

Chapter 4

The Nineteenth Century Visiting Mode and Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction

Introduction

The domestic visit was a component of the short stories of nineteenth-century women's magazines, of religious and philanthropic periodicals, and in novels, from Austen's *Emma* to Eliot's *Middlemarch*.¹ These accounts, whether they offered the powerfully negative tone of Mrs Pardiggle's insensitive and blinkered encounters with a London bricklayer of Dickens' *Bleak House*, (itself counterposed by the combination of empathy and system embodied in Esther Summerson),² or the transformative death-bed experience of Mary Brotherton in Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1839-40), were repeatedly represented as knowledge transactions and potential moments of learning, and rehearsed the conventional components of the visiting mode narrative. Hence the worldly Manchester novelist Geraldine Jewsbury was not just driven to visiting, but to framing her mid-century novel *Marian Withers* with an opening scene involving a servant despatched to a 'back-garden street' to deliver clothes to two impoverished children, complete with a guide (the 'pawnbroker's man), threat from the 'hulking men' at the doorways, a dark and enclosed cellar dwelling, leading to the heroine's vicarious learning of the 'invisible world' of the city's outcast children.³

The traction of the visiting mode as a way of understanding the industrial city is particularly powerfully represented in the work of Elizabeth Gaskell. Gaskell addressed urban society primarily in her two Manchester-based condition of England novels, *Mary Barton* (1848), and *North and South* (1854-5) (where Manchester is thinly disguised as 'Milton-Northern'),⁴ but also in a number of shorter stories set in Manchester, several published under the pseudonym Cotton Mather Mills in *Howitt's Journal*, including 'The Three Eras of Libbie Marsh', and others which appeared in Dickens' *Household Words*, including 'Lizzie Leigh' and 'The Manchester Marriage',⁵ and in many of her non-Manchester novellas and short stories, including *Cranford* (1851-53) (along with its prequel, 'Mr Harrison's Confessions' (1851)), *Ruth* (1853), and *A Dark Night's Work* (1863).⁶ Taken together, Gaskell's writing reveals the intimate exchanges of the realist novel with visiting as practice and paradigm.⁷

The story that Gaskell's inspiration for her first novel came while visiting a poor family in Manchester, when she was grabbed tightly by the father of the family, and asked 'have you ever seen a child clemmed to death?',⁸ may be apocryphal, but visiting was crucial to Gaskell's writing. Her own personal experience of visiting was not substantial - the lack of any substantial reference in contemporary sources, including her own correspondence would suggest this - but she did do some prison visiting,⁹ and later recollections claim that she also visited for the District Provident Society,¹⁰ for her class at the Lower Mosley Street Sunday School, and apparently also to a district in Chorlton-upon Medlock.¹¹ And indirect exposure to visiting pressed on her from every side. Her husband William was prominent in the

Manchester Domestic Mission and the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association, and took a leading role in establishing the Unitarian Home Mission Board, many of whose students acted as visitors for the DPS.¹² Gaskell's daughters visited,¹³ and her close friends included Susanna Winkworth who also acted as a visitor for the DPS in Ancoats,¹⁴ and Travers Madge, 'a zealous amateur missionary amongst the Manch[este]r poor'.¹⁵ Winkworth's account of a Sunday party in 1849 at which she and Madge were catechised by the historian J.A. Froude about their visiting and the needs of the poor illuminates the importance of visiting knowledge in this milieu.¹⁶

Gaskell recognised the role of visiting in part as the acquisition of information about social conditions.¹⁷ She herself drew directly for key descriptions of working class conditions and attitudes on the writings of those like the journalist Angus Reach operating in the 'visiting mode', and especially on the reports of the Manchester Domestic Mission, including short passages of very direct reproduction of the observations of John Layhe the missionary during the later 1830s and 1840s.¹⁸ And while she was aware of the dangers of visiting literature offering formulaic and 'touched up' accounts, and maintained a clear distinction in her mind between the 'facts' which visitors could acquire and the opinions they might develop from them, in her correspondence during the 1850s and 1860s she repeatedly recommended local visitors as the most effective sources of local knowledge.¹⁹

Knowledge realism

Scholarship has tended to treat Gaskell's position as a realist novelist with ambivalence, along the lines of John Gross's verdict that '*Mary Barton* survives chiefly as documentary'.²⁰ Gaskell herself had no such qualms. Even if all else might be dismissed as worthless, she claimed at least that her work was based on fact; and she justified her intervention on the basis of her intimate knowledge of the working poor; 'those best acquainted with the way of thinking & feeling among the poor acknowledge its *truth*', she told one correspondent, of *Mary Barton*, 'which is the acknowledgement I most of all desire'.²¹ Contemporary critical debate agreed that she was successful and significant precisely insofar as she was representational,²² praising her above all as a medium of knowledge; most obviously in Charles Kingsley's much-cited litany: 'Do [the rich] ... want to know why poor men, kind and sympathising as women to each other... learn to hate law and order, ..? Then let them read *Mary Barton*. Do they want to get a detailed insight into the whole "science of starving" ... Let them read *Mary Barton*. ... if they want to know why men ... turn sceptics, Atheists, blasphemers, ... let them read *Mary Barton*'.²³

Knowledge was not just a pervasive theme of Gaskell's fiction, it was its overriding structural preoccupation.²⁴ 'Know one another, the idea impressed on every part of' *North and South*, as one review put it, is established by the first real conversation between its emblematic protagonists Margaret Hale and John Thornton: 'You do not know anything about the South', Margaret protests; 'And may I say', Thornton retorts, 'you do not know the North' (*N&S*, 122-23).²⁵ *Mary Barton* equally is propelled by John Barton's belief that the government could not possibly know of working-class misery, by his faith that 'better times [will] come after Parliament knows all', and by his crushing disillusion when the government 'so cruelly refused to hear us' (*MB*, 130, 145). Throughout Gaskell's writing there is a general valorisation of the

‘strong healthy craving after further knowledge’ (*CP*, 271), visible in Ruth’s craving, despite her outcast status, for learning of various sorts, or in the desire of the factory girl Bessy Higgins ‘to know so many things’ (*N&S*, 133). Gaskell’s heroines and heroes are open to learning, her villains have closed minds.

Mary Barton and *North and South* are novels more of diagnosis than therapeutics, and criticism which focusses on the feebleness of their curative action to some extent misses the point. ‘Meddling twixt master and man’, as Bessy’s father Nicholas Higgins tells Margaret in *North and South*, ‘takes a deal o’ wisdom for to do ony good’ (*N&S*, 384). And wisdom (or at least knowledge) is exactly what is lacking. Just as the rich dancers are ignorant of the meaning of winter to the poor at the outset of *Ruth* (12), so the envy of the roadside workers in ‘A Dark Night’s Work’ is entirely superficial (‘And yet if they had known – if the poor did know – the troubles and temptations of the rich’ (48)). John Barton’s tragedy was the combination of thoughtfulness and ignorance.²⁶ Ultimately he is ‘almost crushed with the knowledge of the consequences of his own action’ (*MB*, 435). The master Carson is equally a victim of structural ignorance: the channelling of his energies into the narrow run of economic success ‘prevented him from becoming largely and philosophically comprehensive in his views’ (*MB*, 451); as was the son of the hard-nosed employer, Hamper, a ‘young man .. half-educated as regarded information, and wholly uneducated as regarded any other responsibility than that of getting money’ (*N&S*, 519).

If Gaskell offers any solution it is implicitly educational, looking to the open articulation and explanation of actions. The failing of the masters was that ‘they did not choose to make all these facts known’ (*MB*, 21), or felt it unnecessary to give their reasons, so that the employers became ‘known only to those below them as desirous to obtain the greatest quantity of work for the lowest wages’ (*MB*, 435-6). Barton and Nicholas Higgins, his counterpart in *North and South*, both articulate this failure of the middle classes to educate: ‘No one learned me, and no one telled me’ Barton says, ‘they taught me to read, and then they ne’er gave me no books’ (*MB*, 440). Higgins tells Mr Hale, ‘If yo’, sir, or any other knowledgeable, patient man come to me, and says he’ll larn me what the words mean ... why in time I may get to see the truth to it’ (*N&S*, 293, viz 207 and 364).

Anti-statistical knowledge

There was little sense of state surveillance in Gaskell’s fiction. Such knowledge as there is lies in the institutions of local voluntarism. The police are an occasional threat to liberty, but not a panoptic presence. They are cunning enough to trick Mrs Wilson into identifying Henry Carson’s murder weapon, but generally in the dark about the murder, overlooking crucial evidence, and misinterpreting what they have. They cannot lead John Barton to his sister-in-law Esther, who is easily able to evade the beat patrols.²⁷ The factory inspector may be wise to attempts to inflate the ages of children so as to enable them to get work in the factories, but controls on smoke pollution are nugatory, the necessary informers non-existent. Parliament, observes Thornton, is merely ‘a meddler with only a smattering of knowledge of the real facts of the case’ (*N&S*, 125).

Nor does Gaskell have any sympathy with modes of statistical knowledge. This antipathy is often coded as a rejection of ‘theory’, most famously at the outset of *Mary Barton* where Gaskell signals that she intends to operate outside the procedures of ‘political economy’, but it is equally visible in the way Margaret Hale is set up as the voice of one who knows nothing of political economy.²⁸ Theory is repeatedly opposed to the practical knowledge of everyday engagement, part of a reiterated dismissal of mere book learning. The visited poor, as worldly and ambitious Ralph Corbet observes in ‘A Dark Night’s work’, ‘were all very well in their way; and if they could have been brought to illustrate a theory hearing about them might have been of some use’ (90). But the factory hand Higgins, the industrialist Thornton, and even the Oxford don Mr Bell share the same stance. ‘[T]he philosopher and the idiot, publican and Pharisee, all eat after the same fashion – given an equally good digestion. There’s theory for theory for you’, remarks Bell, while Thornton claims ‘I have no theory; I hate theories’. Higgins ‘prefers’, as Jenny Uglow has put it, ‘to speak from direct experience’.²⁹ The world, he observes, ‘needs fettling’ (*N&S*, 382).³⁰

More than this, as Caroline Levine has recently pointed out, Gaskell refuses to count.³¹ She might not indulge in the sledgehammer sarcasm of *Hard Times*, but she shares Dickens’ suspicion of statistical thinking.³² Her scattered references to statistics are ironical and subversive: hence the ‘curious statistical fact’ observed in ‘Mr Harrison’s Confessions’ that ‘five-sixths of our householders of a certain rank in Duncombe are women’. Enumeration unnerved, and averages were presented as alien and unhelpfully impersonal, invalidated by the social categorisation their arithmetic required.³³ Higgins recognises that the failing of the book he is given by his employer is that it speaks of people as mere abstractions (‘virtues or vices’). He understands that ‘truth can[not] be shaped out in words, all neat and clean, as th’ men at th’ foundry cut out sheet iron’ (*N&S*, 292-93).³⁴ The collapse of the strike in *Mary Barton* arises from a failure of its leaders to understand that the men are not machines but are creatures of emotion. It is this that makes sense of Job Legh’s otherwise enigmatic observation to Mr Carson, ‘You can never work facts as you would fixed quantities and say, given two facts, and the product is so and so’ (*MB*, 457). Carson’s problem, as he comes to realise, is that he knows his men not by name as individuals, but only *en masse*, just as Thornton is brought to recognise that ‘hands’, though the ‘technical term’, dehumanizes his employees (*N&S*, 166).

Gaskell is particularly severe on the reduction of individuals to economic position. She is aware of the subtle gradations of Manchester’s social structure, as registered by her reference to the apparent extravagance of the diets of fine spinners in ‘Libbie Marsh’. But she refuses to type people by occupation, recognising this as a strategy of psychological control, without which ‘the people rise up to life’, irritating and terrifying (*MB*, 220).³⁵ The inadequacy of judgements derived from occupational stereotypes is a running theme of *North and South*, symbolised by the Hales’ dismissal of Thornton as ‘tradesman’,³⁶ just as Higgins is ‘bamboozled’ by Thornton’s refusal to be confined by the category of ‘master’, and Thornton is ‘taken aback’ with Higgins in the same way (*N&S*, 418-19).

Here I take issue with Emily Steinlight’s recent suggestion that Gaskell’s work is ‘geared less toward the representation of a fixed class of “working men” than toward the making of statistical remainders’.³⁷ Indeed, Gaskell rejects the exclusionary impetus of the ‘census

mentality' which defines by occupation and construes the unemployed as an apparently indescribable residuum. People can only be known, she urges, outside the statistical categories imposed upon them, not as generalities, but as individuals.³⁸ This stance is given its fullest expression in the unsympathetic portrait of Richard Bradshaw in *Ruth*, in his reliance on maxims not feelings, his insistence on applying black and white judgements, and his treatment of Ruth as a category ('sinner') rather than as individual with a history.³⁹ In contrast, the response of Thurstan Benson, Ruth's protector, to the exposure of Bradshaw's wrongdoing is a refusal to identify him as 'criminal' 'without first ascertaining the particulars about him' (*Ruth*, 282).

Gaskell's characters are not just social units; they are, as Uglow points out, 'endowed with pasts'.⁴⁰ These pasts provide character, the unmeasurable measure of an individual's identity. So Jem understands his work-mates' ostracism of him: they 'have nought to stand upon ... but their character' (*MB*, 430). As a result, although Gaskell continues to invoke a binary division of rich and poor, Dives and Lazarus, 'with a great gulf betwixt us' (*MB*, 45, viz 219, echoed in *N&S*, 202),⁴¹ she is more interested in questioning undifferentiated constructions of 'the poor', against which she offers the character-based gradations of Victorian philanthropy, 'the loose-living and vicious, ... the decent poor, ... the well-to-do and respectable' (*Ruth*, 295). Uncovering these pasts is not without challenges, but it is essential to knowing. Thornton's discovery that Higgins had waited five hours for him at the factory gate prompts him 'to going about collecting evidence as to the truth of Higgins's story, going beyond simple categories to the 'nature of his character', beyond his position to 'the tenor of his life' (*N&S*, 403).

Visiting Fictions

It was this importance of history and character which established home rather than street or workplace as the fundamental site of social observation. At the start of *Mary Barton* Gaskell described her fiction as having been written from immersion in the 'busy streets'. But her urban *mise en scene* overwhelmingly subordinates streets and crowds to domestic spaces and family groups. Her occasional crowd scenes are designed to show that people become unreadable (if not, as in the case of the mill riot in *North and South*, de-characterised) in the streets. Hence the narrator's observation in *Mary Barton* that 'he could not, you cannot, read the lot of those who daily pass you by in the street. How do you know the wild romances of their lives; the trials, the temptations they are even now enduring, resisting, sinking under?', which tellingly begins 'He wondered if any in all the hurrying crowd has come from such a house' as his (*MB*, 101). While Levine uses this passage to argue that Gaskell insists that we cannot know the many, I suggest that she is arguing that it was impossible to know the many *in the streets*.⁴²

In Gaskell's fiction, visiting proliferates not least because it provides opportunities to develop social knowledge not otherwise available. Instances range from the formal sick-nurse visits of Ruth Hilton, through the almost conventional ladies' visiting of Margaret Hale and then of Thornton to the Higginses, to a range of variants: the Bartons' visiting of the Davenports, Ellinor Wilkins' philanthropic visits in 'A Dark Night's Work', Tom Fletcher's help in the house across his court in 'Hand and Heart'. Visiting brings visibility. Manchester begins to become legible for Margaret Hale when the 'desolate crowded streets' (*MB*, 288) are replaced

by the Higgins' cottage.⁴³ In the case of Thornton's visits to Higgins, the narrator's commentary could hardly be more emphatic: through his visiting Thornton is 'brought face to face, man to man, with an individual of the masses around him, and (take notice) *out* of the character of master and workman' they can begin to recognise each other has human beings (*N&S*, 511, emphasis in original). He also gets to know of the existence of Margaret's brother Frederick; and hence the removal of his suspicion of her conduct. Even Ruth's visiting, which offers little sense of her personal learning, operates (along with her work in the fever ward to which it leads) as a mechanism of revelation, presenting and vindicating her character.

Gaskell's composition aligns tightly to the key components of the visiting mode: observation, tableau and specimen. Her picture of Manchester was, as she stressed, based on 'personal observation', and the praise of Gaskell's 'observant eye' was an almost universal response of her reviewers.⁴⁴ Gaskell was unwilling to trespass on matters 'the details of which I never saw'.⁴⁵ Her characters insistently privilege sight as a mode of knowing. 'I'm wanting in learning, I'm aware', confesses Job Legh, 'but I can use my eyes' (*MB*, 456). 'I believe what I see and no more,' as Bessy Higgins puts it (*N&S*, 133); similarly Higgins tells Mr Hale that it is hard to base beliefs on 'on sayings and maxims and promises made by folk yo' never saw, about the things and life yo' never saw... where's the proof?' (*N&S*, 289). Not only this, but Gaskell recurred frequently to the conventional visitors' aspiration that her readers might 'really see the scenes I tried to describe'.⁴⁶ In a direct echo of William Buckland's comment (above [insert page number]), one of her reviewers praised Gaskell's ability to persuade her readers to forget technicalities 'and to follow her through the dwellings of the rich and poor, till they are impressed by what they see and hear'.⁴⁷

The result was the presentation of a series of set piece tableaux, meticulously detailed interiors which contrast starkly with her under-delineated public space, with its generic long rows of housing, and its featureless 'busy-ness'. Most recognisably perhaps in the opening picture of the Bartons' house in chapter 2 of *Mary Barton*, 'a complete and most admirable piece of Dutch painting', commented one review, 'which for the accuracy of its details respecting the habits and economy of the poor might almost be studied by the collector of social statistics'.⁴⁸ Froude remarked that reading *North and South* 'gave me such a strange feeling to see our drawing room *photographed*' as the Hales'.⁴⁹ At points the novels almost begin to feel like a sequence of such vignettes, the Bartons' initial house, the Davenport's cellar, the Carsons' drawing room, the second Barton house, and the Wilsons' home.⁵⁰

These set-pieces function as Wardian cases for the display of Gaskell's specimens, for the creation of exactly that sort of 'natural history of our social classes' that George Eliot called for in 1856. The need for the individual to speak for a wider generality was of course intrinsic to social realism; but this was a particular motif of Gaskell's work, developed in conscious hostility to alternative modes of statistical abstraction. As it was later said, Gaskell 'knew' the working classes 'as an ardent naturalist knows the flora of his [sic] own neighbourhood'.⁵¹ John Barton is emblematic here; though his status is replicated by Higgins in *North and South*, through whom Thornton 'starting from a kind of friendship with the one, [became] acquainted with the many' (*N&S*, 524). Barton is introduced as 'a thorough specimen of a Manchester man' (*MB*, 41), his character and modes of speech 'exactly a poor man I know'.⁵² Far from

being de-classed, as Steinlight has recently suggested, or merely offering what Levine terms ‘a glimpse of unending particularity’, Barton is ‘representative’, albeit not of a homogenous, aggregated class, and is recognisable to contemporaries as such; ‘his class, his order, was what he stood by, not the rights of his own paltry self’ (*MB*, 220).⁵³

If we have any doubts about Gaskell’s taxonomic procedure here they should be dispelled by the figure of Job Legh in *Mary Barton*, one of those working class entomologists who ‘pore over every new specimen with real scientific delight’ (*MB*, 75); and another character drawn from a specific working class model.⁵⁴ The symbolic and structural load Legh carries in *Mary Barton* has been widely recognised.⁵⁵ He serves as a representative of a ‘class of men in Manchester unknown even to many the inhabitants’, of the limits of existing social knowledge; as an alternative working-class ‘type’ (in the distinctive sense articulated by Lukács),⁵⁶ of the autodidact Manchester mechanic, with his fascination for learning of all sorts, his ‘love of hard words’ (314), his smatterings of knowledge, which challenges the collapsing of workers identities into occupation.⁵⁷ And he acts as representative of a regime of knowledge whose classificatory protocols, increasingly a matter of debate even in the years before Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, relied heavily on the accumulations of specimens which could manifest both type, and degrees of variation around that type. In this context the argument Legh has with the sailor Will Wilson, over the existence of mermaids, can be seen as a deliberate exploration of the tensions of hearsay, observation, and specimen. Observation can degenerate into hearsay when retold, but the specimen provides portable and replicable proof (*MB*, 199-203).⁵⁸

Reading Homes

The extract from Ebenezer Elliott, the ‘Corn Law Rhymer’, which serves as epigram to Chapter 5 of *Mary Barton* in which Job Legh is introduced, is significant for its explicit equation of the naturalist’s recognition and delineation of species with knowledge of each animal’s ‘home and history’ (just as George Eliot’s idealised natural history was presented as beginning with ‘the degree to which [the social classes] are influenced by local conditions’).⁵⁹ In the same way that nineteenth century natural history was increasingly a spatialized science whose professionalization was associated with rigorous attention to the locations at which specimens were found and collected, so Gaskell’s practice as a ‘visiting mode’ novelist culminates in the primacy afforded to the reading of homes and then their mapping.⁶⁰

Housing looms large in both novels and short stories, many, perhaps most, of which begin or end with a house move, or a description of houses as a way of fixing the scene. The degree of prominence given is hard to exaggerate. Jem’s proposal to Mary offers his home before his heart (*MB*, 174), just as Ruth’s suitor Jerry Dixon offers her ‘a four-roomed house, and furniture comfortable; and eighty pounds a year’ (*Ruth*, 117). Houses embody social status. The Manchester working classes registered the increasing wealth of their employers in their ‘removing from house to house, each one grander than the last, till he ends in building one more magnificent than all, ... or sells his mill to buy an estate in the country’ (*MB*, 59), just as in ‘A Manchester Marriage’ prosperity and poverty is inscribed in successive house moves. The description of the Davenports’ cellar in *Mary Barton* is a set-piece of Gaskell’s social

reportage, but its significance is its contribution to a differentiated working class, part of the social gradation from the Bartons, to the Wilsons, to the Davenports.

This approach invests homes with extraordinary power and resonance. Esther, as a fallen woman, cannot bring herself to cross the threshold (*MB*, 213), just as John Barton clings to his home because of its reminders of his wife. In this sense, *pace* Steinlight, individuals become outsiders or supernumeraries not when they are jobless, but when they are homeless. Esther's social position in the first few pages of *Mary Barton* is characterised as 'street walker', and is further placed by her absence from the domestic party at the Barton's house. As she tells Jem, 'Decent good people have homes. We have none' (*MB*, 214). Without a home she is 'wandering' and unlocatable, and can 'never more belong' to the working 'class' (*MB*, 171, 292).⁶¹

More than this, homes provide more reliable evidence than personal appearance of an individual's history and character, 'thick', as Josie Billington has put it, 'with the cumulative deposits of the past'.⁶² Homes give specificity, separate the individual from the mass; they stand metonymically for households and so for people. Part of Mr Hale's 'Southernness' was his incapacity to read the houses of the working classes of Milton (see his visit to Boucher, *N&S*, 212), and perhaps Gaskell shared some sense of the alien-ness of working-class houses; but despite any initial impression of homogeneity given, (the 'long rows of small houses, with a blank wall here and there' which describes Marlborough Street where Thornton lives in *N&S*, 157) she repeatedly enforced the indexical character of houses and homes. Attention, in what Uglow describes as the 'almost anthropological accounts' of homes, is lavished on the 'evidences of character in inanimate things' (*Ruth*, 165):⁶³ the Hale drawing room, the Holman home in *Cousin Phillis*, the seamstresses' room at the start of *Ruth*.

The home of a stranger encountered in 'Lizzie Leigh', 'exquisitely clean and neat in outward appearance: threshold, window, and window-sill', offered 'outward signs of some spirit of purity within' (*FSS*, 55). Gaskell is acutely aware of the exhibitionary function of furniture and furnishings, both as extension of personality and as status signifier. The Bartons' status as respectable and conscientious workers was embodied in their house and its 'many conveniences', the fire in the grate ready to be fanned into vigour, candles to aid the firelight, check curtains, geraniums, rooms 'crammed with furniture', (*MB*, 49-50), as did, though much more sparsely furnished and damp, 'the perfection of cleanliness' of Alice Wilson's cellar (65-66). Hence the significance of the pawning away of the Davenport's possessions, the Wilsons' withered window plants, or the gradual deterioration of the Bartons' house, as 'by degrees [it] was stripped of its little ornaments' (158-9).⁶⁴ Neglect registered in dirt and cold. Characters are defined far more by their attention to domestic duties than by formal occupational or economic *circumstances*. This is a particular theme of *Ruth*, manifest in the inscribed labour of the Benson kitchen 'with the well-scoured dresser, the shining saucepans, the well-blacked grate, and whitened hearth, which seemed to rise up from the very flags and ruddily cheer the most distant corners' (265).⁶⁵ Such is the strength of the expectation of homology, that when it breaks down, and individuals offer misleading indications of their residences, it is noteworthy (*N&S*, 157).

This puts Gaskell at odds with any rigid sense of the geographical situatedness of status: Barton (though she accepts a certain atypicality in this) allows poverty to register in decay not relocation. But it also reinforces the sense to which social identity comes as much from residence as from occupation or income.⁶⁶ Hence Gaskell's description of John Barton as 'born of factory workers, and himself bred up in youth, and living in manhood, among the mills', so that he is, as Steinlight notes, representative of his class genealogically and environmentally.⁶⁷ Hence also the way Barton conceives of his fellow chartists not as fellow workers but as 'neighbours' (130, viz 241), a collectivity which is registered, for example, in the neighbour, a stranger to the house, new to the district, and yet still pitching in to look after Mrs Boucher in the aftermath of the news of the death of her husband (*N&S*, 371).

Gaskell's Cartographic Imaginary

The spatial dynamics of Gaskell's fiction are usually conceived of on a broader scale (north versus south, country versus city), than on these sorts of 'micro-spatialities', and recent attention has been given more to networks and circulations, to movement between rather than places within.⁶⁸ Edgar Wright went so far as to suggest, not entirely unfairly, that what Gaskell offers 'is not Manchester the city but Manchester the symbol of a type of background for living'.⁶⁹ Yet Gaskell was acutely aware of the need for 'some definite, coloured, living idea' of cities, of the importance of the experienced landscape, 'to understand how such a little clause as "It is but a stone's throw" helps us to hear and read and think'. During her visit to Rome in 1856 she spent a great deal of time studying maps of the city, while recognising that this still did not enable her to grasp much of its actual lived experience, including 'relative positions (such as what can be seen from the other?)'.⁷⁰ In Manchester, as in Rome, this gap required the development of an imagined cartography.

Gaskell grounds her Manchester fiction in significant local allusion. Admittedly, this is largely a reality effect, which anchors the setting in respect of the conventional geographies of Victorian urban description.⁷¹ This is true of the incidental locations of *Mary Barton*, the 'respectable little street leading off Ardwick Green' where Mary is apprenticed as dressmaker (63), Oxford street where George Wilson drops down dead, (*MB*, 141); 'Turner Street', where Carson is murdered (which was a street in the Shudehill area, not in reality 'a lonely unfrequented way' (*MB*, 261), but a minor thoroughfare with beerhouses, fronting on one the cholera nests of the 1849 outbreak). Yet this sort of placing imitates the strategies of other forms of visiting reportage and trades on this notoriety. And so, for example, the address of the Davenport cellar in Berry Street, off Store Street, places it at a spot featured repeatedly in contemporary accounts of Manchester 'slums'.⁷²

But true to her desire to present sociological complexity, Gaskell's urban society is not primarily characterised by the sort of social segregation often presented as the structuring reality in early statistical accounts. Thornton lives in the precincts of his mill. Carson lives in one of the suburban villas beyond the working class houses, 'almost in the country' (*MB*, 105, viz *N&S*, 267), but it is accessible to Barton, part of a sequence which includes the serried rows of working class streets, the gradations of front and back streets, the outer courts opening off 'a squalid street' (*N&S*, 132), and the inner courts off which the Barton house is. The overall

effect generates the concentrated and complicated juxtapositions which place the shops of London-road five minutes from the abject squalor of Berry Street.

For all this there is little sense of the social topography of the city. We are offered colour but not a developed spatial structure; little beyond the broad distinctions of commercial centre and working class residential districts, between Deansgate and Ancoats. There is a suggestion of districts associated with degraded character, as in the house at which Bellingham met Ruth, 'in the lowest part of the town, where all the bad characters haunt', as it was described (75), or a presentation of the concentration of fever in a 'miserable living, filthy neighbourhood' (99). Esther's temporary address in Nicholas Street, Angel's [sic] Meadow, tallies with the district's reputation as the main location of Manchester's common lodging houses; although this is not spelled out. We never know precisely where the Wilson's or the Barton's live, nor do we get an explicit mapping of the progression of poverty from Barton to Wilson to Davenport.

Perhaps it is simply that Gaskell chooses to sacrifice imaginative mapping to facilitate an emphasis on the unknowability of the city, its amorphous and occlusive qualities, what Catherine Gallagher has described as 'the constantly obstructed passage through Manchester's chaotic squalor'.⁷³ In this way the 'well-known' Greenheys Fields which open *Mary Barton* soon give way to the Bartons' home, whose location is difficult to know: those following to the house 'through many half-finished streets, all alike one another', dark and misty even as the fields were bathed in early evening sunshine, 'might easily have been bewildered and lost [their] way' (*MB*, 48, viz 171). Rushing to Carson's Mill, built in the old part of town where the first mills were built, amidst 'the crowded alleys and back streets of the neighbourhood', to see the fire there, Mary and her friend Margaret are 'Guided by the ruddy light more than by any exact knowledge of the streets that led to the mill' (*MB*, 87). Even the nearest doctor to whom John Barton runs in haste to when his wife's labour goes wrong, needs to be guided to his house. Gaskell does not ignore the elements of neighbourhood solidarity that provide networks of information and also a degree of insulation from outside incursion. And she gives a sense of shape and structure to the city which contrasts strongly to the sense of overwhelmingly strangeness which is often the dominant note of the accounts of visitors to the city. But her instincts, not just in her prostitution plotlines, are towards anonymity, and the capacity of the city to swallow and lose. Nicholas Higgins is not to be found while his daughter lies dying.

Conclusion

Gaskell was a novelist of the visiting mode. She argued for visiting as a treatment for contemporary ignorance, but also as a fundamental nexus in the generation of social action. As Dorice Williams Elliott observes, her urban fiction 'represents the novel 'as a philanthropic act akin to visiting'. She encouraged readerly responses of both knowing and doing, 'exciting the mind to a better knowledge and a more active remedial interference on behalf of the labouring classes'.⁷⁴ In doing so she offered, as Caroline Levine has recently observed, 'a critique of the mastery implied by statistical knowledge'; not as the product of an 'enormity effect', nor by adopting biopower's organizing tropes, as Steinlight has argued,⁷⁵ but by challenging the methods and of early Victorian social science, and its claims to describe society through

abstracted populations.⁷⁶ The fundamental nature of this challenge is registered in the hostility to her fiction manifest in the contemporary responses of liberal economists and statisticians, and the defences mounted by visiting institutions and their representatives.

Contemporary reviews of Gaskell's works rehearsed the conflicts over the forms of social knowledge in which she had intervened. While sympathetic reviewers praised the intimacy of her information, and the clarity of her illustration, more statistically-inclined reviewers like the ex-cotton master and one of the founders of the Manchester Statistical Society, W.R. Greg, launched a wholesale challenge both to Gaskell's taxonomies and to her underlying epistemologies. Particular fire was directed at her specimens. Greg rejected John Barton as 'a fair representative of the artisans and factory operatives of Manchester', and presented Gaskell as exposed 'to the charge of culpable misrepresentation'; and similar criticisms were directed at *North and South*, whose problem, thought the radical *Leader*, was that the Higginses and Thorntons, 'are not types, nor even generalities'.⁷⁷ Gaskell's temerity in intervening beyond the new circles of professional expertise drew similar fire. For the representatives of social science 'if there are two classes that should give trade and masters-and-men questions a wide birth those classes are clergymen and women'. 'Some of those representations of factory life which have passed current as authentic representations of fact', argued a review in the *British Quarterly Review* (edited by Robert Vaughan, another Manchester School radical), 'have been based on representations and fabrications obtained in the most disreputable manner through paid agents, sent to collect they could that would tend to blacken the character of various leading men connected with manufactures'.⁷⁸ When the *Manchester Guardian* challenged both the accuracy and the representativeness of Gaskell's account, tellingly counterpointing her evidence with a factory-based survey, we should not be surprised that the first to spring to her defence was David Winstanley, secretary of the Miles Platting Mechanics' Institute, closely aligned to the Ministry to the Poor, and himself an active visitor to the Manchester poor.⁷⁹

Notes

¹ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Superintending the Poor. Charitable Ladies and Paternal Landlords in British Fiction, 1770-1860* (1993), 129; Siegal, *Charity and Condescension*, 170, n6.

² See the discussions in Tobin, *Superintending the Poor*, 143-44, Goodlad, *Victorian State*, 109-111.

³ G. Jewsbury, *Marian Withers* (1851), I, 15; letter of October 19, 1849, in Mrs Alexander Ireland, ed., *Selections from the letters of Geraldine Endors Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle* (1892), 306.

⁴ Gaskell was not particular about distinguishing towns and cities, in *Cranford* 'Drumble', another of her names for Manchester, is also 'the great neighbouring commercial town', 39.

⁵ All three are included in *Elizabeth Gaskell. Four Short Stories*, introduced by Anna Walters (1993), to which subsequent in-line references refer (*FSS*). Subsequent references to *Mary Barton* and *North and South* are to the Penguin English Library editions, edited by Stephen Gill and Martin Dodsworth respectively. The discussion also encompasses other writings such as the indeterminate 'Hand and Heart', *Sunday School Penny Magazine*, in five parts: July-December 1849.

⁶ Further references are to the Penguin English Library editions, *Cranford/Cousin Phillis*, edited Peter Keating, and *Ruth*, edited Alan Shelston.

⁷ A point made by Seed, 'Antinomies of Liberal Culture', 19-20.

⁸ Mat Hompes, 'Mrs Gaskell', *Gentleman's Magazine* CCLXXIX (1895).

⁹ See letter to Dickens, in *Four Short Stories*, 11.

¹⁰ According to an allusion in H.C. Irvine, *The Old D.P.S.* ([1933]), 9, cited John Geoffrey Sharps, *Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention: A Study of Her Non-Biographic Works* (1970), 57. For later passing reference to visiting (during Cotton Famine), see Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell. A Habit of Stories* (1993), 319.

¹¹ Various references, including 'A Manchester Correspondent' [Mat Hompes], "Mrs. Gaskell and Her Social Work among the Poor," *The Inquirer and Christian Life* (London), 8 October 1910, A. Cobden Smith 'Mrs Gaskell and Lower Mosley Street', *The Sunday School Quarterly*, (Jan 1911), 156-161, which included a tribute to 'her kindly and unselfish labours among the homes of our scholars', 156. See also notice in *Unitarian Herald*, 17 November 1865 [possibly by James Martineau], quoted in A. Easson, *Elizabeth Gaskell: the critical heritage, 1848-1910* (1991), 506.

¹² William Gaskell was on the committee from the beginning, Secretary from 1841. For his prominence and influence in the M&SSA, see Margaret Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters: Susanna and Catherine Winkworth* (1908), 93.

¹³ Gaskell to Vernon Lushington, [c.9 April 1862], John Chapple and Alan Shelston, eds, *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (2013), 235-36.

¹⁴ See Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 163, quoting Susanna Winkworth to Emily Winkworth, 1846, Susanna Winkworth and Margaret Shaen, eds, *Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth* (2 vols, 1883-86), I, 106-7.

¹⁵ See the reference to the visiting of Madge, along with Brooke Herford, another of the teachers, in A. Cobden Smith, 'Brooke Herford', *Sunday School Quarterly* 1 (1909), 118-19, and Brooke Herford, *Travers Madge: a memoir* (1867); also John Chapple and Arthur Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (1966), L677; and recommended as someone 'living right amongst them', *Further Letters*, 238. Uglow comments that Madge 'roused Elizabeth into far greater involvement than before', Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 156.

¹⁶ See the letter from Susanna to Emily Winkworth, 8 June 1849, Shaen, *Memorials*, 45-46, 96-98.

¹⁷ It is significantly often given priority, as in her discussion of responses to the visiting of the Brontes, 'to inquire into their condition, to counsel, or to admonish them', *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*, ed. Elizabeth Jay, (1857), 42.

¹⁸ For links with Reach see Carolyn Lambert, *The Meanings of Home in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction* (2013), 109. On the Domestic Mission see M.C. Fryckstedt, *Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth: A Challenge to Liberal England*, *Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia*, 43 (1982), 90-97. Notes direct quotes from Layhe's 1842 report of certain passages. In a similar way, Gaskell's account of the 'fever' hospital in *Ruth* drew explicitly and extensively on procedures at the Manchester Royal Infirmary and Manchester House of Recovery, Katherine Inglis, 'Unimagined Community and Disease in *Ruth*', in Lesa Scholl and Emily Morris, eds, *Place and Progress in the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* (2015), 67-82, especially 71-74.

¹⁹ See two very illuminating letters, Gaskell to Charles Bosanquet, 7 November [1859], *Letters*, L446a, and Gaskell to S.A. Steinthal, n.d. (but probably early 1860s), *ibid*, L630.

²⁰ John Gross, "Mrs Gaskell", in Ian Watt, ed, *The Victorian Novel. Modern Essays in Criticism* (1971).

²¹ Gaskell to Edward Holland. 13 January 1849, *Letters*, L39a; see Gaskell to Mrs Greg, *Letters*, L42; see also Gaskell to John Seely Hart, 28 April 1850, *Letters*, L71; Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 16 July [1850], *Letters*, L72a.

²² 'The great beauty of this "Tale of Manchester Life" consists in its self-evident truthfulness', *The Inquirer*, 11 November 1848. Likewise the verdict of the *Christian Reformer* (1848) that 'characters are natural, life-like, and very various', 747.

²³ Charles Kingsley in *Fraser's Magazine* (April 1849), Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 153-54.

²⁴ For recent criticism which takes up this theme, see for example, Eleanor Courtemanche, *The 'Invisible Hand' and British Fiction, 1818-1860* (2011), which replicates at a number of points the analysis advanced here; Gregory Vargo, 'Questions from Workers Who Read: Education and Self-Formation in Chartist Print Culture and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*', in his *An Underground History of Early Victorian Fiction. Chartism, Radical Print Culture, and the Social Problem Novel* (2018), 115-47.

²⁵ *Examiner*, 21 April 1855, in Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 340. As Canon Richard Parkinson had put it, ‘information will cure what ignorance has caused’, Parkinson, *Present Condition*, 15.

²⁶ See discussion in A. Easson, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (1979), and its reference to a letter describing Barton as ‘the bewildered life of an ignorant thoughtful man of strong power of sympathy’, 76.

²⁷ See the discussion in Hilary Schor, *Scheherazade in the Marketplace. Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Novel* (1992), 30-31; a position consistent with the conclusions of D. Churchill, *Crime Control and Everyday Life in the Victorian City*, (2018), 64-69, but also at odds with Gaskell’s brief essay ‘Disappearances’, *Household Words* (7 June 1851), 246-50.

²⁸ See the discussion in Dorice Williams Elliott, ‘The Female Visitor and the Marriage of Classes in Gaskell’s *North and South*’, *Nineteenth Century Literature* 49 (1994), 21-49; as Courtemanche notes, in Gaskell’s fiction mediations between self and collective ‘are explicitly framed as a problem in political economy’, Courtemanche, *The ‘Invisible Hand’*, 173. Inevitably this leads to parallels with the position George Eliot develops in ‘The Natural History of German Life’, with its rejection of ‘The tendency created by the splendid conquests of modern generalisation to believe that all social questions are merged in economical science, and that the relations of man to their neighbours may be settled by algebraic equations’, *Essays and Leaves from a Notebook* (1884), 238.

²⁹ Uglow, *Gaskell*, 374-75. For this privileging of ‘practical knowledge and ... experience’ over ‘fine names and ... theories’, see also ‘Mr Harrison’s Confessions’ (411).

³⁰ This implies the sort of practical rule-of-thumb knowledge that James C. Scott has described as ‘*mētis*’, *Seeing Like a State* (1998), 311-13.

³¹ Caroline Levine, ‘The Enormity Effect: Realist Fiction, Literary Studies and the Refusal to Count’, *Genre*, 50.1 (April 2017), 61-75.

³² See Siegal, *Charity and Condescension*, 51-52, and Jonathan V. Farina, “‘A Certain Shadow’: Personified Abstractions and the Form of *Household Words*”, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42 (2009), 392-415, which outlines the broad consistency of Dickens’ instincts with Gaskell’s; significantly ‘Lizzie Leigh’ launched the first issue of *Household Words*, which also published a number of the other short stories drawn on here.

³³ As in the comments in *Ruth*, 10, and the vignette in ‘A Dark Night’s Work’, 120. In this, while agreeing Audrey Jaffe that it is a central dynamic of Victorian fiction to identify a norm and explore deviations from it, I reject the suggestion that discussions of normality are necessarily inflected with specifically statistical understandings, Audrey Jaffe, *The Affective Life of the Average Man. The Victorian Novel and the Stock Market Graph* (2010).

³⁴ Patsy Stoneman points out how closely this approach aligns with Gaskell’s father’s exposure of what she describes as ‘the apparent mathematical certainty of “political economy” as a cheat. Attacking “political economists” in their own terms, he had shown them to be “blind guides to the mazes of this science”’, Stoneman, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (2006), 87.

³⁵ This theme is also explored on several levels in Gaskell’s ‘The Heart of John Middleton’.

³⁶ Echoed in Margaret’s musings on Frederick’s position as Spanish merchant (*N&S*, 425). Just as there is a motif of the inner person often hidden by the face they present to the world, eg Margaret’s conversation with her servant Martha, Mr Hale and his friends, (*N&S*, 427-30).

³⁷ Emily Steinlight, *Populating the Novel. Literary Form and the Politics of Surplus Life* (2018), 110; or indeed that ‘*Mary Barton* shows that making remainders rather than representing a consistent class of workers, is what industrial fiction and social science share’, 97.

³⁸ ‘So much for generalities’, as the narrator observes, after a long discussion of the dynamics of striking ‘Let us know return to individuals’ (*MB*, 223).

³⁹ A point made by Alan Shelston in his ‘*Ruth*: Mrs Gaskell’s Neglected Novel’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 58.1 (1975), 173-192.

⁴⁰ Uglow, *Gaskell*, 195.

⁴¹ And taken up by later accounts, including Crosfield, *Bitter Cry*, 9, 12.

⁴² Levine, ‘Enormity Effect’, 63.

⁴³ As Uglow suggests, *Gaskell*, 372.

⁴⁴ Gaskell to Mrs Greg, early 1849, *Letters*, L49. How could she, she asked Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, write about potential employers’ responses ‘the details of which I never saw’, *Letters*, L72a; Edgeworth to Mary Holland, 27 December 1848, quoted Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 89; for one such

description of her style as, ‘full of life and colour, betraying a quick observant eye’, see *Prospective Review*, XVII, (Feb, 1849), 41.

⁴⁵ Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 16 July (?1850), *Letters*, L72a. In the same way she praises Margaret Howitt’s writing in that she ‘does not make the reader see the things with your eyes, but you present the scene itself to him’, Margaret Howitt, *Mary Howitt, Her Autobiography* (1889), II, 66.

⁴⁶ Gaskell to Eliza Fox, 29 May 1849, *Letters*, L48; double underlined in original, see Sharps, *Observation and Invention*, 61.

⁴⁷ *Eclectic Review*, 25 (January 1849), quoted Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 96; the review later talks about Gaskell ‘leading us amongst them, and making us spectators of their pleasures and their cares’, 97.

⁴⁸ *Prospective Review*, XVII (Feb 1849), 42. For similar comments see the review of *The Moorland Cottage*, *The Leader*, 21 December 1850; ‘[Mary Barton: a Tale of Manchester Life]’, *North British Review*, (August 1851), 429-441.

⁴⁹ Froude to Gaskell, 5 January 1862, quoted Uglow, *Gaskell*, 229.

⁵⁰ Again a common theme of contemporary remark, see Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 62, 65, 68, ‘homely yet vigorous painting’ (John Forster, in *The Examiner*, 4 November 1848, 70), ‘pencilings of a true artist’, *Inquirer*, 11 November 1848, in Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 75; or ‘a most graphic sketch’, *Sun*, 30 November 1848, *ibid*, 79.

⁵¹ William Minto in *Fortnightly Review*, ns XXIV (September 1878), 353-69, in Easson *Critical Heritage*, 553.

⁵² Gaskell to Eliza Fox, 29 May 1849, *Letters*, L48. The typicality of Barton was the centre of the book’s authenticity for the working-class poet Samuel Bamford, who remarked ‘of John Barton, I have known hundreds, his very self in all things except his fatal crime’”, Ross Douglas Waller, *Letters Addressed to Mrs Gaskell by Celebrated Contemporaries* (1935).

⁵³ Levine, ‘Enormity Effect’, 68. See also Amy King, ‘Taxonomical Cures: The Politics of Natural History and Herbalist Medicine in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*’, in Noah Heringman, eds, *Romantic Science: The Literary Forms of Natural History* (2003), 262.

⁵⁴ See Anne Secord, ‘Elizabeth Gaskell and the Artisan Naturalists of Manchester’, *Gaskell Society Journal* 19 (2005), 34-51. For a strikingly congruent argument about the character of Roger Hamley in Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters*, see Karen Boiko, ‘Reading and (Re)Writing Class: Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters*’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 33.1 (2005), 85-106.

⁵⁵ See Danielle Coriale, ‘Gaskell’s Naturalist’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 63.3 (2008). 346–375. I do not attempt to follow Coriale here in seeing natural history as representing a liberation from class constraints, or her suggestion that Legh is in tension with what she sees as Gaskell’s anti-classificatory instincts.

⁵⁶ As in the discussion in György Lukács, *Studies in European Realism* (2002) of the distinction between the ‘type’ and the ‘average’. Averages flatten and homogenise. Type can be exceptional as long as it offers ‘clearly revealed social determinants’, 170.

⁵⁷ Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 65; see the similar commentary in ‘Libbie Marsh’ that ‘many of the weavers of Manchester know and care more about birds than anyone would easily credit’ (*FSS*, 9).

⁵⁸ Perhaps this is the significance of Gaskell’s (otherwise) strange description of Job’s antipathy to writing: ‘Writing was to him little more than an auxiliary to natural history: a way of ticketing specimens, not of expressing thoughts’ (*MB*, 406), a sense of the dangers that even the protocols of natural history can be reduced to the brutality of the experience of ‘some insect, which [Job] was impaling on a corking-pin’ (*MB*, 423).

⁵⁹ Ebenezer Elliott, *The Splendid Village, Corn Law Rhymes and Other Poems*, I, (1834), 25; Eliot, ‘Natural History’, 239.

⁶⁰ See, for example, the discussion in Jim Endersby, *Imperial Science. Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (2008), especially chapter 8 ‘Charting’, 225-48.

⁶¹ The scarcity of true homelessness in Gaskell’s work is discussed in Lambert, *The Meanings of Home in Elizabeth Gaskell’s Fiction*, eg 113.

⁶² Josie Billington, ‘Gaskell’s “Rooted” Prose Realism’, in Scholl and Morris, *Place and Progress*, 159-71.

⁶³ Uglow, *Gaskell*, 122.

⁶⁴ 'No observant individual who has been in the habit of regularly visiting the habitations of the poor, can have failed to remark any sure indications of increasing poverty. He [sic] must often have noticed comfortably furnished houses rendered desolate by the disappearance of one article of furniture after another', Adshead, *Distress*, 47.

⁶⁵ We see the same focus on cleanliness and kitchen utensils in 'The Grey Woman'.

⁶⁶ This is in part what elides the worker/non-worker distinction which exercises Steinlight, although of course part of the contemporary discourse was the sense of districts, of which in Manchester Angel Meadow/Charter Street became the most regularly invoked, which were (paradoxically) synonymous with homelessness (via lodging houses).

⁶⁷ The 'population to which Barton belongs is thus defined by the confluence of economic relations, geography, cultural habits and biological characteristics', Steinlight, *Populating the Novel*, 99.

⁶⁸ This is the overriding preoccupation of essays in Scholl and Morris, *Place and Progress*.

⁶⁹ Edgar Wright, *Mrs Gaskell. The Basis for Reassessment* (1965), 94.

⁷⁰ Gaskell to Lord Stanhope, 22 January [1856], in Chapple and Shelston, *Further Letters*, 106-7.

⁷¹ A strategy discussed in T. Gilfoyle, *The City of Eros* (1992), quoted in Robert Dowling, *Slumming in New York* (2007), 4.

⁷² See report in M&SSA Papers, M126/2/4/1-7 (London Road), MCL.

⁷³ C. Gallagher, *The Body Economic* (2005), 62.

⁷⁴ *Eclectic Review*, 25 (January 1849), quoted Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 97.

⁷⁵ Levine, 'Enormity Effect', 70.

⁷⁶ In this she was not alone; see for example the discussions in Gage McWeeny, 'The Sociology of the Novel: George Eliot's Strangers', *Novel* 42.3, (2009), 538-545, and Klotz, 'Manufacturing Fictional Individuals'.

⁷⁷ W.R. Greg, *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1849), and in his *Essays on Political and Social Science* (1853), I, 344-88; evinces a statistical critique, in that fundamental failure is to 'give exceptional cases as a fair type of the generality', *ibid*, 117; *The Leader*, 14 April 1855, printed Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 333-337, quote at 333. Compare with the passing comment of Thomas Ballantyne, Anti-Corn Law Leaguer and one of the original owners of the *Manchester Examiner*, who also stressed the difference of Higgins in a system 'the fatal tendency' of which is 'to destroy the individuality of the workman and render him a powerless unit in a gregarious crowd', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, January 1856, extracted in Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 368.

⁷⁸ *British Quarterly Review*, in Easson, *Critical Heritage*, 103-4.

⁷⁹ Editorial, *MG*, 28 February 1849, and Winstanley's response, *MG*, 7 March 1849 (which prompted a further editorial response enforcing that what is at issue is the generality of Gaskell's critique). For Winstanley see E. and T. Kelly, eds, *A Schoolmaster's Notebook* (1957).