

From Cranford to The Country of the Pointed Firs:

Elizabeth Gaskell's American Publication and the Work of Sarah Orne Jewettⁱ

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In this second of two articles on Elizabeth Gaskell's American connections I plan first to outline the history of the publication of her work in the United States during her own lifetime, and then to consider the popularity of *Cranford* in that country in the years following her death. I shall conclude by discussing the work of the New England writer, Sarah Orne Jewett whose story sequences *Deephaven* (1877) and *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) clearly reflect the influence of Gaskell's work.

I

One of the remarkable things about Gaskell's career as a novelist is the way in which, after a late start, her career took off. She was in her late thirties when *Mary Barton* was published, but from then on, and in particular through the 1850s, her output was incessant. This was partly due to the fact that Dickens took her up for *Household Words*; it is interesting to watch her becoming increasingly independent of his encouragement and influence through the fifties decade. What is also interesting is the extent to which she was taken up abroad, both on the continent and in the USA. To some extent this is because publishers in those countries found it more profitable to publish established English authors - even if, as in the case of the Europeans, they had to translate them - than to develop native talent. It was a period when popular fiction flourished, often published in cheap and sometimes unauthorised popular series. In France, for example, Louis Hachette published his translations of Gaskell's works in his Bibliothèque des Chemins de Fers, and in the USA Gaskell's works were rapidly subsumed into the various

enterprises put out by a newly developing publishing industry. Historians of American publishing have identified the years of Gaskell's writing career as critical for American publishing; they were years in which, after hesitant and uncertain beginnings, the major American publishing houses established themselves in response to a rapidly developing market for leisure reading.ⁱⁱ Describing the firm's achievement over these years the first historian of Harper and Brothers, the New York publisher with whom Gaskell came to be most associated, described the secret of their success:

The Harper brothers saw an enormous reading public in a country of cheap literature, and an immense store of material at their disposition in England, more various and attractive than the home supply, and they resolved to bring the two together.ⁱⁱⁱ

Harper eventually were to come to the fore, but only in the context of considerable competition, first between publishing houses in Philadelphia and New York, and then in New York and Boston, as firms in each of these cities contested to establish nationwide circulation for their products.

In 1850 Gaskell wrote to an American reader of *Mary Barton*, John Seeley Hart, thanking him for his comments on her novel:

The writing of 'Mary Barton' was a great pleasure to me ... A good deal of it's [sic] success I believe was owing to the time of it's [sic] publication, - the great revolutions in Europe had directed people's attention to the social evils, and the strange contrasts which exist in old nations ... I have not told you though how I have liked to receive an expression of approval from an *American*.^{iv}

Assuming her correspondent to have read the novel in his native country, he would have done so in the double columned paper bound edition published by Harper in their 'library' series, the *Library of Select Novels* in December 1848.^v Priced at only 25 cents this volume is in itself evidence of the state of American publishing at its time. Library series were a popular vehicle for the inexpensive transmission of popular reading. Harper's 'Select Novels' library fed into the increasing appetite for fiction amongst a new reading public, ultimately including over 600

separate works, many of them reprints of English authors. Gaskell's next work to appear in America was *Lizzie Leigh*, published in pamphlet form by the New York publishers, Dewitt and Davenport in 1850, at the price of six cents. This was the story, of course, with which Dickens had opened *Household Words*. It was issued on May 18, 1850, only one month after its conclusion in *Household Words*, and with Dickens's name, not Gaskell's on its title-page. Harper reprinted the story in their *New Monthly Magazine* in June 1850, and in the same year other versions of the story appeared in American collections of *Household Words* material. This sequence of events tells us a lot about the conditions of publishing in America at this time: publishers, not all of them scrupulous, were eager to get their hands on anything from which they thought they might make a profit, and which might establish their own position in the industry. Just as English novels were published in volume form in the United States, so too was serialised material taken over for magazine publication: indeed the appearance of fiction in part form in England gave American publishers a start when they came to publish these works in their country. The weekly journal *Littell's Living Age* published a great deal of *Household Words* material, including stories by Gaskell, while Harper was to publish her work in serial form in various of the journals which they published at mid-century. American publishers were thus replicating both full volume and periodical publication of English fiction, and at a pace which scarcely allowed for niceties of production.

Gaskell was perhaps right to identify the subject-matter of *Mary Barton* as specifically European in its interest. While along with *Cranford* it came to be seen as a representative work in her native country, it would seem to have been less popular in the United States. Smith records further impressions of the work issued by Harper in 1855, 1856 and 1859, and one more in 1877, but according to Northup there was no new edition of the work until 1883, the very point at which, as I shall argue, reprints of *Cranford* were taking off across the Atlantic.^{vi}

From the publication of *Mary Barton* on Gaskell's major works were usually published in the United States in the same year as their publication in England. Here again she was helped by the success of the 'Select Novels' library. Following *Mary Barton*, *North and South* (1855), *My Lady Ludlow* (1858), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *A Dark Night's Work* (1863) and *Cousin Phillis* (1864) all appeared for Harper in what Smith describes as the 'light grayish yellowish brown paper wrappers' of this format. *Ruth*, meanwhile, had been published by the Boston publishers, Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, in a single cloth bound volume in 1853, and *Cranford*, in the same year, also cloth bound, by Harper themselves. In the absence of any formal transatlantic copyright arrangement American publishers secured printing rights for themselves in the United States by paying English publishers for advanced sheets of the novels which were then rushed out in their country; it was a matter for the English publishers to negotiate the benefits for their authors. Harper were resolutely opposed to proposals for international copyright, preferring the more informal 'conscience' system of arrangements whereby American publishers established their rights to foreign works. It cannot be assumed that this automatically worked to the disadvantage of European authors, since the more established firms were usually punctilious in paying their advances for the rights to the advance sheets.^{vii}

What all of this reflects is opportunity - and to some extent opportunism - both for the publishers and for their authors. From Smith's listings, we can see that every one of Gaskell's full-length works, together with her later collections of stories, appeared in the United States almost as soon as they appeared at home. But in America as in England, as Gaskell becomes more experienced as a novelist, we see her taking a more direct role in her dealings with her publishers. On October 30, 1857, her daughter Marianne wrote on her behalf to Charles Eliot Norton:

This letter is a business one for Mama. Do you remember her telling you that she had undertaken to write a story for Harper? She finished it on Monday, and sent it off to Sampson Low the American ... publisher in London. He did not acknowledge the receipt of the parcel until this morning (Friday). I enclose his letter in which he says that Harper like the rest of the American world is suffering from money difficulties. Mama is very much afraid that Mr Low has delayed answering her letter that he might be able to send the story off tomorrow by the packet which sails then, without Mama's having the power to stop it.

She says he has done one or two 'dodgy' things of the kind before. She is afraid that her story will be lost altogether, having got into Harper's hands. What she wants, is to know if you would be so kind as to see a little about it, if you having all the particulars think it necessary. She is afraid she is very troublesome but she knows you will be so kind as to help her out of her difficulty if you think there is likely to be any. The name of the story is 'The Doom of the Griffiths'. It is about 53 folio pages.^{viii}

Norton, of course, was then in Boston, where the publishing industry was separate from that of New York, where Harper's operated. What is happening here clearly is that Gaskell fears that Harper's payment cannot be guaranteed, and that they are using Sampson Low to get hold of the story so that they can publish it and perhaps deal with the question of payment once they have published it. Gaskell, for her part, thinks she might get a better deal elsewhere. She was unsuccessful - 'The Doom of the Griffiths' first appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in January 1858, and was later incorporated in her sequence of tales, *Round the Sofa*, published in England by Sampson Low in 1859. (Gaskell had come to Sampson Low, incidentally, via Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose publisher he was in England. Low was an interesting figure in C19 publishing history: he was in fact English, but his small publishing house developed a special relationship with Harper, and he published a number of American authors in England.)^{ix}

The story has a sequel. Gaskell was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with her publishers in England at this time, and in January 1859 we find her contacting Norton again, this time via her second daughter, Meta:

As Mama's deputy I write to you, to beg you to enquire if Messrs Ticknor and Fields will buy the copyright of a story which she is now writing for the 'Household Words',

and which she expects to be about the length of 'Lady Ludlow'. She has been very badly treated abt the latter - *Mr Sampson Lowe* [sic] must have behaved badly, she thinks. Without one word of application to her, either directly or through Mr Lowe ... Messrs Harper have republished Lady Ludlow ... Mama has written to Messrs Harpers abt this piracy ... Of course she has been unable to accept Messrs Ticknor and Field's offer; in consequence of Messrs Harper's having snatched at it (Lady L) so dishonorably. Of course too, it brings her dealings with the Harper-firm to an end - for ever.

If Messrs Ticknor and Field [sic] will give her a certain sum for this new story, and in addition to the price of the story enough more to pay for the copying of it, - (which she can get done by a poor lame cripple) - and if you will let Mama know by return of post, Mama will see that they have a copy of the story in time for them to have the start of any other American publisher with it. She is not quite sure whether the Household Words-people will allow of its publication in America before its conclusion in their paper; but she will enquire. At any rate she supposes that its appearance as a whole story in America simultaneously with the publication of the *last* chapter in Household Words is allowable. Perhaps you know how this is - ?

...

Mama is very well now - I hope not merely *for* just now, though so is Papa -
With our united affectionate remembrances,
Believe me, my dear Mr Norton,
Most truly yours,
Meta Emily Gaskell (*Further Letters*, pp.194-5)

With its interaction of the domestic and the professional the letter is a wonderful insight into the actualities of Gaskell's working practices - Meta writing the letter at her dictation to an increasingly harassed Norton, the 'poor lame cripple' lined up to copy the text, and behind it all Gaskell's anxiety, and her determination to get the best deal for herself that is consistent with her conception of honourable behaviour. It is probable that Meta's reference is to *A Dark Night's Work*, although *Lois the Witch* is also a possibility; the latter story might have been expected to appeal to American readers, given its subject-matter.^x Smith records a single edition of *Lois* on its own in 1864, under the title of *The Maiden Martyr: A Tale of New England Witchcraft*. This volume was published, unattributed to its author, by Beadle and Company of New York. According to Madison, Beadle produced cheap reprints at ten cents per copy for soldiers during the American Civil War.^{xi} If this was such a volume it is a connection of which Gaskell, herself much interested in the war, would have been ignorant.

However, in spite of Gaskell's wish to break with Harper 'for ever', *Lois the Witch* first appeared in America in Harper's publication of the *Round the Sofa* collection in 1860, and *A Dark Night's Work*, also published by Harper, in 1863. A further letter from Meta to Norton in May 1859 tells us why: 'She hopes you will not repent your trouble, but forgive her having caused it to you; when you hear that it has been useless. The offer that Messrs Ticknor and Fields make is so *very* small in comparison with what she gains here that she does not think it worth accepting. Mr Sampson Lowe [sic] - until now the villain of the piece] has just offered her £1000 for a tale but little longer than the one Messrs. T and F bid for.' There is however an advantage that Meta detects:

Privately speaking I am so glad that she should thus give up the resolution she formed in 1857 of publishing for the future in America ... Her abandoning the natural and wonted *publishing field* for a new and foreign one, would, I thought, seem like an attempt to revenge on the English reading-public (who have so warmly received and appreciated her works) the sorrow caused by a small party - or rather by two families - in consequence of the publication of her last book. (*Further Letters*, p.197)

The final reference is to *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* which Gaskell had had to withdraw and then amend because of the threat of a libel action when it was published in 1857. The American first edition of the *Life* incidentally, published in the same year, reprints the unamended text: the libel writ presumably didn't extend to publication overseas. It was in 1857 that Gaskell, perhaps anticipating the hostile responses to the *Life*, took her extended holiday in Rome to which Norton and other of her American friends contributed so much. But the revelation that she was considering abandoning publication in England altogether, and publishing only in America is as startling as it would have been impracticable. Even if it could have been implemented it would have surely finished her English career, and that before the period of her finest novels, *Sylvia's Lovers*, *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters*. It was never likely to happen of course, and for the English publication of her final works her final works, *Sylvia's Lovers*, *A Dark Night's Work*, *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters*, she put herself into the

care of George Smith, most assiduous and generous of publishers, who had of course commissioned *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* from her. In spite of her earlier misgivings all were published in the United States by Harper, thus completing the sequence of his editions of her work.

II

Elizabeth Gaskell's sudden death in 1865 at the point of completion of *Wives and Daughters* evoked a number of essays which combined a review of her final novel with an obituary tribute. Amongst them was one by a young critic destined to become a great figure of American letters Henry James wrote in the in the New York journal, *The Nation*:

We cannot help thinking that in 'Wives and Daughters' the late Mrs Gaskell has added to the number of those works of fiction - of which we can noy perhaps count more than a score as having been produced in our own time - which will outlast the duration of their novelty and continue for years to come to be read and relished for a higher order of merits,

Wives and Daughters, he continued, was 'one of the very best novels of its kind' and 'the best of its author's own tales - putting aside *Cranford*, that is, which as a work of quite other pretensions ought not to be weighed against it.' *Cranford* too however, seemed 'manifestly destined in its modest way to become a classic'.^{xii}

Where the United States was concerned the record of Gaskell's post-mortem publication bears out exactly half of James's predictions. In spite of James's enthusiasm Northup records no further exclusively American publication of *Wives and Daughters* within the time-scale of his bibliography. *Cranford*, however - that 'work of quite other pretentions' - was to be published so repeatedly, and in so many formats as to become its author's almost exclusively representative work.^{xiii}

Despite James's prediction, with the exception of *Cranford* Gaskell's fiction seems only to have been infrequently reprinted in the United States in the years following her death. And when it was, the contrast between the proliferation of editions of *Cranford* and the

apparent disappearance of the longer works reflects a more general pattern. Put at its simplest the shorter works retain some popularity while the full-length novels tend to disappear from view. Thus there were new editions of *My Lady Ludlow* in 1867 and 1877, and again in 1889, and of *The Moorland Cottage* in 1868, but apparently no further independent editions of any of the full-length novels until Harper reprinted *Mary Barton* in 1883. Harper's re-issue shows how once again Gaskell's work was subject to the competitive pressures of the American publishing world. In the late 1870s and early 80s the New York firm of G. Munro issued a sequence of Gaskell titles in their 'Seaside Library'. This was one of a number of such 'libraries', whereby often little-known publishers issued cheap reprints without respect to any financial obligation on their part. According to Madison the 'Seaside Library' was 'the most successful' of these, but its volumes were poorly printed on 'the cheapest kind of paper', often appearing without covers.^{xiv} Northup lists the following Gaskell titles as appearing in Munro's series: *My Lady Ludlow* (1877), *A Dark Night's Work* (1878), *Cranford* (1881), *The Grey Woman and Other Tales*, *Libby Marsh's Three Eras and other Tales*, *Wives and Daughters* (all 1882) and *North and South* (1883). The activities of the pirates provoked responses from the legitimate publishers: thus Harper initiated a new paperback library series of their own, the 'Franklin Square Library', one of the first of whose volumes was Harper's 1877 impression of *Mary Barton*.^{xv} Harper's still managed to pay royalties while charging only ten cents per volume for the works published in their series. Madison identifies 14 such 'piratical' library series in 1877. Clearly Harper were aiming to forestall their less scrupulous rivals, but had it not been for their activities it would appear unlikely that Harper themselves would have re-issued Gaskell's first novel at this point in time.

By the end of the century Gaskell's reputation, as reflected in publishing figures, might have been no more substantial than that of many other nineteenth century English novelists,

and certainly not as substantial as some. Her works re-appeared, but for the most part somewhat randomly and intermittently. One work, however, achieved a popularity in the United States far greater perhaps than almost any other Victorian work of fiction, and that, of course, was *Cranford*

The publishing history of *Cranford* is an unusual one. Surprisingly - but with a nice irony for the purposes of this article - the story from which it originated, 'The Last Generation in England', was first published in America, in *Sartain's Union Magazine*, in 1849 and was not published in England in Gaskell's own lifetime. 'The Last Generation' contains reminiscences of life in an unnamed English village and it includes some of the incidents that Gaskell was to include in her early instalments of *Cranford* itself - the story of the cow dressed in a flannel waistcoat, and of the precious piece of lace that had to be emetically retrieved from the cat who had swallowed it. As has been noted, *Cranford* was published in New York by Harper in 1853, two of its chapters having earlier appeared in magazines ('A Love Affair at Cranford' in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 4 March 1852, and 'Our Society at Cranford' in *Littell's Living Age*, 6 March 1852). Further impressions appeared in 1855 and 1864. The first American edition after Gaskell's death was that in Monro's library series and nothing could have prepared American readers for the flood of reprints that appeared in their country in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. According to Northup, there were twenty reprints of *Cranford* in the United States in the years between 1880 and 1900 alone, and that is not to mention dramatic adaptations, like Mary Barnard Horne's *The Ladies of Cranford: Sketches of English Village Life Fifty Years Ago; in three acts* - one of several such projects registered in Boston in 1899. For 1891 Northup lists no fewer than eight separate reprints of *Cranford* by seven different publishers.

Cranford's meteoric rise in popularity at the turn of the century, on both sides of the Atlantic is manifested in a number of ways. The dramatisations recorded by Northup suggest that it was a work that was socially very accessible, one indeed entrenched in a specific sector of popular taste. Madison notes the rise in what he calls textbook publishing after the American Civil War^{xvi} and editions of *Cranford* begin to appear advertised as being edited or annotated by teachers and academics, like that of 1905, 'edited by Martin W. Sampson, Professor of English in Indiana University'. Clearly Gaskell's work has been adopted as an educational text. Illustration increasingly plays a part, as do decorative bindings and other such aspects of luxury presentation. What all this reflects is the reputation of the work it had by then become not, as I have argued elsewhere, an affectionate commentary on a society at the point of its passing, but the nostalgic reminiscence of an earlier and more genteel provincial society, whose customs and values were part of a distinctly un-urban England.^{xvii} The famous Macmillan edition of 1891, with its decorated binding, introduction by Anne Thackeray Ritchie, and elegant if somewhat precious Hugh Thomson illustrations, which appeared simultaneously in England and in America, has a lot to answer for. But post-bellum America had its own experience of the kind of social shifts recorded in *Cranford*: it also saw traditional patterns of life threatened by a new materialism. For an American novelist like Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The House of the Seven Gables*, published just before *Cranford* in 1851, not only the railroad but the newspaper and the daguerrotype were symbols of a modernity that would change the ways of New England for ever. The American popularity of *Cranford* comes in the aftermath of these social upheavals.^{xviii} A. W. Ward, in his Introduction to the *Cranford* volume of his 'Knutsford' edition quoted Charles Eliot Norton's remark in 1868 that 'Cranford ... is known from Maine to California, and commented that '*Cranford* can justly be regarded as having originated ... a new school of fiction, [and] it is in America that this school

has mostly flourished.^{xix} Ward in all probability refers to a group of American women writers, who flourished in the magazine publishing climate of the last decades of the nineteenth century and who have come to be known as ‘American regionalists’. Chief amongst them was New England’s chronicler of the threatened fishing communities of the Maine seaboard, Sarah Orne Jewett, and in the final section of this article I shall discuss the evidence of Gaskell’s influence upon her as reflected in two of her most well-known works, *Deephaven* (1877) and *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896).

III

Sarah Orne Jewett was born in South Berwick, Maine in 1849; she died just over sixty years later in the house in which she was born. She travelled on several occasions to Europe, and elsewhere overseas, but she remained very much attached to the place of her birth, alternating her residence there for most of her life only with stays with friends in Boston. She had a number of contacts with distinguished literary figures, both European and American, and her biographer, Paula Blanchard, records that on a visit to England she once visited Meta and Julia Gaskell. As a child she had been given *Cranford*, along with *Pride and Prejudice* by her own mother, and its influence is very clear in her own work.^{xx}

Like many other women writers of the period in America, Jewett published much of her work in the various periodicals that catered for middle-class leisured reading. Her natural form is the short story or sketch; as with Gaskell in England these stories were often republished in collections in book form, or formed the basis of a loosely connected longer narrative. A story, ‘The Shore House’, based on the fictional fishing village of Deephaven appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in September 1873; further Deephaven stories were published in the same journal in September 1875 and September 1876 before *Deephaven* itself was published as a single volume by the Boston firm of James Osgood in 1877. *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

was serialised in *The Atlantic Monthly* in four parts early in 1896 prior to its first full-length publication in book form by Houghton, Mifflin and Company later in the same year. The publication process of Jewett's work thus replicates, to some extent the first English publication of *Cranford* itself. Jewett rarely attempted a longer narrative, and she equally rarely strayed from the environment she knew for her subject-matter: one of her few attempts at a structured novel, *A Country Doctor*, for example, draws on her own childhood experience of travelling with her father on his medical rounds.

Both *Deephaven* and *The Country of the Pointed Firs* consist of chains of stories, each narrated by an naive but increasingly aware female narrator who tells of her experiences of living amongst remote provincial communities. While elderly women are prominent these are not exclusively 'communities of the amazons', in Gaskell's *Cranford* terminology: the pattern in each work tends to be that the narrator, having established a central relationship with a matriarchal figure, is introduced to a sequence of isolates, often in fact male, whose lives reflect project various aspects of failure and decline.

In *Deephaven*, the earlier work, the debt to *Cranford* is spelt out by Jewett herself in an early chapter called 'Deephaven Society'. This is an echo of Gaskell's own chapter in *Cranford*, 'Society at Cranford' and the chapter performs much the same function, introducing the reader at the outset to the eccentricities of a society still living within the conventions of its past. 'Deephaven is utterly out of fashion', the narrator, a modern young woman from Boston, Helen Denis, remarks.^{xxi} Jewett in fact draws a direct analogy with her predecessor, when Helen compares one of the characters with one of Gaskell's: 'She occupied much the same position that Mrs. Betty Barker did in Cranford. And Indeed Kate and I were often reminded of that estimable town.' (p.42). Helen Denis is visiting the town with her friend Kate Lancaster: the two young women are thus identified as readers of Gaskell's work. There are further echoes

of *Cranford* in their conversation: “Do you notice how many more old women there are than old men?” her friend observes when they attend church (p.43); these old women, ‘though laying claim to no slight degree of present consequence, modestly ignored it, and spoke with pride of the grand way in which life was carried on by their ancestors, the Deephaven families of old times.’ (p.39) Those who are not spinsters are widowed like ‘Miss Honora and Mrs. Dent’ who ‘had lived gay lives in their younger days ... but they were quite content to stay in their own house with their books and letters and knitting, and they carefully read Littell, and the “new magazine”, as they called the Atlantic.’ (p.41) As with Gaskell, the literary reference is self-referential. Again as in *Cranford* letters play an important part: the two young women from Boston find themselves unwrapping the love-letters of Kate’s dead great-aunt, ‘tied with a very pale and tired-looking blue ribbon’ which provoke a reflection on her never having married: ‘So, there was a sailor lover after all, and perhaps he had been lost at sea.’ (pp.18-19) There is even a long-lost brother who has travelled to a distant land and become a Roman Catholic - as unthinkable in Deephaven as if Miss Matty’s brother Peter had taken up with the religions of the East on his travels.

In the case of *Deeplaven* it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jewett must at least have begun it very much with *Cranford* in mind. In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, a much more accomplished work, the similarities are both less immediately demonstrable and more substantial. At one point Jewett slips in the phrase ‘elegant ingenuity’ (p.467) to describe the nature of local hospitality: it is a direct echo of Gaskell’s famous phrase ‘elegant economy’ in *Cranford*. But it is the more substantial reminders of *Cranford* that matter. The format is similar to that of *Deeplaven*: a narrator from the outside world - but this time an adult, herself an unnamed writer, and a more self-aware and complex character than her counterpart in the earlier work - takes a summer vacation at the little coastal town of Dunnet. In retrospect she

records her own responses to the representatives of this remote community: again the basic pattern is one of modern and sophisticated self-confidence learning from the experience of older people who have lived quieter and remoter lives. But compared with *Deephaven* there is a much more coherent sense of structure inter-linking the individual stories, which operate within the contexts of overall frameworks of time and place. Above all there is the emerging relationship between the narrator and Mrs Almiry Todd, widow, herbalist, and receptacle and narrator of her community's oral history. Mrs Todd is one of the great creations of American short fiction, standing, just as Miss Matty does, on the borderline between sentimentalism and a much more powerful expression of human experience. Jewett can be said to have gone well beyond *Cranford* in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* - to have transformed her model, in fact, and made it truly her own, and part of the American literary inheritance.

Like Gaskell Jewett was driven by her consciousness of cultural change. Looking back on *Deephaven*, she wrote that

The young writer of these Deephaven sketches was possessed by a dark fear that townspeople and country people would never understand one another, or learn to profit by their new relationship.^{xxii}

'Fear' is an emotion completely alien to the spirit of *Cranford*, where Gaskell takes it as axiomatic that townspeople and country people will ultimately understand each other: that is the implication of its ending, where if Miss Matty's economic difficulties are resolved by the deus ex machina of a returning long-lost brother, the city has as much to learn from the village as the village from the city. But the villagers of Jewett's stories are in a much bleaker economic situation. The social optimism which was available to Gaskell in Britain in the mid-1850s was not so easily available to Jewett. The prosperity of the fishing communities of the New England coast had gone irrecoverably by the time when she was writing, and the idea at least arguable in mid-Victorian Britain that the local community might be well-served by national

economic progress was not so applicable in the New England instance. Matthiesen makes the connection between Jewett's writing and the much larger American picture:

The distinction and refinement of Sarah Jewett's prose came out of an America which, with its Tweed rings and grabbing Trusts, its blatantly moneyed New York and squalid frontier towns, seemed most lacking in just those qualities.^{xxiii}

And there are other dimensions of this inherent pessimism. In Jewett's fiction Gaskell's benevolent comedy is replaced by something much darker - a sense of isolation, of loss, and of the irretrievable passage of time. These features figure in *Cranford*, of course, but only to be resolved by human sympathy and kindness. In *Cranford* death comes early in the narrative; it is defeated by the traditional rituals of marriage and birth, celebrated by Mr Hoggins and by Miss Matty's servant. In *Deephaven*, and even more so in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Jewett's characters live increasingly in death's shadow: each work is marked by a significant 'walking' funeral.^{xxiv} Within her declining communities her characters live as isolates: the final story of *Deephaven*, 'Miss Chauncey' tells of a woman made mad by her remoteness from human contact. In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, a very ancient mariner tells of his paranormal experience on the coasts of Greenland, Mrs Todd's aged mother lives alone on island cut off from the land, and a woman disappointed in love similarly refuses to return to the mainland from her otherwise uninhabited island, "'Perhaps thirty acres, rocks and all'", as Mrs Todd describes it. (p. 430) For all their capacity to help and support each other in times of hardship these people ultimately live alone: even the occasion of the annual reunion of the grand Bowden family that brings the villagers together at the climax of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, an occasion for feasting and celebration, is tinged by the sense of the elegiac. The narrator's first approach to the Bowden family home is marked by her sight of 'the stone-walled burying-ground that stood like a little fort on a knoll overlooking the bay': as she observes; 'there were plenty of scattered Bowdens who were not laid there, - some lost at sea,

and some out West, and some who died in the war; most of the home graves were those of women.’ (pp. 458-9) Reflecting on her experiences the narrator’s comment transcends the immediate moment: ‘The sky, the sea, have watched poor humanity at its rites so long; we were no more a poor New England family celebrating its own existence and simple progress; we carried the tokens and inheritance of all such households from which this had descended and were only the latest of our line.’ (p.460) Jewett’s language, and above all her land and seascapes invariably embody a symbolic dimension: through them we are in the world not of Victorian realism, but of Virginia Woolf, even the Eliot of *The Dry Salvages*. *Cranford* ends with its narrator’s tribute to Miss Matty’s beneficent influence: ‘We all love Miss Matty, and I somehow think we are all of us better when she is near us.’ (CD, p.160) When Jewett’s narrator takes her leave of Dunnet, it is with an a more absolute sense of finality:

The little town, with the tall masts of its disabled schooners in the inner bay, stood high above the flat sea for a few minutes, then sank back into the uniformity of the coast, and became indistinguishable from the other towns that looked as if they were crumbled on the furzy-green stoniness of the shore ... Presently the wind began to blow, and we struck out seaward to double the long sheltering headland of the cape, and when I looked back again, the islands and the headland had run together and Dunnet Landing and all its coasts were lost to sight. (p.487)

In the cold air of New England we have the origins of literary modernism.^{xxv}

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Notes

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- i. This is the second of two articles on Elizabeth Gaskell's connections with the United States, the first of which was published in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Vol 15 (2001), pp.53-63.
- ii. See Charles A Madison, *Book Publishing in America*, (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1966), Part One, 'American Publishing to 1865'; William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1874* (rpt., New York, Columbia University Press, 1992), Ch. 10, 'James T. Fields and the beginnings of book promotion, 1840-1855', pp.168-89.
- iii. J. Henry Harper, *The House of Harper: A Century of Publishing in Franklin Square* (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1912), pp. 89-90. The Harper firm became established in the early decades of the nineteenth-century, eventually being headed by four brothers, James, John, Wesley and Fletcher. The name 'Harper and Brothers' was formally adopted in 1833: I have abbreviated this to 'Harper' throughout.
- iv. *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p.115. (Hereafter, *Letters*)
- v. I take my details of Gaskell's publishing history in the USA in her lifetime from Walter E Smith, *Elizabeth Gaskell, A bibliographical catalogue of first and early editions* (Los Angeles: Heritage Book Shop, 1998). This essay was initiated by my interest in Walter Smith's work.
- vi. Clark S. Northup, 'Bibliography', in G. De Witt Sanders, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929)

vii. I have not been able to establish figures for payments to Gaskell, but Madison records that Harper paid Wilkie Collins £750.00 for each of three novels, Charles Reade £1000 for a single novel, Thackeray £450 for *The Virginians*, Trollope £700 for *Sir Harry Hotspur*, and George Eliot ‘as much as £1700 for *Daniel Deronda*’. (Madison, pp.28-9) By any standards these are considerable sums at that time.

viii. *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. John Chapple and Alan Shelston (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 278-79 (Hereafter *Further Letters*).

ix. Gaskell famously described Low as ‘a rascally publisher’ (*Letters*, p.531), but her later letters to him are appreciative and in fact he did a considerable amount for Anglo-American publishing relations. For an account of Low, see Edward Marston, *After work: fragments from the workshop of an old publisher* (London: William Heinemann, 1904).

x. J.G. Sharps argues strongly for *A Dark Night’s Work* in *Mrs Gaskell’s Observation and Invention* (Fontwell Sussex: Linden Press, 1966), p.579-85, but both stories remain a possibility.

xi. Madison, p.36.

xii. Henry James, unsigned review of *Wives and Daughters* in *The Nation* 22 February 1866, Reprinted in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Angus Easson, (London and New York, Routledge, 1991), p.463.

xiii. Here, as elsewhere in this section, I rely on Northup’s bibliography. It has been shown to be incomplete in some aspects, but it provides a reliable overall record of the situation.

xiv. Madison, pp.53-4.

xv. The status of the 1877 text of *Mary Barton* is unclear. I have assumed that the item listed by Northup (Sanders, p. 192) is the same as the 'impression' recorded by Smith (p.24), since the pagination details given in each case are identical.

xvi. Madison, pp.12-8

17. Alan Shelston, 'Cranford and the Victorian reader', *Rivisti di Studi Vittoriani*, Volume 2, 1997, 3, pp.19-32.

xviii. For my understanding of New England socio-cultural history I draw upon the classic studies by Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England* (1936) and *New England Indian Summer* (1940). I once heard Brooks's work described as having been 'superceded' by a precocious historian; one would as soon say that Thomas Carlyle had been updated by an academic thesis.

xix. *The Works of Mrs Gaskell*, with introductions by A. W. Ward (London: Smith Elder and Co, 1906), The 'Knutsford' Edition, vol II, *Cranford* and other tales, p.x.

xx. Paula Blanchard, *Sarah Orne Jewett: Her World and her Work* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1994), p.310; F. O. Matthiessen, *Sarah Orne Jewett* (1929, rpt. Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1965), p.14. Matthiessen, the distinguished historian of nineteenth century American literature and critic of Henry James was in fact related to Jewett through his mother, Lucy Orne Matthiessen.

xxi. *Sarah Orne Jewett: Novels and Stories*, 'The Library of America Edition' (1996, New York: Penguin), p.40. All page references to Jewett's works are to this comprehensive edition.

22. Quoted in *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston and New York:

Houghton, Mifflin and Co, 1913)

xxiii. Matthiessen, p.151.

xxiv. *Deephaven*, Ch 11; *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Ch 4.

xxv. My comment deliberately echoes Henry James's comment on Hawthorne: 'The cold bright air of New England air seems to blow through his pages.' Henry James, Jnr, *Hawthorne*, (London: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 28-9.