Haunted Atlantic Waters: The Historic Traumas of Impressment, Slavery, and Whaling in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers*

Deborah Denenholz Morse

Sylvia's Lovers, Gaskell's historical novel set during the early years of the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1800) in a Yorkshire seaport, has long been the least studied of her novels. The reason often cited for this relative neglect is that *Sylvia's Lovers* is anomalous within Gaskell's corpus of full-length novels, a text more akin to her historical fiction, to the novella *Lois the Witch* or the lengthy stories *The Grey Woman*, *Morton Hall*, or *My Lady Ludlow*.[1] *Sylvia's Lovers* is not generally identified with Gaskell's Condition-of-England 'industrial' Manchester novels, *Mary Barton* or *North and South*, nor is it classed with that different genre of social problem novel, the fallen woman narrative *Ruth*.[2] With its Yorkshire characters, dialect, and setting in England's North, *Sylvia's Lovers* is not often viewed as in the same genre as Gaskell's provincial northwest England novels of manners, *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*, so deeply influenced by her upbringing in Knutsford.[3]

However, Gaskell's choice of the important Yorkshire whaling port of Whitby (the novel's Monkshaven) as her novel's setting has a deep resonance. The Atlantic Ocean itself, so pervasively described in *Sylvia's Lovers* as the primary element of Monkshaven's atmosphere, is crucial to interpreting *Sylvia's Lovers* as a novel of social protest. In Gaskell's narrative, the Atlantic's waters carry off impressed sailors and are the killing grounds for whales. The years in which Gaskell wrote her novel—during the American Civil War—evoke another history throughout *Sylvia's Lovers*: the horrific Atlantic slave trade and ongoing American slavery.[4]

[1] See especially Clare Pettitt, "Time Lag," for the connection to *Lois the Witch*; Deborah Denenholz Morse, "Haunting Memories" for Gaskell's historical fictions of the English Civil War (*Morton Hall*, *Lois the Witch*); Morse, "*My Lady Ludlow*."

[2] Patsy Stoneman is a notable voice in arguing against this view as she connects the public and private plots of the novel in their critique of "aggression on a public scale and ideologies of masculinity as manifested in courtship and the family" (140). She identifies the origin of Sylvia's story in George Crabbe's stories of the poor, along with *Mary Barton* and *Ruth*. Stoneman sees the public and private masculine oppressions in Sylvia's story as connected to the workers' class struggle in relation to Margaret Hale's resistance to male dominance in *North and South* (139-40). Stoneman does not discuss enslavement or the whale industry but focuses upon impressment.

[3] An exception to this is in courses centering on the English Rural Novel; I teach *Sylvia's Lovers* as the other Northern Rural Novel in connection with *Wuthering Heights* in such a course (Austen to D.H. Lawrence), which at times includes *Wives and Daughters*.

[4] See Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*; Marion Shaw, "*Sylvia's Lovers*, Then and Now"; Pettitt, "Time Lag," and most recently (September 2023) Sdegno, "Philip Hepburn, Stephen Freeman"—the last of which I discovered months after first writing this essay. All four scholars discuss the course of *Sylvia's Lovers*'s writing in relation to the American Civil War. Shaw states: "The composition of *Sylvia's Lovers* coincided with an intensification of the struggle over slavery, and its impact on the Lancashire communities" (6). Although Clare Pettitt identifies *Sylvia's Lovers* as Gaskell's "American" novel, her essay focuses upon new technologies as the "subject" of the novel and the "time lag" of modernity during the American conflict rather than on the issue of enslavement. Sdegno expands upon the influence of Charles Eliot Norton, focusing upon Philip Hepburn/Stephen Freeman in relation to the American Civil War. Her interpretation of Philip as 'freeman' is akin to but expands upon my own. Her reading of Philip/Stephen viewing his blackened face in the mirror is particularly original and moving. I am grateful that I came upon this essay during final revisions and edits so that I could acknowledge this new scholarship.

Gaskell's choice of Yorkshire as her setting, influenced by her recent writing of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*,[5] also suggests that Gaskell may have been thinking of British West Indian enslavement as well, a consistent background to the Brontë sisters' novels from Emily's *Wuthering Heights* to Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.[6] The pervading Atlantic waters in *Sylvia's Lovers* are haunted with these brutal histories of violent displacement and bloody carnage. In *Sylvia's Lovers*, Gaskell has written not only a historical novel, but a novel of historical trauma in which individual lives are influenced by great national and global institutions and crises. The narrator's commentary upon the differences between the past and the present throughout *Sylvia's Lovers*—often remarked upon by scholars[7]—not only points to the historical novel as a genre, but also compares the traumatic war over enslavement of the 1860s during which Gaskell was writing her novel to the historic traumas of the tumultuous 1790s, during the early years of the Napoleonic Wars.

Sylvia's Lovers is Gaskell's most elemental fiction—her novel most constructed in the recognizably Brontëan atmosphere of earth, air, fire, and water—and certainly her narrative most imbued with the element of water.[8] Sylvia herself, affined to the natural world by her name, is identified more with water than the 'sylvan' woods throughout the narrative, from her abundant tears to her desire for the sailor Kinraid and her longing to be near "the sight and sound of the mother-like sea" (350) after her mother Bell dies.[9] The Atlantic Ocean permeates *Sylvia's Lovers*

[5] See Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, "Baffled Seas: *Sylvia's Lovers*," especially 507, 517-19, 528; and Fran Twinn, "Navigational Pitfalls": "In *Sylvia's Lovers*, whilst she depicts the moorland wildscape both realistically and symbolically, she also conceives another version of the Brontëan wildscape: that is the sea" (2). Twinn discusses the influence of William Scoresby's book and Gaskell's encounter with Scoresby himself as likely factors in Gaskell's choice of subject matter and setting for *Sylvia's Lovers*.

[6] See especially Susan Meyer, *Imperialism at Home*; Sue Thomas, *Imperialism, Reform, and the Making of Englishness in* Jane Eyre; Julia Sun-Joo Lee, "Jane Eyre" in *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel*; Christopher Heywood, "Yorkshire Slavery in *Wuthering Heights*"; Maja-Lisa von Schneidern, "*Wuthering Heights* and the Liverpool Slave Trade"; Matthew Beaumont, "Heathcliff's Great Hunger"; Morse, "Burning Art"; Morse, "The 'House of Trauma.'"

[7] See especially Marion Shaw, "Sylvia's Lovers Then and Now."

[8] See Morse with Lydia Brown, "Aesthetics and the Poetic Imagination in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*" forthcoming in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Brontës and the Arts*, ed. Deborah Wynne and Amber Regis (University of Edinburgh, forthcoming June 2024), for a fuller discussion of this aspect of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and poetry:

> In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, the brilliant visual image of wine swirling into water symbolizes the continuous, elemental merging of Cathy and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's dynamic vision of the sacred. The dream does not state that the wine is red, but that vivid color is implicitly understood because—as Cathy explains to Nelly—the wine-dream "altered the colour of my mind." Although Charlotte and Branwell Brontë are often more celebrated for their visual art than their sister Emily, her elemental novel—riven with motifs of earth, air, fire, and water—represents the vigorous life of the poet's mind—in dream, in imagination, in metamorphosis—through charismatic visual images that are as striking as her paintings of the tawny, erect hairs of her fierce bull mastiff Keeper's massive neck and the shining beads of her hawk Nero's eyes. My reading suggests that like the wine swirling through water, visual representations of dispersal and consummation are the controlling aesthetic of *Wuthering Heights*.

[9] See Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, ed. Andrew Sanders, 350. All quotations are from this edition. Terence Wright in particular discusses Sylvia as a "child of nature, from the moment we first see her stepping out to sell her butter and eggs in Monkshaven, and pausing to play in the stream" (170).

from the novel's outset;[10] the narrator tells us the mist suffuses Monkshaven, where at times "people breathed more water than air" and "the consciousness of the nearness of the vast unseen sea acted as a dreary depression to the spirits" (45):

> Somehow 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 presence 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, in the time of which I write, in connection with the neighbouring sea.
>
> From the termination of the American war, there had been nothing to call for any unusual energy in manning the navy . . . (8).

That "connection with the neighbouring sea" is the press gang's kidnapping of sailors for England's wars against France beginning in 1793. Gaskell is concerned with the State's tyranny through the press gang, and its adverse—at times fatal—effect upon ordinary folk like the eponymous Sylvia Robson and her family of Haytersbank Farm.[11] *Sylvia's Lovers* also recurs to the historic Whitby's prosperity due to whaling in the 1790s—the high point of the great cetaceans' murderous extraction from the sea.[12] Whaling is intimately connected in the novel with the impressment of sailors: Charley Kinraid, Sylvia's great passion, is a 'specksioneer' or chief harpooner who is kidnapped by the press gang; one of the novel's early working titles was "The Specksioneer". Sylvia's beloved father Daniel, a farmer who was formerly a harpooner on a whaling ship, has mutilated his hand, cutting off his thumb and a part of a finger, in order to escape the press gang during the American Revolutionary Wars; he is ultimately hanged for his leading role in the riot against the press gang. Another connection is suggested by the final sentence cited above: "From the termination of the American war, there had been nothing to call for any unusual energy in manning the navy." The novel's continual focus upon America from its early mention of the Revolutionary War in relation to impressment to its last sight of Sylvia's heiress daughter Bella marrying and emigrating to America "many and many a year ago" intentionally evokes the American Civil War that was raging at the time Gaskell was writing her novel, in particular its burning issue of slavery.[13] The violent events of the novel—cruel impressments, ravaged families, the burning of the Randyvowse where the impressed sailors are being imprisoned and the subsequent hanging of Daniel Robson—all resonate with the violent history of enslavement, with its brutal manhunts, kidnappings, lynchings, and broken families, and the representation of this history in abolitionist literature, in fugitive slave narratives, and in the Victorian novel.[14]

[10] Andrew Sanders cites the importance to the novel of Gaskell's "long-fostered fascination with the sea" (vii) and Francis O'Gorman writes "the sea was part of Gaskell's family history" (xi).
[11] This aspect of Gaskell's social protest was analyzed by Deirdre D'Albertis in *Dissembling Fictions* (1997).
[12] For a brief history of whaling in Whitby, see https://worldcetaceanalliance.org/2022/11/10/scoresbys-arctic-whitby-museum/. The article has a good if short bibliography as well that includes *Moby-Dick* and Philip Hoare's *Leviathan*.
[13] In my spring 2019 senior seminar, "The English Rural Novel," Peter Makey wrote a brilliant paper on this subject in *Sylvia's Lovers* which contributed to my thinking over the past two decades about the Brontës and the hidden narratives of enslavement that haunt their fiction and that of writers they influenced.
[14] See in particular Lee, *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel*.

Scholars since Deirdre D'Albertis have dwelt upon the issue of naval impressment in *Sylvia's Lovers*.[15] They have rarely connected it, however, to the American slavery both past and present that haunts the novel—nor have scholars linked impressment and enslavement to the "extraction ecology"[16] of whaling in the North Atlantic.[17] Yet *Sylvia's Lovers* significantly imbricates the violent history of forcibly enslaved Africans and their descendants' ongoing American bondage with the violence perpetrated upon kidnapped sailors, as well as with the brutality of whaling upon which Monkshaven prospers. The novel is thus not only the "saddest story I ever wrote,"[18] but also the most harrowing, with its representation or allusion to three interwoven historic traumas against which the individual tragedies of *Sylvia's Lovers* are enacted. Gaskell's Atlantic imaginary is imbued with all of these histories of violent displacement from family, community, and natural environment, whether impressed sailor, enslaved black American, or harpooned and dismembered whale, its skeletal "great ghastly whale jaws, bleached bare and white . . . the arches over the gateposts to many a field or moorland stretch" (8) disfiguring the landscape and haunting the narrative.[19]

Whaling in the North Atlantic

Gaskell recalls a past history of Whitby in her late-eighteenth century Monkshaven that owes its prosperity to the killing of whales, extracting these highly intelligent and communal mammals from their natural environment and family in the ocean deeps. She researched Whitby's whaling history, which came to a halt in 1837 with the Phoenix, the last whaler to sail from its harbour.[20] Whale oil was used to fuel the Industrial Revolution's machines and light the world with oil lamps, as well as to provide whalebone for corsets; in the 1790s, whale oil was also used for the production of cheap woollens, chiefly for the military.[21] In *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Gaskell mentions William Scoresby, Jr., Arctic explorer and whaler and vicar of Bradford, whom she had met by chance at a dinner party.[22] As Jenny Uglow tells us, Gaskell knew Scoresby's

[15] See especially Deirdre D'Albertis, *Dissembling Fictions*, "The Plot of Impressment," 108-116.
[16] I use Liz Miller's terminology from *Extraction Ecologies*. I am indebted to Liz for inspiring me to write on extraction ecologies in *Sylvia's Lovers* during a conversation we had at the March 2022 NAVSA, "Virtual Victorians." A later source of inspiration comes from one of my generous anonymous reviewers—Richard J. King's wonderful recent book *Ahab's Rolling Sea: A Natural History of Moby-Dick,* which embodies a present-day ecocritical view of whaling even as it reimagines the environment of Melville's ocean: "We hurl harpoons at the faceless ocean, slowly killing ourselves as we bring down entire ecosystems of life with us" (3).
[17] Marion Shaw is an exception in this regard, as she states after a discussion of the American Civil War: "What Kinraid endures is a type of slavery" (43). In a very different sense, Benjamin S. Lawson's article on *Sylvia's Lovers* as an intertext between Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd* emphasizes Gaskell's novel as a "transition between the worlds of impressment gangs and whaling" (37).
[18] *The Works of Mrs. Gaskell*, with introductions by A.W. Ward (London: Smith, Elder, 1906), vi, p. xii qtd. in Francis O'Gorman, *Sylvia's Lovers* (Oxford World's Classics, 2014), xi. O'Gorman states in his note: "But no authority is given for this much quoted line" (xi).
[19] A great whale jaw arch is still a gruesome tourist lure in Whitby. See https://www.visitwhitby.com/blog/whitbys-whaling-history/
[20] *https://www.thewhitbyguide.co.uk/whaling-in-whitby/.*
[21] See Gordon Jackson, ch. 4, "The Boom in the British Whaling Trade, 1793-c. 1808" in *The British Whaling Trade*. See also "Whale Oil and the Textile Trade," *https://www.scran.ac.uk/packs/exhibitions/learning_materials/webs/40/jute.htm*
[22] See Angus Easson, "Getting it right: Elizabeth Gaskell and *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*," 4, who quotes Gaskell's *Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple & Arthur Pollard (1966), 267a, p. 872. See also Andrew Sanders, Introduction to the 1982 (reissued 1999) Oxford World's Classics edition of *Sylvia's Lovers*, viii.

descriptions of the mother whale protecting her offspring from his two-volume *An Account of the Arctic Regions, with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-fishery* (1820). As Uglow reveals, Gaskell creates the whaling endeavour as masculine, a realm of dangerous killing that threatens to separate mother from offspring: "William Scoresby had made special note of the 'maternal affection' of the mother whale, how she fought for her cub and exposed herself to attack, 'taking it under her wing, and seldom deserting it while life remains.'"[23] Philip Hoare's *Leviathan*—which focuses on the sperm whale hunted in *Moby-Dick* rather than the bowhead whale hunted in Greenland's Arctic waters as in *Sylvia's Lovers*—quotes Thomas Beale's *Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (1830): "The attachment appears to be reciprocal on the part of the young whales, which have been seen about the ship for hours after their parents have been killed" (Hoare 79). For all the gripping adventure of Daniel Robson's and Charley Kinraid's colourful tall tales of dangerous whaling exploits (themselves largely based upon stories from Scoresby's book)[24], the reality of whaling was gruesome, as any reader of *Moby-Dick* realizes. As Robert McNamara explains:

> The technique used by the British and Dutch fleets was to hunt by having the ships dispatch small boats rowed by teams of men. A harpoon attached to a heavy rope would be thrown into a whale, and when the whale was killed it would be towed to the ship and tied alongside. A grisly process, called "cutting in," would then begin. The whale's skin and blubber would be peeled off in long strips and boiled down to make whale oil.[25]

In light of Gaskell's reverence for maternality, recognized in studies of her work since Patsy Stoneman's *Elizabeth Gaskell* and Margaret Homans's *Bearing the Word*,[26] Gaskell would surely recoil at the violence against maternal nurturance inherent in killing whales. As Uglow states, "The whaling stories of Daniel and Kinraid are a male genre, where the ship which holds them (and, in Gaskell's telling, the whales they hunt) are always gendered as female" (517). Uglow also mentions the whaling stories as part of the 'hunting' of Sylvia by Kinraid and in the past, of Bell by Daniel (517). One might extend this consideration of the erotic aspect of the hunt for human females to Gaskell's focus upon the hunted whale as feminine—and thus to the violence of the kill as a kind of gendered sexual assault, perhaps even a rape.[27] There is much more import to the whaling endeavour in *Sylvia's Lovers*, therefore, than scholar Terence Wright's mention of "Robson and Kinraid [who] swap stories of the mighty denizens of the

[23] Uglow, 517, citing William Scoresby. See also Uglow, 666n.
[24] Uglow, " . . . three of their four tales are adapted from Scoresby" (518).
[25] Robert McNamara, "A Brief History of Whaling." ThoughtCo, Apr. 5, 2023, thoughtco.com/a-brief-history-of-whaling-1774068.
[26] See also Felicia Bonaparte, *Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester*; Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*; Kate Flint, *Elizabeth Gaskell*; Morse, "Stitching Repentance, Sewing Rebellion."
[27] Stoneman states that "the growing impact of evolutionary theory" (141) was a strong influence upon *Sylvia's Lovers*, an influence Stoneman connects to the "primitive" rage of the mob resisting the press gang and the "destructive potential of human passion" derived from Gaskell's recent study of the Brontës (142). Kate Flint's discussion of Darwin in *Elizabeth Gaskell* is brief but profound, concluding: "The ruling principles of this future, this historically set novel suggests—in other words, the ruling principles of Gaskell's own time—will be those of strategy and survival. Whether they are to be welcomed is a different matter" (52). I would add that although Kinraid is the most evident survivor in the struggle for existence—and Flint states that "he is hardly a character toward whom we are encouraged to feel great sympathy" (52), this subject is complicated. Bella also lives and seems to thrive, and she is the offspring of Sylvia and Philip.

deep" (165). In Gaskell's novel, the male world of the British State that lawfully impresses sailors to fight its wars in the 1790s and the American Confederacy that is fighting to continue the legal ownership of other human beings as enslaved labourers—including sexual and reproductive labour—are linked to the male dominion and gendered brutalities of whaling. These 'adventures' are male hunting expeditions in which female cetaceans are considered the rightful prey of men who pursue, torture, slaughter, and mutilate them—and in this fatal process, separate mothers and their calves, often destroying both if all mature female whales are killed.

The Influence of Slavery and The American Civil War

The American Civil War—a culmination and crisis of the Atlantic slave trade and four centuries of European and American enslavement of Africans—was threatening to break out at the very moment in which Gaskell started her novel in the spring of 1860. The Fugitive Slave Act—so powerfully represented and resisted in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)—was still being enforced. Enslaved persons were often returned to their Southern masters until March 1862, and the Fugitive Slave Act was not formally abolished until June of 1864. The Civil War was still ongoing as Gaskell completed *Sylvia's Lovers* in early January of 1863, just after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. The novel was much delayed by Gaskell's work in Manchester during the Cotton Famine of 1862-63 (Uglow, ch. 23, "Interruptions," 481-504). As Clare Pettitt has argued, Gaskell's letters to her close friend, the Boston intellectual, man-of-letters, and fellow Unitarian Charles Eliot Norton (later Professor of Art at Harvard) demonstrate her deep concern with America's politics during this time, including dramatic events such as the Trent Affair, in which two Confederate statesmen were captured as they travelled on a British ship, and were eventually released.[28] Gaskell's most intimate relation to the American Civil War was in her succour of Manchester's starving mill laborers, who had no work, because there was no cotton for their looms. The Southern cotton upon which the Manchester factory workers relied was cultivated and produced by enslaved descendants of Africans originally transported across the Atlantic on horrific voyages during which many perished.[29]

Gaskell as a liberal abolitionist was highly aware of this history and supported the North in unity with her closest American friends, antislavery activists like the "passionate abolitionist" Norton (Uglow 419). Gaskell and her two older daughters Marianne and Meta had forged a close friendship with Norton in Rome a few years previous to the writing of *Sylvia's Lovers*, and she carried on a warm correspondence with him until her death. It is to Norton that Gaskell wrote a letter stating that she "hat[es] slavery intensely" (*Letters* 654). Gaskell relied upon Norton for

[28] See Pettitt, 607 ff. Another source of note is Nell Stevens's delightful *Mrs. Gaskell & Me*, through which I learned more about Gaskell's history with Charles Eliot Norton in Rome during the time between the troubled publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and her writing of *Sylvia's Lovers*. Stevens's book imagines a romance that Uglow previously qualifies: "It would be too strong to say that Elizabeth fell in love with Charles. He was part of her Italian romance, and she fell in love with the whole experience" (418). Greenwood adds: " . . . there is no doubt that she loved him as one of her family, perhaps even as a surrogate son to compensate for the earlier loss of her son. However, it seems highly plausible to argue that she had fallen deeply in love with Rome as a counter to all that Manchester represented. And it was Norton who epitomised this other world, no longer attainable in real life but recalled by the regular interchange of letters" (103).

[29] Among the many fine scholarly histories of Atlantic slavery, Hugh Thomas's *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (Simon & Schuster 1999) is a good place to begin.

news of the American Civil War; her final extant letter to Norton was in response to the assassination of President Lincoln (Greenwood 100-101). Norton named his second daughter Elizabeth Gaskell Norton (known as 'Lily', also Gaskell's own nickname). After Gaskell's death, Norton wrote to Gaskell's daughters until his own death in October 1908 at the age of eighty. The English edition of *Sylvia's Lovers* was dedicated to Gaskell's husband William, the distinguished Unitarian minister of Cross Street Chapel in Manchester, "by one who best knows his value," but the American edition of the novel was dedicated to Gaskell's American friends and in particular to "my especial friend Charles Eliot Norton and his Wife, who though personally unknown to me, is yet dear to me for his sake" (Uglow 529).

Elizabeth Gaskell also had an important decade-long correspondence in the 1850s and early 1860s with Harriet Beecher Stowe. As Amber Shaw has very recently argued, the significance of this transatlantic friendship has not been sufficiently recognized, and it is time to "reevaluate the mutual influence of these two women writers" (682). They met several times during Stowe's European tours: first in London, an event Gaskell discussed with Charlotte Brontë during her visit to Haworth in September 1853; in Rome, during Gaskell's sojourn there with her daughters Marianne and Meta in the spring of 1857, where Stowe told stories of "the indomitable freed slave Sojourner Truth" to Gaskell and her circle of friends, much to the discomfiture of some of the Americans, an event scholar Nancy Weyant dates as February 24 (Weyant xviii quoted in A. Shaw 684); in Manchester, where Stowe stayed with the Gaskells and accompanied Elizabeth to the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition on June 3, 1857 (Uglow 353, 423, 436; A. Shaw 685).

Naval Impressment and Trauma

The scenes of terror and rage that Gaskell represents in relation to the press gang have a long history, dating from the mid-seventeenth century. Impressment and its ravages are represented by iconographies of resistance and loss in English art, such as in the painter Luke Clennell's (1781-1849) *The Press Gang* (n.d.), which shows soldiers dragging a resisting man out of his cottage as his wife with babe in arms and elderly parents rush out after him. In his definitive study, *The Evil Necessity: Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, Denver Brunsman focuses upon the British Navy's need to man their ships as the British Empire expanded. The great irony at the heart of Brunsman's study is his recognition that England's Atlantic empire, with values of liberty and individualism enshrined in the English Constitution, yet needed to deny liberty to a large group of seamen in order to preserve that Empire in resistance to the "absolutist Catholic tyranny of its Atlantic competitors."[30] At the battle of Trafalgar, October 21, 1805, half of the 120,000 naval force were *pressed* men.[31] Impressed sailors—usually highly skilled seamen like Charley Kinraid rather than the hapless poor—were the second largest class of forced labourers in the eighteenth-century Atlantic (Brunsman 5-7). Some knowledge of the breadth of impressment alone must have linked it to enslavement in Gaskell's mind as she wrote her Atlantic novel during the American Civil War.

It is significant that Gaskell had for many years been interested in the navy. The navy was, as Francis O'Gorman states, "a part of Gaskell family history," with her grandfather, two uncles,

[30] Aaron J. Palmer, "An Empire of Liberty's Evil Necessity." Review of Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, 266.
[31] John Keegan, *Battle at Sea*, 38.

and her brother navy men (O'Gorman xi). As Andrew Sanders states, the novel emerges in part from "a long-fostered fascination with the sea" (Sanders vii). *Sylvia's Lovers* is not the first novel for which Gaskell researched naval history; in *North and South*, as I have written previously, Gaskell's mutiny plot centred around the heroine Margaret Hale's brother Frederick echoes the Hermione Mutiny, the bloodiest naval mutiny in English history. This resonance changes the interpretation of Frederick in the novel and juxtaposes his violent mutiny to Margaret's nonviolent protest in the face of violence during the mill riot.[32] As Gaskell's biographers have remarked, her interest in sailors and the sea very likely issued from her beloved sailor brother John's sudden disappearance in the winter of 1828: "He was lost, either at sea or after his arrival in India: no definite news ever came of his fate" (Uglow 53). That terrible event is reworked in Gaskell's fiction many times, often in the form of the beloved sailor's return, as in *Cranford* with Peter's reappearance, and in *Mary Barton* with Will Wilson's return just in time to provide an alibi for Jem, accused of murdering the millowner Mr. Carson. Less happily, the returned sailor appears in *North and South* when Frederick comes back to see his mother before her death, with dire results when his former shipmate Leonards recognizes and tries to capture him; in the ensuing struggle, Frederick escapes by train, but Leonards falls from the platform and eventually dies. In the novella *The Manchester Marriage*, the sailor cousin Frank Wilson returns after many years to find his wife Alice happily married to another man, after which the disconsolate Frank drowns himself. In *Sylvia's Lovers*, even Bell's anomalous cautionary tale related to Sylvia about Crazy Nancy Hartley involves a sailor who seduces and then abandons her, to leave her moaning that "he once was here" (187-88), although the impressment plot centres much more sympathetically around the harpooner Charley Kinraid and the former whaler Daniel Robson. As Uglow states, "the figure of the sailor in peril moves through her fiction with the power of a recurring dream . . . " (53).

Impressment, Whaling, and Enslavement as Imbricated Traumas in *Sylvia's Lovers*

The first violent impressment scene in *Sylvia's Lovers* intrudes upon a peaceful feminine interlude. Lovely young Sylvia Robson and her friend Molly Corney are going to sell butter and eggs from their farms. Sylvia, an only child, is also allowed to buy material for a new cloak, and her most important decision is between the scarlet duffle that she prefers for its vibrance and originality, and the grey that her mother Bell and cousin Philip Hepburn—who works in the Quaker Foster Brothers' shop in town—think is more practical. This realm of domestic concerns is interrupted by the glad news that "a whaler lay off the bar on her return voyage" at which news "Many a heart swelled with passionate, unspoken fear" (19):

> . . . how those on land sickened at the suspense, may be imagined, when you remember that for six long summer months those sailors had been as if dead from all news of those they loved; shut up in terrible, dreary Arctic seas from the hungry sight of sweethearts and friends, wives and mothers. No one knew what might have happened . . . The whalers went out into the Greenland seas full of strong, hopeful men; but the whalers never returned as they sailed forth . . . Whose bones had been left to blacken on the gray and terrible icebergs? Who lay still until the sea should give up its dead? Who were those who should come back to Monkshaven never, no never more? (19)

[32] See Morse, "Mutiny on the *Orion*."

Then the horrifying news comes to the anxiously awaiting crowd: some of these yearned-for returning sailors are being impressed by His Majesty's Navy. The response of the townspeople is violent, as their family members and friends, so long away on their Greenland whaling voyage, are captured by the press gang. The whalers resist; the courageous Kinraid is badly injured and the sailor Darley—"the man they [the townspeople] looked upon as murdered" (65) is killed. Philip chides Sylvia for rejoicing with the likes of the prostitute Bess, insisting that she's "not one for you to be shaking hands with" (28). His relegation of Bess to sailors' drab, "'known all down t' quay-side as 'Newcastle Bess'" implicitly compares her body to that of the female whales, a thing for male exploitation and use. But Sylvia's previous choice of the scarlet duffle for her cloak rather than the grey symbolically aligns her in sympathy with Bess rather than Philip. He also tries to keep Sylvia from joining the "stormy multitude" (29), chiding her, "Sylvie! You must not! Don't be silly; it's the law, and no one can do aught against it, least of all women and lasses" (28). Daniel argues against Philip's acceptance of State injustice in the following chapter: "Nation here! Nation there! I'm a man and yo're another, but nation's nowhere . . . I can make out King George, and Measter Pitt, and yo' and me, but nation! Nation, go hang!" (41). Daniel's defiance of the State will eventually lead to his being put to death for his role in the riot that frees impressed sailors in the Randyvowse.

Most of this fiercely individualistic, northern England town—so far from London's government in the country's south—agree with Daniel. They are ferocious in their anger at the press gang, who have not operated in Monkshaven since the American Revolutionary War. The first of a series of traumas that are caused by the laws justifying naval impressment occurs when the whalers from the *Resolution* are taken up by the press gang:

> . . . 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. Their wild, famished eyes were strained on faces they might not kiss, their cheeks were flushed to purple with anger or else livid with impotent craving for revenge. Some of them looked scarce human; and yet an hour ago these lips, now tightly drawn back so as to show the teeth with the unconscious action of an enraged wild animal, had been soft and gracious with the smile of hope; eyes, that were fiery and bloodshot now, had been loving and bright; hearts, never to recover from the sense of injustice and cruelty, had been trustful and glad only one short hour ago.
>
> There were men there, too, sullen and silent, brooding on remedial revenge; but not many, the greater proportion of this class being away in the absent whalers. (29)

The women's expression of trauma in response to their "sense of injustice and cruelty" is compared both to the chorus of Greek tragedy and to the action of "an enraged wild animal." The men in the crowd are mentioned as an afterthought: this is in the main a description of female pain and despair in the face of the inexorable power of the State over the individual.

The second impressment moment of trauma is the capture of Kinraid, witnessed by Philip, a scene of moral crisis that will profoundly affect the rest of the novel. Kinraid has courted Sylvia, and in tender scenes in the Haytersbank Farm dairy and home, they have plighted their troth to each other and consider themselves as good as married. But in the resonantly water-named

chapter, "Eddy in Love's Current," Kinraid is waylaid by the press gang, and is tightly bound, after which "Kinraid lay as still as any hedgehog," with only his eyes "watchful, vivid, fierce as any wildcat brought to bay . . . " (217). In one powerful image, Gaskell imbricates the traumas of impressment, whaling, and enslavement. Kinraid the 'wildcat' is reduced to a constrained 'hedgehog'; Gaskell uses the animal similes to indicate the repression that reduces a human being to the primitive, as in the former scene of the fierce crowd of townspeople surrounding the press gang.[33] His bound body calls forth images of other traumatized animal bodies: those of tightly roped whales. Kinraid's constrained figure also evokes the trussed bodies of the enslaved described in abolitionist literature. As Marion Shaw states, "what Kinraid endures is a kind of slavery" (Shaw 43). Philip happens by the seacliffs where Kinraid is being taken, and the sailor makes the shopman promise that he will tell Sylvia of his plight and that he will return and marry her. But Philip, seeing his chance to rid himself of his rival, lets his "dread Inner Creature" (220) prevail—and he does not tell Sylvia but lets her think Kinraid is dead. Philip's silence makes him complicit in the violence enjoined upon Kinraid.

Gaskell's pervasive animal metaphors describing the separation of the townspeople's families and their furious response implicitly recalls accounts of divided enslaved families and of Scoresby's female whales separated from their offspring. Daniel incites a riot against the press gang in order to free impressed sailors, leading a group that sounds like "some raging ravening beast growling over his prey" (261) as they burn down the inn where the sailors are imprisoned. Characteristically, Daniel's child-like recklessness is matched by his tenderness, as he rescues a trapped cow, leading it to safety. But although "the rescue of the sailors was a distinctly popular movement; the subsequent violence (which had, indeed, gone much further than has been described, after Daniel left it), was, in general, considered as only a kind of due punishment inflicted in wild justice on the press-gang and their abettors" (283), Daniel is tried and hanged. Bell loses her wits after her husband's death, ironically fulfilling the cautionary tale she has told to Sylvia about Crazy Nancy Hartley. With her family destroyed, Sylvia marries Philip in gratitude for all he has done for them, and to provide a comfortable home for her ailing mother. Sylvia wears mourning on her wedding day, despite Philip's entreaties, and is in a traumatized state, expressed by "her white, dreamy, resolute face," her "heavy abstraction," and "the voice that did not seem to be her own" (339). Both Sylvia and Bell are diminished, at times seeming disembodied, more like returning ghosts that haunt their previous lives.

Sylvia's rebellious spirit seems to have been quelled in her permanent state of grief. There is a brief interlude of joy after she gives birth to Bella—the child appearing "like a ray of sunlight into a gloomy room" (351). Sylvia's appreciation of Philip's love and generosity is rewarded with a tender kiss: "Perhaps on that day, Philip reached the zenith of his life's happiness" (353). But Sylvia still has erotic dreams of Kinraid, and she calls out for him: "Oh! Charley! come to me—come to me!" She seems to access truth from her dream of Kinraid, and Sylvia cries out to Philip that Kinraid is "alive somewheere; he were so clear and life-like" (308). Philip's condemnation of her—"What kind of a woman are yo' . . . when yo're a wedded wife, with a child as yo've borne to another man?" (354) brings on Sylvia's postpartum illness. Soon

[33] Gaskell uses this same vision of a maddened crowd as reduced to the bestial in the riot scene of *North and South*: "As soon as they saw Mr. Thornton, they set up a yell,--to call it not human is nothing,-- it was the demoniac desire of some terrible wild beast for the food that is withheld from his ravening" (175) . . . there was a momentary hush of their noise, inarticulate as that of a troop of animals" (176).

afterwards, Sylvia aids in rescuing a shipwrecked vessel that—unbeknownst to her—is carrying Charley Kinraid, returning to Monkshaven to find his betrothed Sylvia Robson: "a place was made for her, and in an instant more the rope was pulling against her hands until it seemed she was holding fire in her bare palms" (370). This successful communal effort leaves all, including Sylvia, feeling celebratory: "She would have liked to have seen the men, and shaken hands with them all round" (372). Shortly thereafter, as Sylvia returns from gathering herbs in the garden of her former home, Haytersbank Farm, in order to make her mother balm-tea, Kinraid appears like a kind of ghost from the past, seemingly in response to Sylvia's desire—and as a denial of Bell's tale of Crazy Nancy Hartley and her sailor lover's abandonment. This sailor does return to claim his betrothed.

In the ensuing dramatic encounter, Philip's deception at last comes to light. Kinraid passionately tries to convince the distraught Sylvia to go with him and get her "pretence of a marriage" to Philip "set aside," and "we'll be married again, all square and aboveboard": "I am your husband. We plighted each other our troth." Kinraid is now a lieutenant, and he is "in favour with my admiral" (382).[34] Significantly, it is Bella's cry that decides Sylvia—she chooses her daughter over both men. As she declares to Kinraid:

> 'I'll never forgive yon man, nor live with him as his wife again . . . He's spoilt my life,-he's spoilt it for as long as iver I live upon this earth; but neither you nor him shall spoil my soul. . . I'm bound and tied, but I've sworn my oath to him as well as yo': there's things I will do, and there's things I won't. Kiss me once more. God help me, he's gone!' (383)

Sylvia's metaphoric use of the phrase 'bound and tied' recalls the image of Kinraid literally roped like one of the specksioneer's whales or like an enslaved person, as he is captured by the press gang in the event that begins her tragedy—incorporating her body as well in this emblem. Her choice of maternal over romantic love is characteristic of Gaskell's aforementioned reverence for motherhood throughout her fiction; however, within this narrative, maternal care resonates with the sacrifice of Scoresby's female whales and with the persistent focus upon enslaved mothers in abolitionist fiction. Most prominently, Sylvia's terrible choice recalls Stowe's heroic, suffering enslaved mothers Eliza and Cassy in the immensely influential 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave* Girl, the true story of a resolute enslaved mother, was published in 1861. Since Jacobs was a close ally of Frederick Douglass—the most famous black man in the United States at the time Gaskell wrote *Sylvia's Lovers*—it is possible that Gaskell knew of Jacobs's book. She may have heard about it from Stowe, with whom she was still corresponding in the early 1860s; Stowe had known about Jacobs's intention to write her autobiographical narrative since 1853, and had wanted to use the narrative herself in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* rather than support Jacobs's writing and publishing her own story (Foster and Yarborough xii).

The aftermath of the revelation scene enacted among Sylvia and her lovers issues in two events that connect the traumas of impressment and enslavement. First, Philip recklessly enlists in the

[34] "Certainly sailors hated the institution itself, but most served well once they had been impressed. Resistance came mostly prior to capture. After capture, camaraderie, patriotism, fear, and limited opportunity prevented a great deal of resistance" (Brunsman 171-75 qtd in Palmer 270).

water-named marines, now calling himself Stephen Freeman. This name connotes both martyrdom (St. Stephen) and a life free from bondage, significantly echoing the term 'freedman' associated with former enslaved persons emancipated during the Civil War by the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment, and a name—Freeman—frequently chosen by formerly enslaved persons. Philip discards the identity of shopman and heroically rescues Kinraid from the battlefield at Acre; he sees his former rival's face in a revelatory beam of sunlight, and risking his own life, Philip "lifted him up, carrying him like a child" (431), in a maternal gesture that marks Philip's redemption. Second, to the reader's surprise and Sylvia's dismay, Kinraid marries a Bristol heiress soon after his passionate reunion with Sylvia. Since Bristol was a major slave seaport in the 1790s, this is an evocative coincidence. Although no one has remarked upon the source of Kinraid's wife's fortune, it is likely to have been money made in the slave trade; Kinraid's marriage to this heiress—kindly as she herself seems to be in the scene in which Sylvia meets her—is a sign of his having changed allegiances from the beleaguered fighter against the press gang to one who benefits from the oppression of others. His marriage quite possibly makes him complicit in the historical trauma of enslavement, as he was complicit in the trauma of the whales he harpooned when he was a specksioneer:

> By the late 1730s Bristol had become Britain's premier slaving port. In 1750 alone, Bristol ships transported some 8,000 of the 20,000 enslaved Africans sent that year to the British Caribbean and North America. By the latter half of the century, Bristol's position had been overtaken by Liverpool. But even as late as 1789, the trade to Africa and the West Indies was estimated to have comprised over 80 per cent of the total value of Bristol's trade abroad.[35]

Just before Philip rescues him, Kinraid is thinking of his Bristol bride: " . . . the unwonted tears came to his eyes as he thought of his newly-made wife in her English home, who might never know how he died thinking of her" (430).

Soon afterward, Philip is gravely injured in a munitions accident on board ship, his face disfigured and blackened, his appearance now seeming to align him with enslavement trauma. Kinraid does not recognize Philip as he gives him alms in a later encounter, coins Philip in turn bestows upon the dying soldier Jem. Upon Philip's return to Monkshaven, he lives alone in the Widow Dobson's cottage near the sea, an impoverished and maimed veteran of the wars whose injured body evokes the many battered soldier bodies of the American Civil War as well as the mutilations of enslavement. Philip's near-starvation and poverty might resonate with Gaskell's own familiarity with the Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1862. The most poignant scene in the final part of the novel depicts Bella giving her unknown father some bread: "Poor man! Eat this; Bella not hungry":

> These were the first words he had ever heard his child utter. The echoes of them rang in his ears as he stood endeavouring to hide his disfigured face by looking over the parapet of the bridge down upon the stream running away towards the ocean, into which his hot tears slowly fell, unheeded by the weeper" (485).

[35] See the Bristol Museum: https://collections.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/transatlantic-traffic-enslaved-africans/#:~:text=By%20the%20late%201730s%20Bristol,British%20Caribbean%20and%20North%20America.&text=By%20the%20latter%20half%20of,had%20been%20overtaken%20by%20Liverpool.

The sea which is the receptacle of Philip's tears is the location of his second act of heroism, saving Bella from being swept into the sea, at the cost of his own life. In the final scenes of the novel, while Philip is dying, he thinks of his boyhood, "when he stood by his mother dreaming of the life that should be his, with the scent of the cowslips tempting him to be off to the woodlands where they grew" (500). His life ends with the remembrance of maternal nurturance and Sylvia's forgiveness: "God bless and comfort my darling . . . she knows me now. All will be right in heaven—in the light of God's mercy" (499). Philip dies having come to the realization that "I ha' made thee my idol . . . I should have loved my God more, and thee less" (495).[36] The intended comfort in all of this tragedy is the biblical promise of Revelations with which the novel closes as Gaskell's narrator listens to the "waves come lapping up the shelving shore with the same ceaseless, ever-recurrent sound as that which Philip listened to in the pauses between life and death. And so it will be until 'there shall be no more sea'" (502). Gaskell alludes to the scriptural passage in which John declares that "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and there was no more sea." Even this beautiful apocalyptic passage so beloved by the Romantic poets does not seem to meliorate the great pain and sorrow associated with the Atlantic waters in *Sylvia's Lovers*.

Jenny Uglow states that *Sylvia's Lovers* is "a novel of longing for the irretrievable, in which energy and zest are slowly undermined and then suddenly destroyed" (505). Uglow is writing of individual loss, but Gaskell's novel is a tragedy of desiring the "irretrievable" on both individual and historical levels, a chronicle of losses that centres upon the Atlantic waters. Uglow is concerned primarily with the vibrant young woman Sylvia's many tragedies—her thwarted love of Kinraid, the hanging of her father Daniel, her mother Bell's death, and the death of her husband Philip, whom she comes to love—which leave her a widowed mother of about twenty, dressed always in black. The bereaved Sylvia, once so vibrant and lovely, dies young, leaving her daughter Bella to be raised by the quietly patient Hester Rose. Hester's unrequited love for Philip finds expression in the alms-houses for disabled sailors and soldiers that she establishes, and in their stone monument stating "This building was erected in memory of P.H."

Sylvia's Lovers remains a tale of water to the end, narrated by a "bathing woman" in present-day Monkshaven, no longer a thriving whaling port but "altered now into a rising bathing place" (502). The feminine storyteller's voice significantly emerges out of its watery element in the wake of the brutal masculine pursuit of whales in demise. She tells the lady (presumably a persona for Gaskell herself) Sylvia's story as it has come down to her as a popular legend in which Philip is the sole victim. The storyteller does speak of a very old man—obviously the farm's hired man Kester—who defends Sylvia, declaring that "she had had her sore trial, as well as Hepburn hisself" (502). Moreover, Gaskell's creation of a novel with the heroine's name in the title and her lovers unnamed might be construed as the novelist's mode of apologia for Sylvia, as Gaskell tells the woman's side of this tragic story, a different kind of memorial than Hester's stone monument to Philip. The one significant exception in Sylvia's sad tale is her child

[36] One of Gaskell's working titles was "Philip's Idol". An earlier title, as previously mentioned, was "The Specksioneer".

Bella's survival and apparently happy and prosperous life after marriage in America. However, that is a life that Sylvia does not live long enough to witness and that Gaskell does not narrate, although Bella's history is the final brief dialogue of the novel, upon which *Sylvia's Lovers* closes. This is very unlike the final chapter of *Mary Barton* set in Canada, which ends in a utopian vision of a farm and orchard, and with Mary's persecuted husband Jem now a successful mechanical engineer, the new baby Johnny renewing the egalitarian hopes of Mary's Chartist father John, and the blind singer Margaret about to marry Jem's dashing sailor cousin Will Wilson as well as have an operation to regain her sight. Bella's history, years after she is rescued from the ocean waves by her father, ends with her crossing of the Atlantic after marriage, her voyage "many and many a year ago" thus connected to—and perhaps in some way meliorating—the traumas of the Atlantic voyages represented and remembered in *Sylvia's Lovers*.

Works Cited

Anon. Bristol Museums website. https://collections.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/transatlantic-traffic-enslaved-africans/#:~:text=By%20the%20late%201730s%20Bristol,British%20Caribbean%20and%20North%20America.&text=By%20the%20latter%20half%20of,had%20been%20over

Anon. "Whale Oil and the Textile Trade." *https://www.scran.ac.uk/packs/exhibitions/learning_materials/webs/40/jute.htm*

Anon. *The Whitby Guide*. *https://www.thewhitbyguide.co.uk/whaling-in-whitby/.*

Beaumont, Matthew. "Heathcliff's Great Hunger: The Cannibal Other in *Wuthering Heights*." *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9.2 (January 2004): 37–63. https://doi.org/10.3366/jvc.2004.9.2.137.

Bonaparte, Felicia. *The Gypsy Bachelor of Manchester*: *The Life of Mrs. Gaskell's Demon*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1992.

Brunsman, Denver. *The Evil Necessity: Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2013.

D'Albertis, Deirdre. *Dissembling Fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Easson, Angus. "Getting it right: Elizabeth Gaskell and *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*." *The Gaskell Society Journal* 11 (1997): 1-14.

Ellin, Beth. https://www.visitwhitby.com/blog/whitbys-whaling-history/

Flint, Kate. *Elizabeth Gaskell*. Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1995.

Foster, Frances Smith and Richard Yarborough, Eds. Introduction. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in*

the Life of a Slave Girl. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South*. Ed. & Introduction by Patricia Ingham. London: Penguin, 1995.

_____. *Sylvia's Lovers*. Ed. & Introduction by Andrew Sanders. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Greenwood, John. "'Our Happy Days in Rome': The Gaskell-Norton Correspondence." *The Gaskell Society Journal* 28 (2014): 97-104.

Heywood, Christopher. "Yorkshire Slavery in *Wuthering Heights*." *Review of English Studies* 38, no. 150 (May 1987): 184-98.

Hoare, Philip. *Leviathan or, The Whale*. London: Fourth Estate/Harper Collins, 2009.

Jackson, Gordon. *The British Whaling Trade*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2005.

Keegan, John. *Battle at Sea*: *From Man-of-War to Submarine*. London: Pimlico, 2004.

King, Richard J. *Ahab's Rolling Sea: A Natural History of Moby-Dick*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 2019.

Lawson, Benjamin S. "From *Moby-Dick* to *Billy Budd*: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers*." *South Atlantic Review* 64. 2 (Spring 1999): 37-57.

Lee, Julia Sun-Joo. *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel*. Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 2010.

McNamara, Robert. "A Brief History of Whaling." ThoughtCo, Apr. 5, 2023, thoughtco.com/a-brief-history-of-whaling-1774068.

Meyer, Susan. *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996.

Morse, Deborah Denenholz. "Burning Art and Political Resistance: Anne Brontë's Radical Imaginary of Wives, Slaves, and Animals in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." *The Brontës and the Idea of the Human: Science, Ethics, and the Imagination*. Ed. Alexandra Lewis. Cambridge UP, 2019. 110-126.

_____. "Emily Brontë and the Visual Imagination." *The Edinburgh Companion to the Brontës and the Arts*. With Lydia Brown. Ed. Amber Regis and Deborah Wynne. Forthcoming June 2024.

_____. "Haunting Memories of the English Civil War in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Morton Hall* and *Lois the Witch*." Bicentenary issue, *The Gaskell Society Journal*. Ed. Fran Twinn. 24 (2010): 85-99.

_____. "'The House of Trauma': The Influence of Frederick Douglass on Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*." *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature*. Special Issue on Reconsidering Victorian Domestic Work and Its Narratives. Ed. Tamara Wagner. No. 140 (December 2021): 164-77.

_____. "Mutiny on the *Orion*: The Legacy of the *Hermione* Mutiny and the Politics of Nonviolent Protest in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South.*" *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Grace Moore. London: Routledge, 2011. 117-33.

_____. "My Lady Ludlow." *The Facts on File Companion to the English Short Story*. Ed. Andrew Maunder. New York. Facts on File, Inc. March 2007. 301-303.

_____. "Stitching Repentance, Sewing Rebellion: Seamstresses and Fallen Women in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction." *Keeping the Victorian House*. Ed. Vanessa Dickerson. Independence, Kentucky: Garland Press, 1995. 27-73.

Miller, Elizabeth. *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2021.

O'Gorman, Francis, Introduction. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. ix-xxvi.

Palmer, Aaron J. "An Empire of Liberty's Evil Necessity." Review of Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*. *The Eighteenth Century* 58.2 (Summer 2017): 265-70.

Pettitt, Clare. "Time Lag and Elizabeth Gaskell's Transatlantic Imagination." *Victorian Studies* 54.4 (Summer 2012): 599-623.

Sanders, Andrew. Introduction. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982. ii-xvi.

Sdegno, Emma. "Philip Hepburn, Stephen Freeman, and the American Context of *Sylvia's Lovers*." *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*. Vol. 57 — Settembre 2023.

Shaw, Amber. "'There Are Two Views Often': The Epistolary Friendship of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Elizabeth Gaskell." *Women's Studies* 56 (2022): 682-98.

Shaw, Marion. "*Sylvia's Lovers* Then and Now." *The Gaskell Society Journal* 18 (2004): 37-49.

Stevens, Nell. *Mrs. Gaskell & Me: Two Women, Two Love Stories, Two Centuries Apart*. London: Picador, 2018.

Stoneman, Patsy. *Elizabeth Gaskell*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Thomas, Hugh. *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Thomas, Sue. *Imperialism, Reform, and the Making of Englishness in* Jane Eyre. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Twinn, Fran. "Navigational Pitfalls and Topographical Constraints in *Sylvia's Lovers*." *The Gaskell Society Journal* 15 (2001): 38-52.

Uglow, Jenny. *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*. London: Faber & Faber, 1999.

Von Schneidern, Maja-Lisa. "*Wuthering Heights* and the Liverpool Slave Trade." *ELH* 62.1 (1995): 171-96.

Weyant, Nancy. "Chronology." *Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell*. Ed. Jill Matus. Cambridge UP, 2007. xi–xx.

Wright, Terence. *Elizabeth Gaskell,'We Are Not Angels': Realism, Gender, Values*. Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.