefore was moving forward innovations was usual; but in a town like Cranford, strictly bonded to the past and to its old way of living, would be absurd.

Another testimony of this attachment to the past occurred when the announcement of a magical show in the town spread. They were very excited about this particular event, but at the same time they were sceptical and were apt to consider all his tricks as fake. The magician was called by Miss Pole “The Grand Turk”, and here the reference to the oriental came out again. He was firstly criticized for his broken English and afterwards for his “unchristian look”, looking more like a “Mussulman”.³³⁰ The fact that the article by Henry Morley preceded the *Cranford* instalment suggests how the former is related to the latter.

The piece that follows “The Great Cranford Panic” is “The Dirty Old Man” and again the protagonist is a man; curious placement if it is taken into account that for the first time a man has appeared in the *Cranford* narration. The article is a

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 388.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 388.

³³⁰ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 135.

comical poem on the life of a singular dirty man who has lived his entire life in a filthy warehouse in London.

What comes after it is “Tit for Tat”, which describes how people who do not find a work are sent to war. It then goes on reporting an encounter between a French coast-guard and an English man, who discuss on the prices of local goods, saying how unfruitful it is to have taxations so high on their importation. The place in which this conversation takes place is “a tiny bay, formed by a vast hollow in the cliff,³³¹ with the English Channel on the left. Whilst the French man is in the bay to work, Miss Mary’s father went to the seaside to recover from an illness probably caused by the too intense frenetic life of Drumble. When away you are excluded from everything that happens around you and in fact when Mary is abroad with her father she is “deprived of the opportunity of hearing any chance intelligence of the dear little town for the greater part of that year”.³³²

Linked to this article by the same sea-life is that which follows, called “Black-skin A-Head”, written by Samuel Rinder, who was a businessman and Public Official of Victoria and Australia. It describes the adventure of a crew of sailors who work in a whale-ship in the Australian waters. They have captured a whale and after having listed all the various roles of the member of the crew, they talk about the profits deriving from the catch.

What links this article with the *Cranford* instalment is the theme of adventure. As the ladies say: “Miss Pole was always the person, in the trio of the Cranford ladies now assembled, to have had adventures”³³³ and was very proud to have such bravery, even if she asked Mr Hoggins’s worn-out hats to hung them outside her door, after having heard of a mysterious gang. Among the trio she seemed to be the leading person, as “in each boat there is always a headsman”³³⁴.

The closing article is “A Child’s History of England”, written by the editor which was serialized in the newspaper from January 1851 to December 1853. It is a chronology of English monarchs beginning from ancient times to James the second in the years 1688. The ruler taken into observation in this issue is Henry the Eight,

³³¹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 398.

³³² Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 128.

³³³ Ibid., p. 129.

³³⁴ Charles Dickens., op.cit., p. 400.

and to Dickens's opinion he was "the most detestable villains that ever drew breath" and that "he was anxious to make himself popular, and the people, who had long disliked the late King, were very willing to believe that he deserved to be so".³³⁵ It then recounts the wars between France and Britain and the expedients used by Henry to divorce from his wife and marry Anne Boleyn. It is commonly known that between the two countries the relationship has always been hostile. In *Cranford* in fact the first person to be suspected of a robbery was Mr Brunoni, who they thought to be French. According to them, their little community was too honest and aristocratic to commit a crime like that and therefore, in their opinion, the theft could only have been accomplished by a foreigner, and at that time the only one external to the society was the magician. As they say:

Cranford had so long piqued itself on being an honest and moral town, that it had grown to fancy itself too genteel and well-bred to be otherwise, and felt the stain upon its character at this time doubly. But we comforted ourselves with the assurance which we gave to each other, that the robberies could never have been committed by any Cranford person; it must have been a stranger or strangers who brought this disgrace upon the town, and occasioned as many precautions as if we were living among the Red Indians or the French. [...] The Cranford people respected themselves too much, and were too grateful to the aristocracy who were so kind as to live near the town, ever to disgrace their bringing up by being dishonest or immoral; therefore, we must believe that the robbers were strangers – if strangers, why not foreigners? - if foreigners, who so likely as the French? Signor Brunoni spoke broken English like a Frenchman, and, though he wore a turban like a Turk, Mrs Forrester had seen a print of Madame de Staël with a turban on, and another of Mr Denon in just such a dress as that in which the conjuror had made his appearance. [...] there could be no doubt Signor Brunoni was a Frenchman – a French spy, come to discover the weak and undefended places of England.³³⁶

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 404.

³³⁶ Peter Keating., op. cit., p.139.

4.6 “The Great Cranford Panic” – II Chapter: A Land of Fear

Cranford: Chapters X/XI – *Household Words*: January 15, 1853 – Vol. VI, n° 147

- 1) “Scholastic”, Henry Morley – pp. 409-413.
- 2) “The Great Cranford Panic”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 413-420.
- 3) “Travel on Tramp in Germany”, William Duthie and Henry Morley – p. 420.
- 4) “Chip: The Ghost of the Cock Lane Ghost Wrong Again”, Charles Dickens – pp. 420-422.
- 5) “What Sand Is”, Edmund Saul Dixon – pp. 422-427.
- 6) “Information against a Poisoner”, unknown author – pp. 427-430.
- 7) “Playthings”, Henry Morley – pp. 430-432.

The second chapter of “The Great Cranford Panic” was contained in the issue number 147 of *Household Words* which was published on 15 January 1853, a week after the first. She intentionally left the previous instalment incomplete so that readers would have been interested on reading the following part. Moreover it could have been divided also because it would be too long to be published in only one issue. In this part of the novel it is revealed that Signor Brunoni was not the robber and that the murderous gang has left. Moreover at the end of the chapter another question is left unanswered, that is whether the man of whom Signor Brunoni talks about is actually the lost Jenkyns brother. This choice reveals Elizabeth Gaskell’s intention to provide other parts to Mr Dickens, in fact in a letter he wrote her he says: “As to future work, I do assure you that you cannot write too much for *Household Words* and have never yet written half enough”.³³⁷

As a matter of fact in the following four months she furnished the final three parts and eventually the complete work was published in June 1853.

The opening article “Scholastic”, whose author is Henry Morley, deals with education and in particular it is a list of advertisements on schools in order to be informed on which was the most appropriate to children. The question of education

³³⁷ Richard Lettis, *Charles Dickens on Literature: a Continuing Study of his Aesthetic* (Ney York: AMS Press, 1990), p. 44.

during the Victorian Age was one of the main social issues which created discussions and discontent. With the Industrial Revolution and thence with many people moving from the country to the town, thanks to higher possibilities of finding a work, a need for a reform of the education system was required. One of the first improvements was Robert Peel's Factory Act of 1802, which permitted employers to be taught reading, writing and arithmetic during their apprenticeship. On 10 April 1839 an Order in Council created the Committee of the Privy Council on Education. After this, several kinds of schools opened to provide education also to poor children, among which there were: Sundays Schools, Ragged Schools, Schools of Industry, Monitorial schools, Infant and elementary schools and technical studies. The presence of an article in the newspaper of this kind suggests the necessity of the masses of having an education and moreover of being informed on it.³³⁸

Immediately after it there is the *Cranford* instalment which is strictly connected to the subsequent piece called "Travel on Tramp in Germany: Hamburg to Lubeck". It recount of two men who were travelling and during that time they talked about "tales of robbery and murder"³³⁹ and the field in which they were passing was really picturesque. The main theme of this instalment of *Cranford*, is the fear arisen by the arrival of a mysterious gang, suspected of having robbed several houses in the town. As the two men in the article recount tales dealing with robbery, in the same way Miss Pole tells to the other ladies the story of Mr Hoggins being robbed. In order to protect herself, Miss Matty "armed herself with a footstool to drop down on the head of the visitor"³⁴⁰ like the narrator of the article did: "handling my stick at the same time as one ready to strike instantly if any injured were offered".³⁴¹ While doing it he contemporaneously is admitting their cowardliness: "we were a mere couple of rabbits. Each of us in his innocence feared that the other might be a guilty monster, and so we were both glad enough to get out of the hollow".³⁴² The ladies of Cranford seem to embrace the same pusillanimity although initially, in particular

³³⁸ "Education in England: a brief history," Derek Gillard, accessed September, 2016, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter02.html>.

³³⁹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. vi, p. 420.

³⁴⁰ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 140.

³⁴¹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 420.

³⁴² Ibid., p. 420.

Miss Pole, declared themselves pretty brave, except from Miss Matty, who has always admitted her being fearful. In fact when they were going to Mrs Forrester, she

before being shut down in the sedan, like jack-in-the-box, implored the chairman, whatever might befall, not to run away and leave her fastened up there, to be murdered; and even after they had promised, I saw her tighten her features into the stern determination of a martyr, and she gave me a melancholy and ominous shake of the head through the glass.³⁴³

On the other hand “Miss Pole was very much inclined to install herself as a heroine because of the decided steps she had taken in flying from the two men and one woman, whom she entitled ‘that murderous gang’”.³⁴⁴ At least they arrived to Mrs Forrester’s safe and sound, in the same way the protagonist of the article reached its destination. He could get there because he had found admittance in two houses during his travel who had offered him shelter and food, as happened to Mr Brown’s in *Cranford*. Before arriving in England, Mr Brown’s family had travelled several countries, encountering many difficulties, but finally they got there, in particular to have their only child alive. When they were in India Mr Brown’s wife lost six children and was going to lose also her last one, so she decided to depart to save her. Unluckily during the voyage the little child became ill, but the mother reported that: “God led me to a place where I found a kind Englishman lived, right in the midst of the natives”³⁴⁵ who helped them and made them reach England safely. That Englishman will be later revealed to be exactly the lost brother of Miss Matty.

The following article is one written by Charles Dickens that deals again with the supernatural and the mysterious, being spiritual manifestations its main theme. It is based on a superstition concerning an apartment in Cock Lane who was supposed to be haunted by ghosts. As the author suggests, it ends with acknowledging that actually it was an absurdity. The presence of the supernatural is contained also in this *Cranford* instalment, when the ladies are discussing about what feared them most. Mrs Forrester’s answer, as if by coincidence, is actually “Ghosts”³⁴⁶ and Jenny the

³⁴³ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 147.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 144.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 161.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 149.

maid, to confirm this superstition admitted she saw “a ghost with her own eyes, not so many nights ago, in Darkness-lane – the very lane we were to go through on our way home”.³⁴⁷ The conclusion at which Miss Mary arrived, to demonstrate the foolishness of the saying was “that Jenny had certainly seen something beyond what a fit of indigestion would have caused”.³⁴⁸

The closing article instead takes into account several games that are possible to be found in a fair and in the homes of children. It is an appropriate article because in Gaskell’s work Miss Matty decided to donate to Miss Brown’s daughter the play ball that she let roll under the bed to see if there were any people hiding under it. Presumably her present held in itself also a propitiatory value, which wished for the baby to have a happy destiny.

“My dear,” says Miss Matty, “my heart is sad for that little careworn child. Although her father is a conjuror, she looks as if she had never had a good game of play in her life. I used to make very pretty balls in this way when I was a girl, and I thought I would try if I could not make this one smart and take it to Phoebe this afternoon”.³⁴⁹

Before the closing article, there are two pieces that have nothing relevant to denote in their comparison with the *Cranford* paper. The first one describes what sand is taking into account also agriculture, fishing, forestry and gardening. The second one instead is on the problems deriving from malaria and its definition.

4.7 Stopped Payments at Cranford: A Fresh Air in a Dark Time

Cranford: Chapters XII/XIII – *Household Words*: April 2, 1853 – Vol. VII, n° 158

- 1) “How to Kill Labourers”, Henry Morley – pp. 97-102.
- 2) “The Kingdom of Reconciled Impossibilities”, George Augustus Sala – pp. 102-105.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 149.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 149.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

- 3) “Gentlemen and Bullocks”, Richard H. Horne – pp. 105-107.
- 4) “Chip: Fresh Air in Finsbury”, unknown authors – pp. 107-108.
- 5) “Stopped Payment, at Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 108-115.
- 6) “The Feast of Life”, Harper – p. 108.
- 7) “Colza Oil”, unknown author – pp. 115-118.
- 8) “The Roving Englishman: After the Boars”, Eustace Clare Grenville Murray – pp. 118-120.

The sequent instalment was published in the issue on 2 April 1853, three months after the previous one. It firstly recounts the great event of the marriage between Lady Glenmire and Mr Hoggins. Initially the ladies were incredulous because it could not have been possible for a lady of such a high rank to marry someone of a lower one. Eventually, seeing how much happy the couple was, they decided to approve this marriage and wished them all the best. The second part of the instalment, deals with a less cheerful situation, as it recounts of Miss Matty’s loss of money due to the failure of her bank.

The first article of the issue is concerned exactly with the question of social workers, which are treated very badly. The author of it is Henry Morley and he is describing how stressful it is to work in farms in parishes, especially because there were not place available to sleep there and whence they had to walk to and fro their working place every day. This is a reflection of the consequences of the English Poor Law of the sixteenth century, according to which the care and supervision of the poor were supplied by parishes. As some parishes were richer than others, many people moved, violating in this way the Settlement Law of 1662 that obliged people to remain in their own area. This lasted until 1834 when the Poor Law Amendment Act passed. It stated that every person who needed help could receive it only if he or she belonged to a workhouse, in which conditions were very harsh. Moreover men and women should live separate. It ended only in 1927 when the Poor Law Act passed.³⁵⁰

The second article is called “The Kingdom of Reconciled Impossibilities” and depicts a world where everything is on the contrary.

³⁵⁰ “Spartacus Educational,” John Simkin, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://spartacus-educational.com/Lpoor1834.htm>.

Locomotion in this kingdom is astonishingly rapid: we run without moving and fly, without wings [...] There is a voyager therein, one Clown, who with Pantaloon his friend and dupe and scapegoat, dances about the streets, insults and beats respectable shopkeepers, swindles and robs ready furnished lodgings, leers at virtuous matrons, commits burglaries and larcenies in the broad day(or lamp) light, and perpetrates child-murders by the dozen, yet goes “unwhipp’d of justice”: nay, he and his confederate are rewarded, at last, by an ovation of fireworks and revolving stars.³⁵¹

Everything here is strange and a sentence in the text makes the reader think that the allusion to *Cranford* is present because the author says: “The only territorial kingdom that I can compare it to is one – and even the duration of that one is fleeting and evanescent, appearing only for a season”.³⁵² This kingdom could be the symbolical representation of Gaskell’s work because actually what the author is describing is a vanishing way of life, bond to the past that is never going to exist anymore.

The kingdom of the reconciled impossibilities seems also to be a critic to the author’s current time, in which the ones who work are always penalized, whilst to the worst ones everything is permitted: “Innocent, we are frequently condemned to death, or to excruciating tortures. Masters, we are slaves; wrong and oppressed, we are always in the wrong and the oppressors”.³⁵³ Similarly Miss Matty, who is the kindest and most honest in the town, saw all her money vanishing, after the failure of the bank. If she had lived in the kingdom of the reconciled impossibilities she would have lived fairly because “we are amenable to no laws; money is of no account; introductions are not required for entrance into polite society”.³⁵⁴ But at the same time also the worst is present in the kingdom, when we “get up as early as we may, we are sure to miss the train; the steamboat always sails without us; If we have cheque to get checked, the iron-ribbed shutters of the bank are always up, when our cab drives to the door, and somebody near us always says, without being asked, “Stopped payments”.³⁵⁵ In this

³⁵¹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., vol. vii, p. 102.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 102.

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 103.

last sentence the allusion to *Cranford* is made explicit, from the title to its contents, as Miss Matty's bank's notes started to be rejected. And again the reference to the loss of money is present: "no sooner do we possess it than we have it not. We wake and the shining sovereigns and the rustling notes have turned into dry leaves, like the money paid by the magician in the Arabian Nights".³⁵⁶ As the editor Peter Keating reports, provincial joint stock banks were allowed by the Banking Act of Parliament in 1826, which banned the issuance of bank notes of less than five pounds,³⁵⁷ in order to end the monopoly of the Bank of England, which at that time was growing exploiting the money of the people. Therefore the presence of many references within *Cranford*, and of course *Household Words*, express the dissatisfaction with this bank of many British citizens.³⁵⁸

The entire article therefore offers the set for some scene of the following *Cranford* instalment: "The Kingdom of the Reconciled Impossibilities is a land of unfulfilled promises, of broken engagements, of trees for ever blossoming but never bearing fruit, of jumbles of commencements with never a termination among them, of prefaces without finises, of dramas never played out".³⁵⁹

The third article is "Gentlemen and bullocks" where a reckless young man is sent away to improve himself, who met with another young fellow, together with whom purchased hundred head of bullocks to drive them over land to Melbourne. His story resembles in some way that of Peter Jenkyns, who in his youth caused many troubles to his poor father. The young man of the article provoked the same preoccupations in his father because: "he cantered in the parks, lounged about the Clubs; the Opera and Almacks were his, with their songs, and dances, and winning smiles. He hunted, he shot, he raced, he gamed, he drank, and "all that".³⁶⁰ Therefore his father told him: "Arthur, you're going to the devil, and I must stop you. Sell out directly, sir, and leave the country for three years. I'll pay your debts here, and allow you just enough to live. Learn to do something for yourself; and come back in your right senses".³⁶¹ Here it is the father who suggested that his son must leave, while in

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

³⁵⁷ Larry Allen, *The Encyclopedia of Money* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), p. 21.

³⁵⁸ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 345.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 105.

Cranford is Peter who decides by himself to depart, not to disappoint his family anymore. E sailed to serve in the army and eventually made his family proud of him.

The poem that follows, “The Feast of Life”, is a sentimental poem on the joys of life. In *Cranford*, together with the sad event that grieved Miss Matty’s life, there is the presence of a merry situation, which is the marriage between Lady Glenmire and Mr Hoggins. Initially the couple was not appreciated because they thought that Lady Glenmire had only opportunistic reasons to marry the doctor, but actually when the ladies saw them in the church they literally changed their opinion:

Her face seemed to have almost something of the flush of youth in it; her lips looked redder and more trembling full than in their old compressed state, and her eyes dwelt on all things with a lingering light, as if she was learning to love Cranford and its belongings. Mr Hoggins looked broad and radiant, and creaked.³⁶²

4.8 “Friends in Need at Cranford”: The Question of Money

Cranford: Chapter XIV – *Household Words*: May 7, 1853 – Vol. VII, n° 163

- 1) “The Spirit Business”, Charles Dickens – pp. 217-220.
- 2) “Friends in Need, at Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 220-227.
- 3) “Bavarian Poachers”, unknown author – p. 227-229.
- 4) “Patent Wrongs”, Henry Morley – p. 229.
- 5) “And He Took a Child”, unknown author - pp. 229-234.
- 6) “A Puff of Smoke”, unknown author – pp. 234-235.
- 7) “Powder Dick and His Train”, George Augustus Sala – pp. 235-240.

The second to last instalment of *Cranford* was contained in the issue of *Household Words* published on 7 May 1853. Mrs Gaskell was not aware of the title Dickens chose for it and this is underlined in a letter she sent to Mr Forster on 3 May 1853: “I did not know what ‘Friends in need’ was, at first; you know the HW people

³⁶² Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 169.

always make title for me”.³⁶³ In the same letter could also be noted the hostile attitude of the author towards the publisher Chapman and Hall, due to several controversies among the two:

“Oh dear! I suppose I must come to the fact about publishing Cranford. About that unlucky letter I wrote to Mr Chapman & part of which he repeated to you so falsely, - well! When I received your first letter, I wrote to him very indignantly, not to say angrily; I don’t remember the exact words, but I know it was something to the effect that I would have nothing to do with him. [...] And whatever you think right I will do, - only for the reason named above I would rather any one else had it than Mr Chapman.”³⁶⁴

Confirmation of this hostility comes from a letter she wrote to Williams and Norgate on 25 February 1854: “[...] presenting the enclosed card to Mr Chapman, to whom she does not like to write again”.³⁶⁵ Moreover from the letter it is understood that Mrs Gaskell was going to complete her work in the near future and for this reason she was talking about the hypothetical publisher. Eventually the disagreement was resolved and the complete work was published by Chapman and Hall,³⁶⁶ although bitterness remained over the low payments involved.

To return to the analysis, the instalment present in this issue is the one in which the generous character of the ladies is most revealed. When they heard about Miss Matty’s terrible situation, they decided to gather to find a suitable solution to help her, but not without having consulted Miss Mary first.

The leading article presents remarks on feminine solidarity, although it deals with spiritual communication written down throughout announcements. The reference to “those supernaturally endowed ladies”,³⁶⁷ could possibly be linked to the behaviour of the women of Cranford, because to their opinion they do not need any man to survive in the little community. In fact when Miss Matty was facing destitution, the ladies showed all their supernatural qualities, as if heroines, to

³⁶³ John Chapple and Alan Shelton, op. cit., p. 87.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

³⁶⁵ J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, op. cit., p. 264.

³⁶⁶ Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 9.

³⁶⁷ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 217.

support her in the best way they could.³⁶⁸ Yet they could not have helped her without the assistance of Mary's businessman father. Also in the article the reference to men that provoke indignation in women is present as one of them underlines that the latter is provided "unhappily with moral courage"³⁶⁹. Similarly in *Cranford* Miss Matty sees men as superior because "they had such loud ways with them: and did up accounts, and counted their change so quickly",³⁷⁰ and for this reason she would rather "sell comfits to children"³⁷¹ so that she could not be afraid of committing mistakes. But she was also a really sensitive and emotional person and it was pretty difficult to manifest her feeling, like for instance when Martha prepared her favourite pudding: "Miss Matty wanted to speak her thanks, but could not; so she took Martha's hand and shook it warmly".³⁷² In one of the announcement of the article there is the same feeling as "it is sometimes very difficult to express our sentiments in words"³⁷³, in particular when they deal with love. One of the traits that connect the spirits, protagonists of the article, with those of the novel is the presence of sympathy in both of them: "the enjoyment and happiness of thy friend here to see thee happy",³⁷⁴ like the happiness of the ladies of Cranford towards Miss Matty's. At the end of the article there is the presence of a sentence which could be associated to Miss Matty state of affair, also if it concerns not trade but spirits: "in the Spirit business, as in most other trades, there are some bankruptcies".³⁷⁵ It is not by chance if the article that follows is exactly that of Cranford.

The subsequent one is called "Bavarian Poachers" and represents pictures of mountain life in Germany and Austria.

The following one is a poem entitled "And He Took A Child", full of sadness for the loss of a child. The loss is represented throughout the metaphor of the change of seasons, from spring to winter. In every season a mother reaches the grave of her son and lays there flowers, like presents to nature. It is also a metaphor for the inner resurrection of the parent, who at the end feels eventually at peace: "She laid her

³⁶⁸ Helen Kuryllo, op. cit., p. 104.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 218.

³⁷⁰ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 198.

³⁷¹ Ibid., p. 198.

³⁷² Ibid., p. 187.

³⁷³ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 218.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 218.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 220.

down beside her child, A smile of deepest peace she smil'd That night, the Angels sang!".³⁷⁶ The path of revelation could be associated to that of Miss Matty, who initially feels very sorrowful for the situation in which she is; but afterwards, thanks to help of her companions, she could finally see a better and more cheerful future.

Contrarily the following one is based on a story of trade because according to the author: "a clever man would find it worth his while to write a book on the romance of trade. We have the romance of history, the romance of war, the romance of geology, even the romance of peerage; but there are tales of the counter and the counting-house which would stir flesh and blood with very simple telling".³⁷⁷ In this romance of trade it is narrated the story of a certain Mr Heath who wants "to beget an iron trade in the East Indies, and to improve and enlarge the use of steel and iron in this country".³⁷⁸ As he improved the industrial system with new discoveries, Miss Matty accepted Miss Mary's suggestion to open a tea-shop and soon after she inaugurated it.

The last article is one written by George Augustus Sala called Powder Dick and His Train". First of all there is a depiction of the several pubs in London, to switch then to the rivers and to the men who sailed those rivers, in particular this Powder Dick who is a ferry-man. The narrator than goes inland and describes the clients of a lone white house named *Trinchinopoly Crab*. Inside it, the majority are nautical-men coming from abroad and the reference to the immediate return of Peter is clearly visible: "The stout little man in the rough brown coat and wide-awake has just come home from Smyrna".³⁷⁹ Another element that makes the reader understand that quite surely Peter is to return is the reference to the external aspect of the men who come from abroad, which has "mahogany cheeks and sun-crimsoned foreheads and embrowned hands".³⁸⁰ Actually this will exactly be the appearance of Peter once returned.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 229.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 229.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 230.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 240.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 240.

4.9 “A Happy Return to Cranford”: The End of the Fictional Community

Cranford: Chapter XV/XVI – *Household Words*: May 21, 1853 – Vol. VII, n° 165

- 1) “Our Last Parochial War”, Henry Morley – pp. 265-270.
- 2) “English Milords”, George Augustus Sala – pp. 270-273.
- 3) “Exploring Expedition to the Isle of Dogs”, George Dodd – pp. 273-277.
- 4) “A Happy Return to Cranford”, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell – pp. 277-285.
- 5) “The Settlers”, Adelaide Anne Procter – p. 277.
- 6) “Chips: Diffusion of Knowledge among Cattle”, Henry Morley – p. 285.
- 7) “Chips: Twenty Guinea Diplomas”, William Henry Wills – p. 285.
- 8) “The Life of Poor Jack”, Henry Morley – pp. 286-288.

The last instalment of *Cranford* was included in the issue of *Household Words* published on 21 May 1853. As has previously been said when analysing the letter sent to Forster, Mrs Gaskell knew she would have delivered other parts, but she did not know how many. At the end she opted for the provision of only one further piece, in which are recounted the return of Mr Peter and the community’s eventual restored peace.

The first article of the journal is a parallel description of the culture of another small town, which in several aspects resembles that of Cranford. It is entitled “Our Last Parochial War” and was written by Henry Morley. Since from the beginning the connection between the two works is clearly evident; even in the article an opposition between two cities, belonging to different times, is present. The two cities are Cess-cum-Poolton, which is the old town and the other which is unnamed that is simply called the New Town. It is new, because like Drumble is more recent and because it is “created in the neighbourhood of an important railway station”.³⁸¹ Moreover like Drumble, it is a new industrial city, because the narrator says that “it contains only an exceptional population consisting chiefly of young

³⁸¹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 265.

working men”.³⁸² The writer of the article, like the narrator of Cranford, feels a deep connection with the inhabitants of the city, so much so that he considers himself part of their community: “I am a Cess-cum-Pooltonian, only in so far as I am Briton. As for the people, I consider myself one of them, and shall discuss my neighbours as I please”.³⁸³ He then goes on representing the various characters of present there. First there is Mr Zinzib, “the first promoter of the public health movement among us”, and he could be associated with Mr Hoggins, the doctor of Cranford who does everything he can to save people’s lives. On the other hand Henry Morley is harder because while describing the city he is also criticizing the bad health conditions of the town, depending also on the fact that the inhabitants thought that “Sanitary reform was not required in Cess-cum-Poolton”.³⁸⁴ Therefore the narrator’s proposal was to “sit upon our hill like gods together, and oppose movements of all kinds, whether sanitary, social, or revolutionary”.³⁸⁵ They refused to sign the petition for the innovation of the health system, because they were solidly bond to their old ways of living, similarly to the Cranford community but for different reasons. They refused modernization because they thought that their conducts were right, and to the inspector’s questions answered falsely to protect their presumed right actions. The story is taken from the public health inspection of 1851 in the real town of Poulton-cum-Seacombe.

The following article is “English Milords” whose author is again George Augustus Sala. It describes how the French people look at English milord, starting from ancient times until the author’s contemporary time. Initially he was badly seen as he “was looked upon in France as a species of drunken savage, frequently cutting other people’s throats, and not unfrequently going raving mad, tyrannising over their dependents, and merciless beating their wife and children”.³⁸⁶ Probably this bad consideration of English people derives from the constant ancient diatribe between the two countries. As their relationships improve, they started to look at them differently, entitling them “Seigneur – the grand Seigneur Anglais”,³⁸⁷ praising also

³⁸² Ibid., p. 265.

³⁸³ Ibid., p. 265.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 266.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 267.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 270.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 270.

their way of dressing. In the article are also taken into account those who travel abroad and for this reason the allusion to Mr Peter's experience could not be ignored.

Even the subsequent article is connected with the Jenkyns brother. It is entitled "Exploring Expedition to the Isle of Dogs" and describes the landscape and the origin of an isle barely unknown. The history of its name is based on two theories which are not sure to be real, and there are recounted also many stories concerning its source. Mr Peter does the same when he return in his country, as he narrates a lot of stories to the curious ladies, but no one of them has been there, therefore we are not sure of whether they are based on real fact or if they are products of his imagination. As Mary Smith underlines: "For my own part, I had vibrated all my life between Drumble and Cranford, and I thought it was quite possible that all Mr Peter's story must be true although wonderful; but when I found, that if we swallowed an anecdote of tolerable magnitude one week, we had the dose considerably increased the next, I began to have my doubts".³⁸⁸

The isle is also known for her docks, in particular it is recorded that "no less than ten ships of war were launched here during the single year 1813"³⁸⁹ and probably there was built the ship in which Peter sailed to go to India.

The subsequent piece is the *Cranford* instalment who is immediately followed by a poem called "The Settlers", which represents the grief of two men who went away from their country: "Would, some voice could tell where they are, our own beloved ones!".³⁹⁰ Moreover when one of them asked where her love was, he only received an echoing voice who said that she was dead:

Lo, she lieth cold and pale,
And her smile so calm and saintly
Heeds no grieving sob or wail –
Heeds not the lilies strewn upon her,
Pure as she is, and as white,
Or the solemn chanting voices,
Or the taper's ghastly light.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Peter Keating, op. cit., p. 211.

³⁸⁹ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 276.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 277.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 277.

The same happened to Peter, who felt the same sorrow when abroad either because far from his family, but also because he lost his mother without the possibility of telling her goodbye: “The very day after her death – for she did not live quite a twelvemonth after Peter went away – the very day after – came a parcel from India – from her poor boy. It was a large, soft, white Indian shawl, with just a narrow border all round; just what my mother would have liked”.³⁹² Soon after Peter’s father says, as trying to smooth his and his son’s sorrow: “She shall be buried in it, Peter shall have that comfort; and she would have liked it”.³⁹³

The succeeding articles deals respectively with the possibility of acquiring a diploma only paying twenty guineas, “Twenty Guineas Diploma”; and the second with the strange capability of animals, in this case of cattle, to communicate to each other without saying a word, “Diffusion of Knowledge Among Cattle”.

The last one is called “the Life of Poor Jack”, by Henry Morley, and as for almost each of his works, it is a critic; in this case of the bad conditions and the negligence of the superiors concerning vessels. The narrator is underlying how many sailors die due to the awful state of the ships, caused by the fact that insurances covered any possible risks and therefore the works were done very approximately. Moreover those who had great capabilities were paid low and this bothered sailors pretty much: “the entering of fishmongers, tailors, and others, who desired to work their passage out to the gold diggings, at a reduced pay, to the hurt of good seamen by lowering their rate of wages, and screwing up to the worst possible pinch their rate of work”.³⁹⁴ Many of them however died for the critical conditions of the vessels: “I find in my blue books, that of every seventeen sailors who die, twelve are drowned or lost by shipwrecks”.³⁹⁵ And the last sentence of this paragraph could be related to Peter’s life, as the sorrow of his family is similar to those who lose a love or a child or even a parent: “how many women have the thought of a dead sailor curled up in their hearts, and how many sailors’ orphans there are in the workhouses

³⁹² Peter Keating., op. cit., p. 102.

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁹⁴ Charles Dickens, op. cit., p. 286.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 286.

and gutters”.³⁹⁶ In the article it is eventually described the necessity and the presumed innovation according to which “I would make every men responsible in his pocket for the loss he inflicts on others by neglecting proper precautions against damage to his fellow-creatures in the carrying of his business, or in the doing of anything whatever that he may do”.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 287.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 287.

Conclusion

The aim of the present work, as has already been pointed out, has been that of showing the relationships that exist between *Cranford*, the novel written by Elizabeth Gaskell and *Household Words*, the weekly journal founded by Charles Dickens on 1850.

Before getting through the study itself, a brief account of the lives and works of the two authors has been given, because they were fundamental to the understanding of their choices. First of all Dickens chose Elizabeth Gaskell, because he saw in her a great potential that could be exploited to reinforce his consideration on current topics. She in fact treated in her work *Mary Barton*, the first to have been praised by the editor, themes that he found interesting, because aligned to his way of thinking. He therefore immediately asked her to contribute to his journal and she accepted delivering *Lizzie Leigh*, a short tale that really thrilled him, for its dealing with subjects that he enjoyed. As a matter of fact it was published in the launching issue of the magazine on 30 March 1850. What followed was another approval and he continued asking her to provide further pieces. The result was the first instalment of *Cranford*, which was initially supposed to be a self-contained sketch, but which eventually became a novel because she delivered to Charles Dickens eight further parts. It depicts the small town of Cranford, with its genteel ladies, and their strictly way of living. This chapter presents also the arrival in the town of a new citizen, a certain Mr Brown, who came along with his two daughters. It was such a disturbing event that initially the ladies did not know how to react, although Miss Deborah since from the beginning showed her discontent. The chapter ends with Mr Brown, Miss Brown and Miss Deborah Jenkyns' death and Miss Jessie Brown's meeting with an old acquaintance of her father.

This piece was inserted in the issue published on 13 December 1851, and many connections between the instalment and the articles of the journal could be found. Dickens was so charmed by Gaskell's work that he decided to put it first in the issue, followed by an article on the question of seamen's troubles, a poem on Christianity and the faith on going to heaven if you act in the right way. Immediately after it there are an article on the sale of poisons and one on pork insurances. There

was also “A story of a Nation” by Henry Morley, and the closing one was about the christening of a baby and the funeral of a duchess. At first sight it could seem that between the articles and the story there is nothing in common, but when carefully analyzed it appears that the latter is clearly linked to the number of the newspaper. Initially *Cranford* was supposed to be a relief from the general gloomy tone of the journal, but actually inside the novel there are many references to the outside world that makes it appropriate to be included in *Household Words*. Furthermore the pleasant episodes of the novel satisfy the aim of the journal of “raising up those that are down”³⁹⁸, one of the things that encouraged Dickens to chose exactly Elizabeth Gaskell. She convinced so much Charles Dickens that he asked her to supply further pieces. And that was what she did; eight further parts followed. In these the technique and the spirit of the narration were the same of the first piece, although new characters arrive, like Mr Brunoni. The fact that he was a man provoked in the townswomen the same feeling that every man caused in them, which is detachment and suspect; moreover this latter was also accused of robbery. As has happened for the previous male characters, at the end he is absolved from their hostile judgment and revealed to be a very kind person. The episode seems to represent that the initial will of the ladies to remain self-absorbed in the community is eventually overcome. It is also confirmed by their approval of Miss Matty’s brother, who has returned safely home after having spent many years abroad, and having restored peace within the little town.

For the purpose of the present work every instalment of *Cranford* within the journal has been taken into consideration, to see whether the choices of the editor interested only the first piece or even the others. As a matter of fact the same operation has been used for every number, presumably because the editor wanted to remain close to his preliminary aims. In fact every instalment presents at least one of the characteristic exposed in the guiding line of *Household Words*, although from the letters exchanged by the two authors it does not appear that the former has in any way influenced Gaskell’s writing.

Despite having been sometimes in contrast, the topics treated by the two authors were pretty similar and the analysis on which this work is based confirms it.

³⁹⁸ Graham Storey, Cathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, op.cit. pp.21-22.

They were both interested in social matters, including the bad condition of the labourers belonging to the working class, the terrible sanitary condition of the country and the question of the fallen woman. Many articles present in the journal deal with this kind of topic indeed, and therefore the association of Mrs Gaskell with him is consequent.

The task of this production has been thence the analysis of the meaning of *Cranford* compared with the surrounding context of *Household Words*. It could be said that the insertion of the instalments was casual, but when accurately analyzed, it appears that the editor's choices have been made to properly suit his intentions, exposed in the opening issue.

In fact Mrs Gaskell's work satisfies everything Dickens had in mind and moreover it has been revealed that the actual interpretation of *Cranford* could not be done if not considered within its wide context of *Household Words*.

Appendix I

“A Preliminary Word”, Charles Dickens

"Familiar in their Mouths as HOUSEHOLD WORDS." ---- SHAKESPEARE.

HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 1.] SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 1850. [PRICE 2*d.*

A PRELIMINARY WORD.

THE name that we have chosen for this publication expresses, generally, the desire we have at heart in originating it.

We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look.

We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the progress of

mankind, less thankful for the privilege of
living in this summer-dawn of time.

No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of
the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh
tone to our Household Words. In the bosoms
of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of
the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light
of Fancy which is inherent in the human
breast; which, according to its nurture, burns
with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen
glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can
never be extinguished. To show to all, that
in all familiar things, even in those which are
repellant on the surface, there is Romance
enough, if we will find it out:—to teach the
hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil,
that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal
fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces
of imagination; to bring the greater and the
lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field,
and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance
and a kinder understanding—is
one main object of our Household Words.

The mightier inventions of this age are not,
to our thinking, all material, but have a kind
of souls in their stupendous bodies which may
find expression in Household Words. The
traveller whom we accompany on his railroad
or his steamboat journey, may gain, we hope,
some compensation for incidents which these
later generations have outlived, in new

associations with the Power that bears him onward; with the habitations and the ways of life of crowds of his fellow creatures among whom he passes like the wind; even with the towering chimneys he may see, spiriting out fire and smoke upon the prospect. The swart giants, Slaves of the Lamp of Knowledge, have their thousand and one tales, no less than the Genii of the East; and these, in all their wild, grotesque, and fanciful aspects, in all their many phases of endurance, in all their many moving lessons of compassion and consideration, we design to tell.

Our Household Words will not be echoes of the present time alone, but of the past too.

Neither will they treat of the hopes, the enterprises, triumphs, joys, and sorrows, of this country only, but, in some degree, of those of every nation upon earth. For nothing can be a source of real interest in one of them, without concerning all the rest.

We have considered what an ambition it is to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness; to people the sick room with airy shapes 'that give delight and hurt not,' and to be associated with the harmless laughter and the gentle tears of many hearths. We know the great responsibility of such a privilege; its

vast reward; the pictures that it conjures up, in hours of solitary labour, of a multitude moved by one sympathy; the solemn hopes which it awakens in the labourer's breast, that he may be free from self-reproach in looking back at last upon his work, and that his name may be remembered in his race in time to come, and borne by the dear objects of his love with pride. The hand that writes these faltering lines, happily associated with some Household Words before to-day, has known enough of such experiences to enter in an earnest spirit upon this new task, and with an awakened sense of all that it involves.

Some tillers of the field into which we now come, have been before us, and some are here whose high usefulness we readily acknowledge, and whose company it is an honour to join. But, there are others here—Bastards of the Mountain, draggled fringe on the Red Cap, Panders to the basest passions of the lowest natures—whose existence is a national reproach. And these, we should consider it our highest service to displace.

Thus, we begin our career! The adventurer in the old fairy story, climbing towards the summit of a steep eminence on which the object of his search was stationed, was surrounded by a roar of voices, crying to him, from the stones in the way, to turn back. All

the voices *we* hear, cry Go on! The stones that call to us have sermons in them, as the trees have tongues, as there are books in the running brooks, as there is good in everything! They, and the Time, cry out to us Go on! With a fresh heart, a light step, and a hopeful courage, we begin the journey. The road is not so rough that it need daunt our feet: the way is not so steep that we need stop for breath, and, looking faintly down, be stricken motionless.

Go on, is all we hear, Go on! In a glow already, with the air from yonder height upon us, and the inspiriting voices joining in this acclamation, we echo back the cry, and go on cheerily!

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