Elizabeth Gaskell

Sylvia's Lovers

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ELIZABETH GASKELL was born in 1810, the daughter of Elizabeth Holland and William Stevenson, who trained as a Unitarian minister and was subsequently a farmer, journalist, and civil servant. After her mother's death, she was brought up by her aunt in Knutsford, Cheshire. In 1832 she married William Gaskell, junior minister at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel in Manchester; the couple had seven children, of whom four survived to adulthood. Gaskell's first novel, *Mary Barton*, published in 1848, was very successful and brought her to the notice of Charles Dickens, who subsequently asked her to write for his new periodical, *Household Words*. Her second novel, *Cranford* (1853), began as a series of papers in this journal. Her other novels are *Ruth* (1853), *North and South* (1855), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *Cousin Phillis* (1864), and *Wives and Daughters*, published posthumously in 1866. She also wrote many stories and non-fictional pieces, and the first biography of Charlotte Brontë (1857). She died in Hampshire in 1865.

FRANCIS O'GORMAN has written widely on English literature, and recent books include *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture* (2010) and editions of Margaret Oliphant's *The Makers of Venice* (2012), John Ruskin's *Praeterita* (Oxford World's Classics, 2012), and, with Katherine Mullin, Anthony Trollope's *The Duke's Children* (Oxford World's Classics, 2011). He is Professor of Victorian Literature at the University of Leeds.

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ELIZABETH GASKELL

Sylvia's Lovers

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
FRANCIS O'GORMAN

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INTRODUCTION

Readers who do not wish to learn details of the plot will prefer to treat the Introduction as an Afterword.

But for sorrow there is no remedy provided by nature; it is often occasioned by accidents irreparable, and dwells upon objects that have lost or changed their existence; it requires what it cannot hope, that the laws of the universe should be repealed; that the dead should return, or the past should be recalled.

(Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 28 August 1750)

When Elizabeth Gaskell began her penultimate novel, *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), her most recent major publication had been a biography. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) was a commemoration, and celebration, of another woman writer. It is easy to forget that the whole art of the biographer, let alone of the novelist, let alone of a woman novelist, was not in the 1850s well established. Charlotte, like Gaskell, had found time for fiction only in the middle of a busy life with many responsibilities at home and beyond. In the *Life*, Gaskell declared Charlotte to be incomprehensible without an appreciation of her physical and social environment. 'For a right understanding of the life of my dear friend,' she said, 'it appears to me more necessary in her case than in most others, that the reader should be made acquainted with the peculiar forms of population and society amidst which her earliest years were passed.' And peculiar in Gaskell's eyes they were. 'Even an inhabitant of the neighbouring county of Lancaster is struck by the peculiar force of character which the Yorkshiremen display,' she continued, using that same word 'peculiar', and elaborating on the famous rivalry between the two counties of the red and the white rose. She thought Yorkshiremen strikingly independent. She thought them suspicious of strangers and 'untried modes of action'; curt in address and harsh in speaking. She thought they had affections that were 'strong and their foundations lie deep: but they are not — such affections seldom are — wide-spreading'; Yorkshiremen, she added, were fond of pithy observations, and had feelings that were 'not easily roused, but their duration is lasting'.[1]

[1] Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Angus Easson, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17–18.

Charlotte Brontë's life made sense in this context. And so, in fiction, did the life of Sylvia Robson, the beautiful, blighted heroine of *Sylvia's Lovers*.

Set in an imagined version of the north Yorkshire whaling town of Whitby ('Monkshaven'), *Sylvia's Lovers* develops Gaskell's accounts of Yorkshire life. The moors around Whitby and the temperament of those who live there are the topics of her first chapter. The novel portrays a community in which suspicion, particularly Philip Hepburn's of Charley Kinraid, is part of the emotional drama. Who *is* Charley, and does he mean what he says? Gaskell's novel studies another man, Daniel Robson, who makes his mind up independently, who pursues his own line of action against others—and with disastrous consequences. It is a novel of taciturn individuals (Kester and Alice, for instance), and of feelings that are hidden. It concerns affections that are strong and deep but not 'wide-spreading': *Sylvia's Lovers* explores relationships within the small Robson family; friendships in a tiny community; the love of one cousin for another; the happenings in a single draper's shop. And it is about feelings that are far from easily roused, but which endure. Indeed, the endurance of a love, wise or otherwise, is central to the plot of this magnificent nineteenth-century novel of waiting (Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is another and so, a little later, is Anthony Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867)). Gaskell may have been heavy-handed in her description of Yorkshire when she was looking for the key to Charlotte Brontë's genius. But *Sylvia's Lovers* turned what seem to us stereotypes into imaginary flesh and blood, into figures with whom readers, wherever they were, could sympathize—across classes, across places, across time.

In one respect, *Sylvia's Lovers* marked a significant shift in Gaskell's career. As the author of *Mary Barton* (1848), *Ruth* (1853), and *North and South* (1854–5), she was known for her modern themes: the city, the urban poor, industrial relations, the new industries, the fallen woman.[2] *Sylvia's Lovers* is not about such topics, though the issue of a woman's self-determination and the nature of her education mattered as much in the 1860s as at the end of the

[2] For a recent argument about a modern context for *North and South*, see Stefanie Markovits, 'North and South, East and West: Elizabeth Gaskell, the Crimean War, and the Condition of England', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 59 (2005), 463–93, which argues for the place of the Crimean War in the novel.

eighteenth century when the novel is set. Yet *Sylvia's Lovers* is no sharp break from Gaskell's past, for all that. It belongs, in mood and setting, with the Gaskell of the shorter fiction. It belongs with *Cranford* (1851–3) and its melancholy exploration of lost loves and ordinary lives on the margins; with the broken happiness of 'My French Master' (1853); with 'Half a Lifetime Ago' (1855) and its tale of perished romance and silent suffering; with the small community and the hidden inner life of a young woman in *Cousin Phillis* (1864); even with the drama of a ruined family in 'The Doom of the Griffiths' (1858). *Sylvia's Lovers*, Gaskell is believed to have said, was the 'saddest story I ever wrote'.[3] But she wrote many sad stories. Indeed, she published a tale of peculiar unhappiness, 'A Dark Night's Work' (1863), in the same year as *Sylvia's Lovers* appeared. There too 'sorrow came marching down [. . .] like an armed man' on a father and daughter.[4] 'A Dark Night's Work' resonates with many of the themes and images of *Sylvia's Lovers*. It is a story of waiting as well—and for a more literal return from the grave. *Sylvia's Lovers* has not the modern topicality of Gaskell's earlier work. Yet it is no departure from her life-long concern with the sorrow of ordinary lives and the inevitability of suffering, the tragic potential of obscure communities, and the pain endured by seemingly unremarkable men and women. She was the Victorian novelist closest in spirit to Wordsworth's *The Excursion*[5] (1814) and, perhaps, to the darkest pessimism of J. M. W. Turner.

The sea was part of Gaskell's family history. Her grandfather, from Berwick-upon-Tweed, had been a naval captain; two of her uncles were navy men; and her brother, John Stevenson (1798–1828), had been a sailor too, but had disappeared in the winter of 1828. Perhaps he died at sea, or on his ship's arrival in India: no one ever knew. In Sylvia's response to the vanishing of Charley Kinraid in *Sylvia's Lovers* is a displaced recollection of that family calamity that had helped to kill Elizabeth's father. More immediately, Gaskell had

[3] *The Works of Mrs Gaskell*, with introductions by A. W. Ward (London: Smith, Elder, 1906), vi, p. xii. But no authority is given for this much quoted line.

[4] Elizabeth Gaskell, *A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories*,World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 28. 'A Dark Night's Work' was published serially in *All the Year Round*, 24 January–21 March 1863.

[5] For some consideration of Gaskell and Wordsworth (though without reference to *Sylvia's Lovers*), see Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), esp. Ch. 4: 'The Poetry of Humble Life'.

some local knowledge of Whitby, which she visited for a short holiday in the early winter of 1859 (see Note on the Text, p. xxvii). There she learned about Whitby's past as a whaling port, and may have heard of a riot in 1793, following which a man called William Atkinson had been condemned to death at York.[6] She later read more in local histories. But it would be wrong to say that she 'researched' *Sylvia's Lovers* in any modern, or certainly in any thorough, sense. She took some ideas, some events, and a small number of actual people from history as the basis for a story that was her own. (And she may have picked up the idea of a girl abandoned when her lover is seized by the press-gang from any number of poems and ballads.)[7] Only in the last few chapters did she rely more extensively on real occurrences. If not always consistently, Gaskell wanted her facts to be right as far as she could (sometimes hurriedly) make them. But real events and places were only imaginative spurs.

What may have been more on Gaskell's mind in shaping *Sylvia's Lovers* were three other women novelists: Charlotte and Emily Brontë and George Eliot. Gaskell had been reading the Brontës' fiction and poetry in preparation for the *Life*. And it lingered in her thoughts. In one way, though, it was not their *writing* that mattered. The whole feel of *Sylvia's Lovers*, about lives and loves in inaccessible parts of Yorkshire, was influenced by Gaskell's conception not of the Brontës' novels but of the Brontës themselves, living emotionally troubled existences apparently far removed, in Haworth, from the mainstream of nineteenth-century life, from the currents of ordinary feelings and wide society.[8] But at the same time, *Sylvia's Lovers* is a *literary* dispute with Charlotte and Emily about what fiction itself should represent. Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) was Anne's morally robust response to her sister's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). *Wuthering Heights*—the 'W. H.' initials are not accidentally repeated in the name of Wildfell Hall—told a rough, violent story of a woman pursued by two men, isolated from any large community, where revenge becomes the dominant passion. Anne,

[6] See George Young, *A History of Whitby, and Streoneshalh Abbey*, 2 vols. (Whitby: Clark and Medd, 1817), i. 285.

[7] See Appendix II.

[8] Gaskell's conception of the Brontës as essentially isolated has been extensively challenged. See, for instance, Heather Glen, *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

wishing to 'tell the truth',[9] took another story of sexual triangles in an isolated house, and offered a morally decisive, almost educational text about what she saw as the reality of living with the destructive forces of depravity. Symptomatically, she turned the dark and sexy glamour of Heathcliff into the careless, callous, heartless, drunken Huntingdon (and there was something of her brother Branwell in him too). Moral coordinates were murky in Emily's novel. But not in Anne's.

Like Anne, Gaskell had *Wuthering Heights* in mind. She knew it dismayed its first audience: Emily's novel 'revolted many readers by the power with which wicked and exceptional characters are depicted', Gaskell admitted.[10] And she told a correspondent more personally in 1857 that: 'I cannot say I agree with you in preferring "Wuthering Heights" to [the sisters'] other works—notwithstanding its wonderfully fine opening.'[11] Gaskell was cautious in public about a book that Charlotte defended.[12] And *Sylvia's Lovers* was, in turn, another response. The novel was Gaskell's narrative of a woman desired by two men in a remote northern community, where sorrows in love were made far more sympathetic and violence was driven from households onto streets and battlefields. Extreme emotions in Emily's *Wuthering Heights* are transformed into the often unspoken love of Sylvia for Kinraid. The sexual charisma of the outsider who disappears on a long absence is made ambiguous in Kinraid, and he is given nothing of Heathcliff's volcanic malevolence. The dull, conventional, proprietorial Hepburn is the metamorphosed Linton, just as the unpalatable Joseph becomes the enduringly loyal Kester. Brontë's fascination with revenge is changed, too, and the novel is a subtler, more uncertain meditation on the 'justice' of Philip Hepburn's action in trying to protect Sylvia from Kinraid and on Sylvia's 'revenge' on Philip. 'I'll never forgive yon man, nor live with

[9] Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, ed. Herbert Rosengarten, introduction by Josephine McDonagh, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

[10] Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 270.

[11] Letter to ?Mr Anderson, 9 December 1857, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 494.

[12] See Charlotte's 'Editor's Preface' to the 2nd edn (1850), reproduced in Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Ian Jack, introduction by Helen Small, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 307–10.

him as his wife again' (p. 332), Sylvia says after the revelation of Philip's untruthfulness. That is Gaskell's feminized, psychologically concentrated, and tragic version of Heathcliff's later life as he pursues a Jacobean vendetta against Linton's family.

Wuthering Heights is in the weave of *Sylvia's Lovers*, and so is *Jane Eyre* (1847). Perhaps Sylvia's erotic choice (not that there is much of a choice) between the risky, sexy, charming Kinraid and the moral, earnest, dull Philip is also Gaskell's version of Jane Eyre's choice between Rochester and St John Rivers. Not for Gaskell, certainly, the violence or 'coarseness', as many contemporary readers saw it, of the Brontës' representation of sexual love. And then there is the question of courage, of feistiness. Where Jane Eyre is one of the most emotionally articulate and decisive of all the heroines of nineteenth-century fiction—and, in turn, an important figure for twentieth-century literary feminism—Sylvia's strength is different. She has hardly any words to express her inner life. Like many of Gaskell's women, Sylvia could never be the first-person narrator of her own story. Yet if Sylvia's sorrows remain only partly expressed, and are regularly misunderstood, it is startling lucidity that she finds for a moment in the middle of calamity. Kinraid, returning after he is believed dead, tells a distraught Sylvia in Chapter 33 to set aside her first marriage as fraudulent and marry him. But Sylvia reminds him of her child. '"He's spoilt my life,"' she says of Philip as she refuses Kinraid's proposal, just as Jane Eyre refused to live as Rochester's mistress: '"—he's spoilt it for as long as iver I live on this earth; but neither yo' nor him shall spoil my soul"' (p. 332).[13] It is the verbal pinnacle—even as it is the emotional nadir—of Sylvia's history. This is Gaskell's presentation of an ordinary woman—'A creature of ballad',[14] as Jenny Uglow nicely phrases it—with extraordinarily limited powers to describe or to control her destiny who, for a moment, is strong, without being Jane Eyre; able to defend herself, without being Heathcliff; and to love passionately, without being Catherine. Here is the once-in-a-lifetime

[13] It was an emotional situation on Gaskell's mind: she has Ellinor Wilkins in 'A Dark Night's Work' declare that the evening when her father accidentally kills his business partner '"has spoilt my life for me"' (Gaskell, *A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories*, 69).

[14] Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (1993) (London: Faber, 1999), 517.

strength of ordinariness without self-possession or education, with neither personal confidence nor, it may be, deep intellectual resource.

Gaskell's response to the Brontës was creative. It was part of a conversation in fiction between influential writers. But where George Eliot was concerned, Gaskell, writing *Sylvia's Lovers*, felt something more like anxiety. With their intense if controlled sympathy for the suffering of ordinary provincial lives, and their commitment to the novel as an exploration of such lives, the two novelists shared aesthetic and moral ground. Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) had defined a distinctive rural realism in representing the lives of working men and women at the end of the eighteenth century: its setting was a sketch of a pre-modern, pre-citied, pre-industrial society. Eliot's narrator proposed to show the reader 'the roomy workshop of Mr Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799'.[15] *Sylvia's Lovers* occupied similar territory, sharing the same concern with local places, local labour, and specific moments in English history experienced in rural communities. And like *Adam Bede*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Wildfell Hall*, and *Jane Eyre* together, Gaskell's specificity included linguistic verisimilitude. As with the Midlands fiction of Eliot and the northern fiction of the Brontës, *Sylvia's Lovers* explores the expressive capacity of dialect, an apparent marker of human authenticity; of voices that seem rooted in history and place; of language that achieves different nuances and is bounded by different limits from what we would now call Standard English. Gaskell's representation of dialect had been a characteristic of her earlier writing, particularly *Mary Barton*, a novel for which William Gaskell had supplied his 'Two Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect'.[16] But in fact the dialect of *Sylvia's Lovers* caused some trouble on the novel's publication. It proved to some attentive readers that Gaskell was more at home in north-western than north-eastern speech (see Note on the Text). In her revisions in the manuscript and between the first and second editions, she was obliged to

[15] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Carol A. Martin, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

[16] These were published in 1854 as a separate pamphlet, then appended to the 5th edn of *Mary Barton.* They are reproduced in Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, ed. Shirley Foster, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 384–414.

convert much of what she had originally written in Lancastrian into Yorkshire dialect. It mattered that she was right.

Yet George Eliot's presence was more problematic for Gaskell than this account suggests. The two writers shared moral and aesthetic ground — but that, alas, was also the problem. The book that particularly daunted the author of *Sylvia's Lovers* was *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). It had been published just as Gaskell was beginning to think about her story of specksioneers, press-gangs, betrayals, and broken hearts. George Smith, Gaskell's publisher, sent her a copy of *The Mill* the day after its publication in April 1860. Gaskell wrote back to thank him, saying she was 'so greedy to read it'.[17] But a year later, she was still struggling with what she had read. Writing in April 1861, Gaskell told Edward Hale that she was 'going to finish my book, 3 vols, very soon':

> though after seeing what Miss Evans (George Eliot) does I feel as if nothing of mine would be worth reading ever-more. And that takes the pith out of me. Then Meta [her daughter] says 'But Mama remember the burying the one talent,' — so I cheer up, & mean to get strong & do the best I *can*.[18]

Perhaps that was something of an excuse for the slow progress of the novel.[19] But *Sylvia's Lovers* circles thoughtfully around the issues and plot elements of *The Mill* all the same, as if unable to cast off its presence, inhibiting and productive both at once. And, centrally, the argument with Eliot is about the nature of a heroine, and the nature of choice in a world of cause and effect.

Sylvia is Gaskell's version of, her reply to, Maggie Tulliver — the captivating young woman living a seemingly 'simple' life, who is caught up in the erotic cross-currents of her two suitors in *The Mill*. Like Eliot, Gaskell's interests are in the shaping force of a rural environment on a young woman, the limiting of her mind and sexual choices, the confining of her imagination and her actions. Both novelists probe the challenge of a promising woman who has little power to decide. When Philip in Chapter 21 wonders 'if the lives of one generation were but a repetition of the lives of those who had gone before, with no variation but from the internal cause that some

[17] Letter of 5 April 1860, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell,* 611.

[18] Letter of 22 April 1861, *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell,* ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Alan Shelston (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 223.

[19] See Note on the Text, pp. xxvii–xxviii.

had greater capacity for suffering than others' (p. 210), he speaks about the unexceptional and 'unhistoric'[20] lives to which Eliot's fiction was, at least theoretically, dedicated. But Gaskell makes her heroine far more 'ordinary', more vulnerable, than Eliot's. She plays out the life of the even more unhistoric, proposing the often silent pain of Sylvia Robson as no less worthy of a novel's attention than the dilemmas of the more characterful and resourceful heroine of *The Mill*. Maggie—like Eliot herself—is eager for education; she has a mischievous self-confidence; and is exceptionally articulate. Gaskell replies, as she did to *Jane Eyre*, with a heroine of greater limits: weary of education, unconfident, often tongue-tied. And there is a difference philosophically too. Gaskell's and Eliot's representations of the forces of history, of the nature of the novel as historiography, are dissimilar. In making an unnaturally great sea wave the final calamity of Philip Hepburn's life, Gaskell nods to the great flood that carries off Maggie and Tom at the close of *The Mill on the Floss*. In Eliot, that flood is the inevitable expression of great forces—fate, history, something beyond individual decisions that is inescapable—which have been anticipated by the 'rush of the water'[21] on the first page of the novel. For Elizabeth Gaskell, the impossibly huge wave that topples Philip's daughter into the sea at Monkshaven is not the requirement of history's inescapable forces. It is no strenuous symbol of a fateful world of cause and effect, where the past defines the present. That wave is more like an accident and a narrative convenience: another event out of any character's control but within the author's; a terrible happening that is necessary not because of history but because of the exigencies of fiction.

Sylvia's Lovers urges the reader to think about what and who is just. Nowhere is that more true than in the dramatic moment of the impressment of Charley Kinraid. The novel invites reflection on whether Philip is being reasonable in doubting Charley's integrity, and in turn whether there is anything to justify Philip's decision not to pass Charley's message of faithfulness to Sylvia. It is hard to forget that there may be evidence of Kinraid's 'real' character in what we

[20] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. David Carroll, introduction by Felicia Bonaparte, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 785.

[21] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Gordon Haight, introduction by Dinah Birch, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

are told of his previous, apparently casual, relationships with women. It is hard not to wonder why Charley wrote no letters to Sylvia while he was away, or whether there is an indication of a lack of personal integrity in his decision to wed another so quickly after finding Sylvia married to Philip. Sylvia is shocked by this haste; it helps her reassess Philip's worth. But as Gaskell confronts the reader with puzzles about human personalities and the possibility of acting wisely, so she asks the reader to think of another bond with *The Mill on the Floss* and *Wuthering Heights* as modern meditations on the same ancient theme. All three texts ruminate not only on what is just but also, more specifically, on the ancient question of the relationship between justice and revenge.

Whatever the human cost of the press-gangs, they are, in the period of the revolutionary wars in which *Sylvia's Lovers* is set, legal. '[It's] the law, and no one can do aught against it' (p. 28), Sylvia is told, as she watches with horror the gang among the returning whalers. When Daniel helps to rescue impressed sailors and burn down the Randyvowse in Chapter 23, he believes he is acting on a principle of natural justice. But is he acting with some form of *rough* justice that is outside the law, pursuing a kind of revenge? Daniel's own experience with the press-gang early in life had deprived him of a finger and part of his thumb: ' "A've a score for t' reckon up wi' t' press-gang!" ' (p. 48), he says, ominously. What is the relationship between his actions and justice, not least in relation to the 'just' nature of the press-gangs themselves? And when Daniel is made an example at the York assizes, and hanged, what is the relationship between justice and revenge there? Into this grim moment — which we never see directly — obtrudes the profound questions of whether the operation of law relates to 'real' justice and whether human motives can ever be adequately accommodated within the cold boundaries of the statute book. Although there are many Christian denominations in *Sylvia's Lovers*, church and chapel attenders, and much Bible reading, the novel affirms no unambiguous sense of a providential dispensation. Justice is not divinely tempered with mercy in the management of human affairs. And beside this faint Christianity is Aeschylus' conception in the *Oresteia* (*c.*458 BCE) that the modern world, that civilized society itself, arises with the assertion of reasoned law over the wild forces of revenge. Like *Wuthering Heights* and *The Mill* (where Maggie's father and

brother are caught up in a conflict between legality and vendetta), *Sylvia's Lovers* examines the persistence of ancient forces, the deep-rooted desires for blood in reparation for harms. '"I used to read of Orestes and the Furies at Eton when I was a boy,"' says the guilty father, Mr Wilkins, in 'A Dark Night's Work', trying to comfort his distraught daughter: 'and I thought it was all a heathen fiction."'[22] But the reach of such narratives goes far into *this* fiction. Aptly, with the first appearance of the press-gang under Admiralty warrant in Chapter 3 of *Sylvia's Lovers*, there is a moment's glimpse of the ancient world of Greek theatre, the stage on which Aeschylus had played out the conflict between justice and revenge. 'One of the men was addressing to his townspeople, in a high pitched voice', Gaskell writes of the chaos in Bridge Street as the press-gang pursues the returning sailors: 'an exhortation which few could hear, for, pressing around this nucleus of cruel wrong, were women crying aloud, throwing up their arms in imprecation, showering down abuse as hearty and rapid as if they had been a Greek chorus' (p. 29). In those cursing women is a reminder of the last part of Aeschylus' trilogy: a reminder of the Eumenides, the infernal goddesses, the deities of vengeance.[23]

Another great moment in the plot hints at Christian and pre-Christian sources: the return of Kinraid 'from the dead'. The novel draws widely on return-from-the-dead vocabulary, alluding to myths of revival and returning spirits, even while never once using the words 'resurrection' or 'Easter'. Gaskell prohibits any lazy misconception of the novel as some form of Christian allegory. *Sylvia's Lovers* is not the only Gaskell story to turn to such motifs of revival: the narrator returns 'as though I were risen from the dead'[24] in the story of another woman's spoilt life, 'The Grey Woman' (1861), for instance. But the density and coherence of revival vocabulary in *Sylvia's Lovers* is exceptional. Ironically, the press-gang that secures Kinraid is from the *Alcestis*, a ship named after the wife of Admetos, whom Hercules in classical myth rescued from the underworld.

[22] Gaskell, *A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories*, 94.

[23] It may be relevant that 1853 had seen a major new translation of *The Eumenides* (*The Furies*): *Æschyli Eumenides: The Greek Text, with English Notes . . . an English Verse Translation and an Introduction . . . by Bernard Drake* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1853).

[24] 'The Grey Woman' in Gaskell, *A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories*, 253.

More extensively, *Sylvia's Lovers* enlarges the reader's sense that narrative fiction has a peculiar capacity for bringing characters 'to life' by making the return, apparently from the dead, the literal climax — the text's crucial moment of *anagnorisis*. The patterns of return are everywhere: ' "I told yo' I should come back, didn't I?" ' (p. 170), Kinraid says to Sylvia, making a special journey to bid farewell before setting out on that deadly walk to join the whaling ship at North Shields. The words will silently haunt them three years later as Kinraid honours his vow and Sylvia learns that ' "He is alive; he has niver been dead" ' (p. 330). Bodies rise: Philip 'raised his stiffened body, and stood up' (p. 185) in Chapter 17; Kinraid, beaten by the press-gang in Chapter 18, 'raised himself and cried after [Philip]' (p. 194) as if the vocabulary of the grave and of the recall to life is difficult to banish even from descriptions of ordinary human acts. When Daniel tries to enter the Randyvowse he calls out his name: 'Not one word in reply' is heard, 'any more than from the tomb' (p. 227), while Sylvia has a more ghostly thought, wondering in Chapter 29 if she 'might indeed meet her dead lover at the ash-field stile' (p. 233). Chapter 33 narrates Kinraid's return and his first meeting with Sylvia, and it picks up the ghost reference in its title, 'An Apparition', as if Gaskell were writing another one of the supernatural tales for which she had become famous. And when Kinraid tries to find out what happened to Philip after he was rescued at Acre, he is told by a sailor, unable to locate Hepburn: ' "May be it was a spirit" ' (p. 375). The idea of the returning dead cannot be exorcised. Even Hester Rose's surname tempts us, amid this great clustering of allusions, with the past tense of 'rise'.

By the end of the novel, a different idea of coming back from the dead, of being alive while seeming to be dead, has taken root. As *Sylvia's Lovers* draws to its close, the reader finds it hard to distinguish between the living and dead *among* the living, to decide whether someone is alive when their heart has been crushed. Philip leaves Sylvia, after his betrayal is revealed, with the conviction that 'my life is ended' (p. 332) and, as Coulson says, with 'the look of a corpse on [his] face' (p. 333). 'You must all look on me as one dead' (p. 351), he writes later to Hester. During the Siege of Acre, Philip will bring Kinraid back from the verge of literal death and allow him a new life. But Philip must endure, terribly wounded from an explosion, a living death. His first residence on his return to England is St Sepulchre's

Hospital, named as if it is a living grave.[25] And in the end it seems that Hepburn must give his own life for his daughter's as Alcestis gave hers for her husband. In dying, he hopes for forgiveness. '"I did thee a cruel wrong,"' he says to Sylvia on his deathbed, '"But I am a dying man. I think that God will forgive me—and I've sinned against Him; try, lassie—try, my Sylvie—will not thou forgive me?"' (p. 428). The hoped-for exchange of a life for forgiveness is followed by a hoped-for exchange of earthly life, as Hester sees it, for a heaven 'where there is no more sorrow, and no more pain' (p. 434). Christian consolation in the language of the Book of Revelation hints at final reparations. Yet after such a long and unconsoled story, it is hard to find in Hester's words adequate certainty. Gaskell, it is impossible to forget, had taken words from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) as the epigraph for her novel, a poem nobly struggling to believe that immortal life really is the consolation of the bereaved.[26]

These gestures to the returning dead help pattern the realist narrative. They disclose the guiding hand of the novelist and hint, perhaps, at a broader, even mythic resonance to Gaskell's story. But they hint only faintly. These references do nothing like the same work as, for instance, the vocabulary of redemption and the symbolic use of gold in underlining the moral fable at the heart of Eliot's realist tale *Silas Marner* (1861). Gaskell invites the reader more conspicuously to think about the *mode* of her fiction in the final stages of *Sylvia's Lovers*. In the chapters concerning Philip's activities as a soldier, and in Chapter 38 notably, mid-Victorian narrative realism returns to its roots in historical fiction. History—the events around Napoleon's attempted conquest of Jerusalem in 1799—does not distantly inform the plot: it becomes the plot. Yet the effect, sharply different from the uses of history in the novels of Sir Walter Scott, is of dream, of unreality. As *Sylvia's Lovers* deepens its dependence on facts, it reads more like a romance. Plainly, Philip's action

[25] On the identity of St Sepulchre's, see Francis O'Gorman, 'Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers* and the Scandal in Trollope's *The Warden*', *Notes & Queries*, 59 (2012), 336–9.

[26] For a note on the relationship between Gaskell and Tennyson, see Brigitte Bischoff, 'Tennyson, Mrs Gaskell, and the Weaver Poet', *Victorian Poetry*, 14 (1976), 356–8. On the Gaskells and immortal life, see also William Gaskell, *Christian Views of Life and Death: A Sermon Preached in Cross-Street Chapel, Manchester, September 25th, 1859, on the Occasion of the Death of John Ashton Nicholls* (Manchester: Whitfield, Johnson, and Rawson, 1859).

in saving Kinraid from death is that of a romance hero (even if it is more a product of inertia and lifelessness than bravery). Reparation is achieved as a piece of theatre. The novel at these moments seems awkwardly conscious that life does not conform to convenient patterns or conclusions; that there is something staged and artificial about redemptive deeds that heal troubled pasts. As Kinraid lies on the battlefield, he perceives Philip come to help him. '[It] was too like a dream, too utterly improbable to be real' (p. 374), says the narrator: Gaskell is far from unaware of what she is doing. And it is almost inevitable that what must succeed this staged conclusion is a set of simple vanishings, a refusal to tie anything else up too neatly. We know what happens to Philip. But Gaskell has no appetite left for bringing life histories into tidy shapes. We are left with uncertainty. Sylvia is only a distant memory by the time of the final chapter: all we know is that she 'died before her daughter was well grown up' (p. 435). Hester has vanished, except for the almshouses she endowed; Bella and the 'distant cousin' she married have disappeared into America 'many and many a year ago' (p. 435). Their stories are presented as beyond the reach of fiction to know or tell. As *Sylvia's Lovers* concludes with those conventional words 'The End', the reader can only feel how little we know about some of the ends.

The misty conclusions of the novel are in sharp contrast with the clarity of Gaskell's imagining elsewhere, not least in the environments of her characters' lives. *Sylvia's Lovers*, like *Mary Barton*, *Cousin Phillis*, or *North and South*, has, for instance, a vivid sense of rooms. If the origin of the English novel is inseparable from domestic spaces, with women's work and daily life at home, then *Sylvia's Lovers* pays rich tribute to them. Much of the plot is played out between walls: the 'house-place' at Haytersbank Farm where the Robsons live; the parlour at Foster's shop. That parlour, in which many of Sylvia's final sorrows occur,

> looked out on the dark courtyard in which there grew two or three poplars, straining upwards to the light; and through an open door between the backs of two houses could be seen a glimpse of the dancing, heaving river, with such ships or fishing cobles as happened to be moored in the waters above the bridge (p. 30).

All of Monkshaven seems crowded into this view. The straining trees hint appropriately at restrictions, limitations, confinements, as well

as, contrastingly, at the presence of light. Some of the hidden spaces in the novel are human minds — Sylvia's, Philip's, Hester's — but of domestic spaces we have a stronger sense: their layouts, furniture, customs, lighting, daily use. Mrs Robson's dresser plays almost as important a role in *Sylvia's Lovers* as Cousin Holman's dresser in *Cousin Phillis*.[27] We know about diets and where household goods are stored. We know who sits where. As with Charlotte Brontë, Gaskell's fiction is rooted in the tangibility of indoor places. But there is still a view. Around these domestic locations occurs, however distantly, a national spectacle of revolution, European war, French imperial ambition, and the severe measures needed to protect Great Britain. Monkshaven is, and is not, cut off. The rhythms of its life, economy, and society are peculiar to itself, as Gaskell explains in the first chapter. Yet they are shaped by events in London, Paris, and the Middle East, however little Gaskell's characters comprehend the issues behind the events. Public crises have to be lived with, dealt with. They are inevitable. But they are barely comprehended or, it seems, particularly worth comprehending.

As a topic for fiction, the French Revolution had gained new visibility just before *Sylvia's Lovers*. It had, of course, been the context for Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), which had depicted the economic consequences on the new industries of the revolutionary wars, particularly the Orders in Council, which cut off British trade from France and North America. Gaskell, following on, was depicting the small-town and rural consequences of another government decision, the press-gang. Charles Dickens, who had played an important role in publishing Gaskell's early work, had used the Revolution too. He had made literal, satirical, political, and psychological play out of the idea of being 'recalled to life' in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) in far more extended senses than Gaskell.[28] *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens's novel of the Revolutionary Terror, drew on Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History* (1837), which had recently been reissued in Chapman & Hall's *The Collected Works*

[27] Cf. Clare Pettitt, '"Cousin Holman's dresser": Science, Social Change, and the Pathologized Female in Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 52 (1998), 471–89.

[28] The phrase 'recalled to life' is the subtitle of 'Book the First'. See Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. Andrew Sanders, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7–50.

of Thomas Carlyle (16 vols., 1858). *The French Revolution* meditated on comparisons between the French past and modern England. Like John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), or Carlyle's own earlier *Past and Present* (1843), *The French Revolution* probed the capacity of history to admonish the contemporary world. Carlyle, like Ruskin, investigated the scope of the past to serve as a warning. He presented the French Revolution as both terrible and inevitable. Eighteenth-century France was a country where revolution could not have been avoided, and where a revolution spiralling out of control could not have been avoided either. Carlyle's point, apart from anything else, was about the responsibilities of leadership in contemporary Great Britain, the need for men of heroic stature. Yet Gaskell, writing on the revolutionary wars, was hardly interested in such political connections with the past in the manner of Ruskin, Carlyle, or Dickens. She notes, for the most part, simply differences. If there *is* a political view in Gaskell's representations, it is quietly Whiggish (though the novel may have something oblique to say about individuals' personal accountability for their actions). And in terms of broader, national politics, there is an unobtrusive but still noticeable smile in this novel, perhaps even a complacent one, over the recognition that the present has moved on. The narrator writes from a moment when a husband could no longer be 'kidnapped for the service of the Government' (p. 29), and looks back to a time before the railways; a time when whale-oil was the barbaric necessity of human industry; a time of European peril before the imperial ambitions of a single man were defeated. Such Whiggism, however momentarily glimpsed, hardly satisfies now, just as it hardly did then.

What is *not* different between the past and the present matters more to Gaskell: the texture of human feelings through time. Sorrow's springs are the same. And as the reader's sympathy is extended to the extraordinary suffering of imagined ordinary lives, *Sylvia's Lovers* offers not merely a way of metaphorically visiting those 'unvisited tombs'[29] of the obscure with which Eliot concludes *Middlemarch* (1871–2) but, so to speak, a way of opening them. *Sylvia's Lovers*' use of the language of the returning dead is both obviously relevant to the central event of Kinraid's reappearance, and an unobtrusive figure for the work of Gaskell's fiction itself in creating the illusion of real

[29] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 785.

historical lives fashioned out of words; a figure for literary language that, as Robert Browning said of the poetic imagination, 'starts the dead alive'[30] in the reader's mind. Here is, quietly, an active affirmation of the realist novel as a way of collapsing time, of rendering the past as immediate as the present through the reader's sympathies. And those sympathies, it is worth remembering, were potentially a radical matter in the 1850s and 1860s, because in the realist novel they could cross deep divides, including those between classes. The capacity to feel sympathy for others, especially the working classes, certainly, had been an edgy issue in the plot of Brontë's *Shirley* as it had been for Gaskell in her earlier fiction, especially *North and South*. Caroline Helstone in *Shirley* stops herself from asking her uncle to be more 'sympathizing' when she believes she has been abandoned by Robert Moore, thinking that Mr Helstone 'would indeed have laughed if that namby-pamby word had escaped her'.[31] But *Shirley* exposes the heartlessness of individuals for whom sympathy is merely 'namby-pamby', even as Brontë's novel poses the question how, precisely, the reader can feel sympathy for its own often disagreeable or problematic characters. *Sylvia's Lovers*, offering more likeable men and women, nevertheless invites the reader to make no harsh, gendered, or unsympathetic judgement on the business of sympathizing itself.

Of course, there are tough questions, as far as sympathy in fiction is concerned, about the 'lives' with which the realist novel trades. What ethical work can realist prose really do in fortifying human connections with figures who are only 'alive' by illusion? And, beyond that, what is the relationship between sympathy for characters in a literary text and sympathy with real people? What, too, is the nature and moral force of an art that enables us to take an almost decadent pleasure in the tragic suffering of imagined men and women? Gaskell was doubtful about the Brontës' representation of sexuality, and she was nervous of George Eliot's achievement. But *Sylvia's Lovers* is her reply to both. Responding to Charlotte and Emily Brontë in fictional characters and plot, Gaskell answers

[30] Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book*, ed. Richard D. Altick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), Book 1, l. 733.

[31] Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith, introduction by Janet Gezari, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 163. *OED* dates 'namby-pamby' in this sense to 1774.

her anxiety about Eliot in the implicit assertion that her own fiction, enabling readers to sympathize with literary creations in the backwaters of provincial England, imparted 'life' through art every bit as much as Eliot did. We may recognize philosophical problems with claims about literary sympathy and its uses, but, with Gaskell, we cannot miss the confidence of her contention. Returning from the dead is at the heart of the plot in *Sylvia's Lovers*. Yet revival as a motif, so difficult to overlook in the novel, hints too at Gaskell's belief, despite her anxiety, that she was a writer of fiction, like Eliot, able to lend to imagined men and women from 'many and many a year ago' a compelling and sympathetic vitality. 'We might pause for a moment', said an early reviewer, 'to admire that high gift by which a hand can thus play upon the deepest chords of our hearts; by which hot tears are drawn from living human eyes for the love and the grief that died long ago.'[32] Philip Hepburn in *Sylvia's Lovers* does not pass on the words that would enable Sylvia to know her lover was still alive. Missing words of life are at the core of the novel's plot. But words of life are not missing from the substance of Gaskell's art.

[32] '*Sylvia's Lovers*', *John Bull*, 7 March 1863, 156.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Origin and title

THE writing of *Sylvia's Lovers* was no straightforward business. It began breathlessly. Gaskell took a brief holiday starting on 31 October 1859 at Whitby. 'We rushed here for ten days on Monday,' she told her publisher, George Smith: '"We" are Meta, & Julia — for whose benefit we are come, as she has outgrown her strength — six inches in the last 12 months.'[1] While she was there, incidentally, Gaskell read *The Missing Link; or, Bible-Women in the Homes of the London Poor* (1858) by Mrs L. N. Ranyard, founder in 1857 of the London Bible and Domestic Female Mission. Gaskell's first plans were to write a novel called *The Specksioneer*, but she was still discussing the title in (probably) March 1862, when she asked Smith: 'What do you think of "Philip's Idol"[?]; — then again you may say people will call it "Philip's idle".' She wondered about *Philip's Darling*, or even *Monkshaven*. The problem with '"Sylvia's Lovers"', she said to Smith, was that 'there is a "Nanette & her lovers", is there not? and published by you too' (*Letters*, 678). Issued by Smith, Elder in 1854, *Nanette and her Lovers* was by 'Talbot Gwynne', the pseudonym of Josepha Heath Gulston (1811–59). There had been a new edition in 1862, part of Smith, Elder's 'Shilling Series of Standard Works of Fiction'. Curiously, *Nanette and her Lovers* was to be one of the texts advertised on the front end-papers of the fourth edition of *Sylvia's Lovers*.

Publication

But the problem was not only with the title. In April 1861, Gaskell was telling a correspondent: 'I am going to finish my book, 3 vols, very soon.'[2] But nearly a year and a half later, on 4 September 1862, she was writing to Smith, Elder: 'Gentlemen, I can only repeat what

[1] *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 586.

[2] *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Alan Shelston (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 223.

I have said before; that you shall have the conclusion of my story as soon as I can finish it. But from local causes my time is so much occupied that I am unwilling to have any specified time' (*Letters*, 691–2); later that month she was trying to find out precisely how many pages she would need to complete the third volume. Gaskell had told Edward Hale in April 1861 that she had been bothered by the unmatchable quality of George Eliot (see Introduction, pp. xv–xviii). But she was also spending a lot of time helping the distressed loom workers in Manchester, suffering during the early 1860s from the effects of the American Civil War (see note to p. 416). Gaskell had 'A Dark Night's Work' in hand as well, and, if that was not enough, some family troubles arising from her daughter Marianne's flirtation with Roman Catholicism. It was some time before the formalities of publication could be concluded. The 'entire copyright' of *Sylvia's Lovers* was sold on 31 December 1862 for £1,000 (Gaskell, preparing for a reprint, sold the 'entire copyright' of *North and South* on 19 May 1865 for £100; *Letters*, 967).

Sylvia's Lovers (we do not know what changed Gaskell's mind about the title) was eventually published in February 1863, by Smith, Elder & Co., one of the most respectable of mid-century publishers, who had launched the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860. George Smith, son of the founder, had been Charlotte Brontë's publisher: he published Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and then became Gaskell's favoured publisher and a friend. There were four editions of *Sylvia's Lovers* in 1863: the first was issued in three small volumes, with neither illustrations nor end-papers of advertisements. Two more followed in April, though the 'third' was more or less a reprint of the second. The vast majority of the corrections discussed below were made to the second edition, and retained in the subsequent two. A single-volume fourth edition was issued in late 1863 as the 'Illustrated Edition'. It had a more commercial look, including front and back end-paper advertisements for other works published by Smith, Elder and a section of 'Select Notices of "Sylvia's Lovers" ', giving quotations from reviewers. This edition also had an illustrated title page, showing the Whitby bridge (see note to p. 425) and having the Tennyson motto in the middle (this motto was surprisingly repeated on the second, unillustrated title page), and four further illustrations. All these were by the young artist, cartoonist, and later novelist George du Maurier (1834–96), who was much affected by the novel.

Shortly after executing these illustrations, he named his daughter Sylvia. She became Sylvia Jocelyn Llewelyn Davies (1866–1920), the mother of the boys who inspired J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan and his friends. There was also an edition from Bernard Tauchnitz (Leipzig) in 1863, in their 'Collection of British Authors Series', and an American edition the same year from Harper & Brothers, New York. E. D. Forgues translated the novel into French, published as *Les amoureux de Sylvia* (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette & Cie, 1865).

Gaskell's corrections in published editions

A full collation of the manuscript and the first and second editions of *Sylvia's Lovers* with the fourth is included in Marion Shaw's edition of the novel.[3] Important alterations relate to the matter of dialect (see also pp. xv–xvi), and Gaskell's efforts to alter Lancastrian to Yorkshire speech for the second edition included much correction of, for instance, 'th'' to 't'', 'ye' to 'you', 'with' to 'wi'', 'right' to 'reet', 'never' to 'niver', 'ever' to 'iver'. Such changes were retained for the fourth edition. Gaskell also recognized that she had made topographical errors. For a start, she had assumed that Whitby was orientated north–south, with the river flowing eastwards into the North Sea. But, in fact, Whitby is more or less on an east–west orientation and the River Esk flows almost due north. So when Gaskell wrote (for instance, on p. 5) of the 'south side', she meant the east, and by the 'north' the west. There are other topographical errors, some arising from this mistake and others merely from a more generally hazy recollection of the real town.

Some errors, certainly, were pointed out by readers of the first edition, not least by James Malcolm Forbes Ludlow. Writing to him on 14 November 1863, Gaskell admitted that 'I was only [in Whitby] once for a fortnight, about four years ago, in such cloudy November weather that I might very easily be ignorant of the points of the compass if I did not look at a map; and I am afraid that I did not test my accuracy by so doing.'[4] She made various efforts to correct

[3] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, ed. Marion Shaw, vol. ix of *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 407–74.

[4] J. Miriam Benn, 'Some Unpublished Gaskell Letters', *Notes & Queries*, 27 (1980), 507–14, at p. 514.

the most obvious topographical mistakes for the second edition, but the fourth still remained problematic in its representation of Whitby and its environs. The problems involved in Gaskell's representation of distances are considered in Appendix I. That Appendix also surveys the other prominent area where there is still confusion in the novel: the chronology. This was a matter Gaskell did little to rectify. Some other errors were spotted for the second edition, including confusions between the two Fosters, though oddities remained even here. There was one other significant change in the second edition. Gaskell, in the first edition, had overlooked an important reform in the legal representation of defendants in English courts, which had taken place between the time in which the story was set and her own day. The mistake was pointed out by an unnamed correspondent (see *Letters*, 521; for full details see note to p. 268). The present edition does not record each of Gaskell's revisions, or comment on every remaining error (particularly where the source is the mistaken orientation of Whitby). All significant or intriguing matters are, however, glossed.

Manuscript

The (incomplete) manuscript of *Sylvia's Lovers* is now in the Special Collections of the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, catalogued as Brotherton Collection MS 19c Gaskell MS 1. Volume 1, pp. 1–46, volume 2, pp. 1–10 and 167–80, and volume 3, p. 15, are missing. The manuscript was purchased at Christie's, on 29 May 1986, as lot 237, from the archive of Smith, Elder & Co. It is the printer's copy. An additional small fragment is also in the library in a Victorian autograph album (MS 19c Gaskell MS 2) on fol. 5.

Gaskell wrote on grey, cream, or blue foolscap paper, single-sided, leaving no margins: the blue Pirie paper is watermarked '1860' or '1862'. The manuscript as it currently exists ends on p. 151 of volume 3: 'he had persuaded himself that' (p. 374 in the present edition). The first volume ends with Chapter 12; in the printed versions, the first volume ends with Chapter 14, an arrangement clearly made to balance the material more evenly across three volumes (the book has forty-five chapters). Gaskell's manuscript is heavily corrected, the corrections including efforts to amend the dialect even at this stage. There are frequent conversions, for instance, of 'the' in local

speech to 't'' (there are three examples on the first page—p. 47—alone), and 'ye' to 'thee'. (I cannot be absolutely certain that the 't'' changes are Gaskell's.) The manuscript reveals that it took Gaskell well into the first volume to decide on the name of the speck-sioneer as Charley Kinraid. Her first choices of surnames (if there *were* more than one) are hard to decipher, but some more legible versions look to me like 'Macphra(e)ille'. There is, however, no historical record of that as a real name. Gaskell had at least two versions of Kinraid's first name too before settling on 'Charley'. The first versions are again usually obliterated: on p. 103 of volume 1, the name looks like 'Sandey'. William Coulson was originally 'James Banks' (e.g., volume 1, p. 158). A different confusion about other names prompted Gaskell to ask for a message to be passed on to the printer (still preserved with the manuscript) that reads: '[Mrs Gaskell] would also be very much obliged to [?] if he would look over the proofs of the 1st + 2nd volumes, and see whether the names Jonathan or Jeremiah was decided upon in them, for that of the brother of *John* Foster; and if he would then correct the wrong name in the 3rd volume.' Despite these efforts, as already noted, the published versions retain problems with the Foster names (see, for instance, note to p. 428).

The manuscript has no chapter titles, and it is unclear who added these: perhaps Gaskell or the publisher at proof stage. Among the many corrections in the manuscript, some certainly appear to be by another hand. Gaskell tended to correct in ink, and some pencil corrections do not look obviously like her handwriting. It is usually possible to work out the logic for these alterations. For instance, in volume 1, Chapter 11, Gaskell's manuscript reads: 'He felt it as reflecting consequence on himself. He had never troubled his mind with reflections [. . .]'. But 'reflections' is changed in pencil in the (foreign?) hand to 'speculations' in the first and subsequent editions to avoid a repeated word (p. 109 of the present edition). It is certainly the case that the punctuation of the manuscript is significantly different throughout from the printed editions. This may have been the work of the compositor/editor at the point of typesetting, or of the author or editor at the proof stage. In effect, the manuscript Gaskell submitted was a kind of work-in-progress, in which matters of punctuation and, indeed, paragraphing, were to be confirmed later. The manuscript has the names of typesetters(?) pencilled

throughout, presumably each of whom set small portions of the text in turn: Blackwell, Barnett, Shea, Shand(?); Farley, Cash, and Graham.

Reception

Sylvia's Lovers, when finally published, was generally well received. 'Mrs Gaskell has written a tale of marvellous beauty,' said *John Bull*, and 'by this work [she has] earned for herself a high place among the few great living writers of English fiction'.[5] The reviewer particularly admired the novel's depth of sympathy. *Sylvia's Lovers* was 'The Book of the Month' in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in April 1863, and the long, celebratory review quoted extensively (as was the habit of mid-Victorian reviewers) from the novel: 'We tell no more,' it ended: 'Ask Mr Mudie [the famous commercial library] for the book.'[6] *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Members of the English Church* devoted a whole article to examining the skilful construction of *Sylvia's Lovers* in April 1866,[7] having earlier recommended it as a 'foremost [. . .] work of art of the tragic school'. In Gaskell's text, *The Monthly Packet* had said in that first assessment, 'is a severe adherence to probability in the lot of each of the personages, that makes us feel that it was conscientious writing, not for popularity'.[8] The novelist Geraldine Jewsbury observed in *The Athenaeum* for 28 February 1863 that 'for true artistic workmanship we think "Sylvia's Lovers" superior to any of Mrs Gaskell's former works',[9] though she found the dialect difficult. Similarly, *The Reader* found much to appreciate, in particular Gaskell's knowledge of working lives and the way in which she encouraged understanding across classes: 'Few educated people really know the poor,' the anonymous reviewer said, 'and still fewer can translate that knowledge into fiction. When we said, therefore, that the novel here noticed is one of the

[5] '*Sylvia's Lovers*', *John Bull*, 7 March 1863, 156.

[6] *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 1 April 1863, 281.

[7] *Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Members of the English Church*, 1 April 1866, 102–7.

[8] *Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Members of the English Church*, 1 January 1866, 90.

[9] Unsigned review in the *Athenaeum*, 23 February 1863, 291; repr. in Angus Easson (ed.), *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1991), 432–5, at p. 432.

very best of this kind, we award it no slight praise.'[10] The only recurrent criticism was about dialect: in the rather extreme words of the *Daily News*, Gaskell was 'trying the patience of readers too far [by compelling] them to wade through three volumes of unpronounceable *patois*'.[11] There were a few other reservations—the *Saturday Review*, for instance, said, in its review on 4 April 1864, that the novel lacked coherence. But the *Daily News* was the most impatient. For Sylvia, the reviewer said, 'we cannot get up a spark of interest'.[12] Not many readers have agreed.

Present edition

The current text is based on the fourth edition, edited originally by Andrew Sanders for his World's Classics edition of 1982, corrected by the present editor. Some obvious printers' mistakes have been silently corrected, and one or two confusing examples of what is now non-standard grammar have been normalized to avoid uncertainty. Following Oxford World's Clssics house style, points have been removed from contractions ('Mr' rather than 'Mr.') and single inverted commas are employed throughout.

[10] Unsigned review in the *Reader*, 28 February 1863, 207–8; repr. in Easson (ed.), *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage*, 435–40, at p. 436.

[11] Unsigned review in the *Daily News*, 3 April 1863, 2; repr. in Easson (ed.), *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage*, 445–6, at p. 446.

[12] Ibid.

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—— *Wives and Daughters*, ed. Angus Easson.

A CHRONOLOGY OF ELIZABETH GASKELL

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1810	(29 Sept.) Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell born to William Stevenson and Elizabeth Holland in Chelsea. One surviving sibling, brother John, born 1798.	
1811	(29 Oct.) Mother dies. (Nov.) Baby Elizabeth taken to Knutsford to be brought up by Hannah Lumb, Mrs Stevenson's eldest sister.	
1812		Charles Dickens born. Robert Browning born. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (to 1818) Crabbe, *Tales in Verse*
1813		Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
1814	William Stevenson remarries: new wife Catherine Thomson.	Abdication of Napoleon. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* Scott, *Waverley*
1815		Battle of Waterloo. Napoleon banished to St Helena.
1816		Charlotte Brontë born. Jane Austen, *Emma* Coleridge, 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan'
1817		Jane Austen dies. Keats, *Poems* Robert Owen, *Report to the Committee on the Poor Laws*
1818		Emily Brontë born. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (posthumous) Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
1819		Peterloo Massacre in Manchester. Queen Victoria born. Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) born. John Ruskin born. Crabbe, *Tales of the Hall* Scott, *Ivanhoe* Byron, *Don Juan* (to 1824)

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1820		Accession of George IV. Anne Brontë born. Lamb, *Essays of Elia* (to 1823) Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy*
1821	Goes to boarding school at Barford, Warwickshire, run by Byerly sisters, relations of her stepmother. School moves to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1824.	Napoleon dies. Keats dies. *Manchester Guardian* started. John Stuart Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*
1822		Shelley dies.
1824		Byron dies.
1826	(June) Leaves school.	James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*
1827		Treaty between Britain, France, and Russia to determine independence of Greece (confirmed 1830).
1828	Disappearance of John Stevenson on way to India. Elizabeth goes to live in Chelsea with father and stepmother.	
1829	(22 Mar.) Father dies. Elizabeth goes to stay with uncle, Revd William Turner, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.	Carlyle, *Signs of the Times*
1830		Revolutions in Germany, Poland, Belgium, and France. Accession of William IV. Christina Rossetti born. Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*
1830–1	Newcastle. Visits Edinburgh with cousin, Ann Turner.	
1831	Visits Knutsford and Liverpool. Goes to stay with Revd John Robberds, senior minister at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Manchester, and his wife. Meets here Revd William Gaskell, Robberds's junior minister.	First Reform Bill introduced.
1832	(30 Aug.) Marries William Gaskell at St John's parish church, Knutsford. Gaskells set up house at 14 Dover Street, Manchester.	First Reform Act passed. Walter Scott dies. Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (to 1834)

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1833	(10 July) Birth of stillborn daughter.	Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* Carlyle, *Sartus Resartus* *Tracts for the Times* (to 1841)
1834	(12 Sept.) Birth of Marianne Gaskell.	Coleridge dies. Charles Lamb dies.
1835		Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*
1836		Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*
1837	(Jan.) 'Sketches Among the Poor' (written with William), *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. (7 Feb.) Birth of Margaret Emily (Meta) Gaskell. (1 May) Death of Hannah Lumb.	Accession of Queen Victoria. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*
1838		Anti-Corn Law League founded in Manchester. Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* Lyell, *Elements of Geology*
1838–41	Birth and death of unnamed son.	
1839		Chartist Petition presented to Parliament. Carlyle, *Chartism*
1840	'Clopton House' in William Howitt's *Visits to Remarkable Places*.	Marriage of Victoria and Prince Albert. Robert Browning, *Sordello* Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of HMS Beagle* Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*
1841	(July) Visits Heidelberg with William.	Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays* (i) Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*
1842	(7 Oct.) Birth of Florence Elizabeth ('Flossy') Gaskell. Moves to 121 Upper Rumford Road, Manchester.	Tennyson, *Poems*
1843		Carlyle, *Past and Present* Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (to 1860)
1844	(23 Oct.) Birth of William ('Willie') Gaskell.	Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Poems* Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* Disraeli, *Coningsby* Emerson, *Essays* (ii)

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1845	(10 Aug.) Willie dies on family holiday in North Wales.	Potato famine begins in Ireland. Disraeli, *Sybil* Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*
1846	(3 Sept.) Birth of Julia Bradford Gaskell.	Repeal of Corn Laws in Great Britain. *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (Brontë sisters) Dickens, *Dombey and Son* Edward Lear, *A Book of Nonsense*
1847	'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' (June) and 'The Sexton's Hero' (Sept.), *Hewitt's Journal.*	Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey* Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* Tennyson, *The Princess*
1848	(Jan.) 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine', *Howitt's Journal.* (Oct.) *Mary Barton.*	Revolutions in France, Sicily, and Austria. Emily Brontë dies. Formation of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*
1849	(Apr.–May) Visits London and meets Dickens, Forster, and Carlyle. (June–Aug.) Visits Lake District and meets Wordsworth. (July) 'The Last Generation in England', *Sartain's Union Magazine*; 'Hand and Heart', *Sunday School Penny Magazine.*	Garibaldi enters Rome. Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*
1850	(Jan.) Approached by Dickens to write for his new periodical, *Household Words.* (Feb.) 'Martha Preston', *Sartain's Union Magazine.* (Mar.–Apr.) 'Lizzie Leigh', *Household Words.* (June) Moves to 42 (later 84) Plymouth Grove, Manchester. (Aug.) Meets Charlotte Brontë at the Kay-Shuttleworths' house, Briery Close, near Ambleside. (Nov.) 'The Well of Pen-Morfa', *Household Words.* (Dec.) *The Moorland Cottage*; 'The Heart of John Middleton', *Household Words.*	Wordsworth dies. Tennyson becomes Poet Laureate. Dickens, *David Copperfield* Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke* Tennyson, *In Memoriam* *Household Words* started by Dickens

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1851	(Feb.–Apr.) 'Mr Harrison's Confessions', *Ladies' Companion and Monthly Magazine.* (June) 'Disappearances', *Household Words.* (July) Visits London and Great Exhibition. (Oct.) Visits Knutsford. (Dec.–May 1853) *Cranford* serialized in *Household Words.*	First Women's Suffrage Petition presented to Parliament. Great Exhibition in London. Melville, *Moby Dick* Ruskin, *Stones of Venice* (to 1853)
1852	(Jan.–Apr.) 'Bessy's Troubles at Home', *Sunday School Penny Magazine.* (June) 'The Shah's English Gardener', *Household Words.* (Dec.) 'The Old Nurse's Story', *Household Words.*	Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
1853	(Jan.) *Ruth*; 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers', *Household Words.* (Apr.) Charlotte Brontë visits Plymouth Grove. (May) Visits Paris. (June) *Cranford* (book form). (July) Visits Normandy. (19–23 Sept.) Stays with Charlotte Brontë at Haworth. (Oct.) 'Bran' (?with William), *Household Words.* (Nov.) 'Morton Hall', *Household Words.* (Dec.) 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots', 'My French Master', 'The Squire's Story', 'The Scholar's Story' (?with William), *Household Words.*	Turkey declares war on Russia. Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* Dickens, *Bleak House*
1854	(Jan.–Feb.) Visits Paris. (Feb.) 'Modern Greek Songs', *Household Words.* (May) 'Company Manners', *Household Words.* (Sept.–Jan. 1855) *North and South* serialized in *Household Words.*	Crimean War begins. Dickens, *Hard Times* Henry Thoreau, *Walden*
1855	(Feb.) Visits Paris. (Mar.) *North and South* (book form; Feb. in USA). (31 Mar.) Charlotte Brontë dies. (June) Patrick Brontë asks her to write his daughter's biography. (Aug.) 'An Accursed Race', *Household Words.* (Sept.) *Lizzie Leigh and Other Tales.* (Oct.) 'Half a Life-Time Ago' (revision of 'Martha Preston'), *Household Words.*	Robert Browning, *Men and Women* Tennyson, *Maud* Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1856	Visits Brussels to research for Charlotte Brontë biography. (Dec.) 'The Poor Clare', *Household Words.*	Crimean War ends with the Paris Peace Congress.
1857	(Feb.–May) Visits Rome and meets Charles Eliot Norton. (Mar.) *Life of Charlotte Brontë.* (May) Faces libel action for misrepresentation brought by various people mentioned in the *Life.* Meta engaged to Captain Charles Hill, widowed officer in Indian army.	Indian Mutiny. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* Dickens, *Little Dorrit* Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*
1858	(Jan.) 'The Doom of the Griffiths', *Harper's Monthly Magazine.* (June) 'An Incident at Niagara Falls', *Harper's Monthly Magazine.* (June–Sept.) 'My Lady Ludlow', *Household Words.* (Aug.) Meta's engagement broken off. (Sept.–Dec.) Visits Heidelberg. (Nov.) 'The Sin of a Father' (in later collection as 'Right at Last'), *Household Words.* (Dec.) 'The Manchester Marriage', *Household Words.*	George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*
1859	(Mar.) *Round the Sofa.* (June) Visits Scotland. (Oct.) 'Lois the Witch', *All the Year Round.* (Nov.) Visits Whitby and gains material for *Sylvia's Lovers.* (Dec.) 'The Ghost in the Garden Room' (in later collection as 'The Crooked Branch'), *All the Year Round.*	War of Italian Liberation; Garibaldi in Sicily. Dickens starts *All the Year Round.* Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* George Eliot, *Adam Bede* J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*
1860	(Feb.) 'Curious if True', *Cornhill Magazine.* (May) *Right at Last and Other Tales.* (July–Aug.) Visits Heidelberg.	Lincoln elected president of the USA. George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* Ruskin, *Unto This Last*
1861	(Jan.) 'The Grey Woman', *All the Year Round.*	Outbreak of American Civil War. Unification of Italy; Victor Emanuel becomes king. Prince Albert dies. Elizabeth Browning dies. Dickens, *Great Expectations* George Eliot, *Silas Marner* Trollope, *Framley Parsonage*

	Life	*Historical and Cultural Background*
1862	(May) 'Six Weeks at Heppenheim', *Cornhill Magazine.* Visits Brittany and Normandy to gather material for 'French Life' (1864) and to plan memoir of Madame de Sevigné (never written). (Summer) Marianne secretly engaged to her second cousin, Thurstan Holland.	Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*
1863	(Jan.–Mar.) 'A Dark Night's Work', *All the Year Round.* (Feb.) *Sylvia's Lovers*; 'Shams', *Fraser's Magazine.* (Mar.) 'An Italian Institution', *All the Year Round.* (Mar.–June) Visits France and Italy. (Apr.) *A Dark Night's Work* (book form). (8 Sept.) Florence Gaskell marries Charles Crompton. (Nov.) 'The Cage at Cranford', *All the Year Round.* (Nov.–Feb. 1864) 'Cousin Phillis', *Cornhill Magazine.* (Dec.) 'How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle', *All the Year Round*; 'Robert Gould Shaw', *Macmillan's Magazine.*	Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Thackeray dies. J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*
1864	(Apr.–June) 'French Life', *Fraser's Magazine.* (Aug.–Jan. 1866) *Wives and Daughters, Cornhill Magazine.* (Aug.) Visits Switzerland.	Browning, *Dramatis Personae*
1865	(Mar.–Apr.) Visits Paris. (Mar.) 'Columns of Gossip from Paris', *Pall Mall Gazette.* (Apr.) 'A Letter of Gossip from Paris', *Pall Mall Gazette.* (June) Buys 'The Lawn', Holybourne, Hampshire, as a surprise for William. (Aug.–Sept.) 'A Parson's Holiday', *Pall Mall Gazette.* (Sept.) Visits Dieppe. *The Grey Woman and Other Tales.* (12 Nov.) Dies at Holybourne. (Dec.) *Cousin Phillis and Other Tales.*	Assassination of Lincoln; end of American Civil War. W. B. Yeats born. Rudyard Kipling born. Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*
1866	(Feb.) *Wives and Daughters: An Every-Day Story* published in book form, posthumously and unfinished.	

SYLVIA'S LOVERS

Oh for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil! Behind the veil!

TENNYSON*

This Book
is dedicated to
MY DEAR HUSBAND
by her
who best knows his value*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

MONKSHAVEN

On the north-eastern shores of England there is a town called Monkshaven, containing at the present day about fifteen thousand inhabitants.* There were, however, but half the number at the end of the last century, and it was at that period that the events narrated in the following pages occurred.

Monkshaven was a name not unknown in the history of England, and traditions of its having been the landing-place of a throneless queen* were current in the town. At that time there had been a fortified castle on the heights above it, the site of which was now occupied by a deserted manor-house;* and at an even earlier date than the arrival of the queen, and coëval with the most ancient remains of the castle, a great monastery had stood on those cliffs, overlooking the vast ocean that blended with the distant sky. Monkshaven itself was built by the side of the Dee, just where the river falls into the German Ocean.* The principal street of the town ran parallel to the stream, and smaller lanes branched out of this, and straggled up the sides of the steep hill, between which and the river the houses were pent in. There was a bridge* across the Dee, and consequently a Bridge Street running at right angles to the High Street;* and on the south side* of the stream there were a few houses of more pretension, around which lay gardens and fields. It was on this side of the town that the local aristocracy lived. And who were the great people of this small town? Not the younger branches of the county families that held hereditary state in their manor-houses on the wild bleak moors, that shut in Monkshaven almost as effectually on the land side as ever the waters did on the sea-board. No; these old families kept aloof from the unsavoury yet adventurous trade which brought wealth to generation after generation of certain families in Monkshaven.

The magnates of Monkshaven were those who had the largest number of ships engaged in the whaling-trade. Something like the following was the course of life with a Monkshaven lad of this class:—He was apprenticed as a sailor to one of the great shipowners—to his own father, possibly—along with twenty other boys, or, it might be, even more. During the summer months he and his fellow apprentices

made voyages to the Greenland* seas, returning with their cargoes in the early autumn; and employing the winter months in watching the preparation of the oil from the blubber in the melting-sheds, and learning navigation from some quaint but experienced teacher, half schoolmaster, half sailor, who seasoned his instructions by stirring narrations of the wild adventures of his youth. The house of the shipowner to whom he was apprenticed was his home and that of his companions during the idle season between October and March. The domestic position of these boys varied according to the premium paid; some took rank with the sons of the family, others were considered as little better than servants. Yet once on board an equality prevailed, in which, if any claimed superiority, it was the bravest and brightest. After a certain number of voyages the Monkshaven lad would rise by degrees to be captain, and as such would have a share in the venture;* all these profits, as well as all his savings, would go towards building a whaling vessel of his own, if he was not so fortunate as to be the child of a shipowner. At the time of which I write, there was but little division of labour in the Monkshaven whale fishery. The same man might be the owner of six or seven ships, any one of which he himself was fitted by education and experience to command; the master of a score of apprentices, each of whom paid a pretty sufficient premium; and the proprietor of the melting-sheds into which his cargoes of blubber and whalebone were conveyed to be fitted for sale. It was no wonder that large fortunes were acquired by these shipowners, nor that their houses on the south side of the river Dee were stately mansions, full of handsome and substantial furniture. It was also not surprising that the whole town had an amphibious appearance, to a degree unusual even in a seaport. Every one depended on the whale fishery, and almost every male inhabitant had been, or hoped to be, a sailor. Down by the river the smell* was almost intolerable to any but Monkshaven people during certain seasons of the year; but on these unsavoury 'staithes'* the old men and children lounged for hours, almost as if they revelled in the odours of train-oil.*

This is, perhaps, enough of a description of the town itself. I have said that the country for miles all around was moorland; high above the level of the sea towered the purple crags, whose summits were crowned with greensward that stole down the sides of the scaur* a little way in grassy veins. Here and there a brook forced its way from

the heights down to the sea, making its channel into a valley more or less broad in long process of time. And in the moorland hollows, as in these valleys, trees and underwood grew and flourished; so that, while on the bare swells of the high land you shivered at the waste desolation of the scenery, when you dropped into these wooded 'bottoms' you were charmed with the nestling shelter which they gave. But above and around these rare and fertile vales there were moors for many a mile, here and there bleak enough, with the red freestone cropping out above the scanty herbage; then, perhaps, there was a brown tract of peat and bog, uncertain footing for the pedestrian who tried to make a short cut to his destination; then on the higher sandy soil there was the purple ling, or commonest species of heather growing in beautiful wild luxuriance. Tuffs of fine elastic grass were occasionally to be found, on which the little black-faced sheep* browsed; but either the scanty food, or their goat-like agility, kept them in a lean condition that did not promise much for the butcher, nor yet was their wool of a quality fine enough to make them profitable in that way to their owners. In such districts there is little population at the present day; there was much less in the last century, before agriculture was sufficiently scientific to have a chance of contending with such natural disqualifications as the moors presented, and when there were no facilities of railroads* to bring sportsmen from a distance to enjoy the shooting season, and make an annual demand for accommodation.

There were old stone halls in the valleys; there were bare farmhouses to be seen on the moors at long distances apart, with small stacks of coarse poor hay, and almost larger stacks of turf for winter fuel in their farmyards. The cattle in the pasture fields belonging to these farms looked half starved; but somehow there was an odd, intelligent expression in their faces, as well as in those of the black-visaged sheep, which is seldom seen in the placidly stupid countenances of well-fed animals. All the fences were turf banks, with loose stones piled into walls on the top of these.

There was comparative fertility and luxuriance down below in the rare green dales. The narrow meadows stretching along the brookside seemed as though the cows could really satisfy their hunger in the deep rich grass; whereas on the higher lands the scanty herbage was hardly worth the fatigue of moving about in search of it. Even in these 'bottoms' the piping sea-winds, following the current of the

stream, stunted and cut low any trees; but still there was rich thick underwood, tangled and tied together with brambles, and brier-rose, and honeysuckle; and if the farmer in these comparatively happy valleys had had wife or daughter who cared for gardening, many a flower would have grown on the western or southern side of the rough stone house. But at that time gardening was not a popular art in any part of England; in the north it is not yet. Noblemen and gentlemen may have beautiful gardens; but farmers and day-labourers care little for them north of the Trent, which is all I can answer for. A few 'berry' bushes, a black currant tree or two (the leaves to be used in heightening the flavour of tea, the fruit as medicinal for colds and sore throats), a potato ground (and this was not so common at the close of the last century as it is now), a cabbage bed, a bush of sage, and balm, and thyme, and marjoram, with possibly a rose tree, and 'old man'* growing in the midst; a little plot of small strong coarse onions, and perhaps some marigolds, the petals of which flavoured the salt-beef broth; such plants made up a well-furnished garden to a farmhouse at the time and place to which my story belongs. But for twenty miles inland there was no forgetting the sea, nor the sea-trade; refuse shell-fish, seaweed, the offal of the melting-houses, were the staple manure of the district; great ghastly whale-jaws, bleached bare and white, were the arches over the gate-posts to many a field or moorland stretch. Out of every family of several sons, however agricultural their position might be, one had gone to sea, and the mother looked wistfully seaward at the changes of the keen piping moorland winds. The holiday rambles were to the coast; no one cared to go inland to see aught, unless indeed it might be to the great annual horse-fairs held where the dreary land broke into habitation and cultivation.

Somehow in this country sea thoughts followed the thinker far inland; whereas in most other parts of the island, at five miles from the ocean, he has all but forgotten the existence of such an element as salt water. The great Greenland trade of the coasting towns was the main and primary cause of this, no doubt. But there was also a dread and an irritation in every one's mind, at the time of which I write, in connection with the neighbouring sea.

Since the termination of the American war,* there had been nothing to call for any unusual energy in manning the navy; and the grants required by Government for this purpose diminished with every year of peace. In 1792 this grant touched its minimum for many years.