

“The (Feminist) Epistemology of the Nineteenth Century Periodical Press: Professional Men in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters*”

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<1>The nineteenth-century English serial novel is the site of convergence for multiple discourses and epistemologies because it involves the periodical press, which is, itself, a site of convergence. Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters*, published in the *Cornhill* from August 1864 to January 1866, embodies this kind of convergence. Gaskell borrows from several epistemologies, such as perception, memory, reason, and testimony, in order to do the ideological work of creating an English and male professional class. Aspects of her blended strategies, further, anticipate twentieth-century considerations of feminist epistemology, especially those that claim that knowledge is social and relational. Gaskell’s use of her periodical context to depict a male professional class defines a new masculinity for mid-Victorian British culture, one that values merit over birth.

<2>Gaskell began her writing career publishing with Dickens in *Household Words*, and, according to John Chapple and Alan Shelston’s introduction to *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, “when *Household Words* was succeeded by *All the Year Round* in 1859 Mrs. Gaskell continued to contribute stories and articles to Dickens’s new periodical. However, she was effectively transferring her loyalties to George Smith, publisher of her Brontë biography.” (xix) Chapple and Shelston note that this transference is important for Gaskell studies because “for Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell was writing primarily for a popular audience, while Smith’s journal [the *Cornhill*] aimed at exactly the kind of professional and leisured middle-class readership with whom she had become acquainted in her personal life.” (xix) Writing for a more specific audience allowed Gaskell to focus on issues relevant to the middle class, such as the rise of the professional man. This is, of course, a shift from her previous works, such as *North and South*, which focus on the plights of the working class. While the title *Wives and Daughters* directs readers to expect a female *Bildungsroman*, I argue that it also calls to mind the gendered opposites of wives and daughters: husbands and sons. As Linda Hughes and Michael Lund discuss in *Victorian Publishing and Mrs. Gaskell’s Work*, the title “seems to inscribe obligatory marriage, reproduction, and descent [...but...] rather than instating biological determinism, [the title functions] to loosen the connection between biology and motherhood, gender and essence, replacing identities with multiplicities of being and social roles.” (26) I argue that Gaskell’s emphasis on “multiplicities of being and social roles” extends to the men she depicts, as well, as they navigate their own social and professional roles.

<3>In her last, unfinished, novel Gaskell is more aware of her periodical context than in any of her previous works; she uses that awareness to create realistic representations of two individual professionals: Mr. Gibson, a surgeon, and Roger Hamley, a naturalist. She uses a third character, Lord Hollingford, peripherally to demonstrate the perceived “classlessness” of the professional class. Her representations create an understanding of multiple aspects of professional life. The professions she depicts are primarily male dominated and help to further develop already shifting ideas of masculinity in Victorian England. Gaskell’s recognition of such aspects also feeds into her ability to incorporate multiple epistemologies. The term “epistemology” was new, introduced only in 1856 in James Frederick Ferrier’s *Institutes of Metaphysics*. Its very novelty is a symptom of the way the study of knowledge was an intellectual challenge that philosophy was taking up in its role of self-reflector of society at large. Epistemology indeed was of particular relevance for the still-developing identities of professionals and professions which depend upon very specific economies of knowledge, which Gaskell shows very clearly in *Wives and Daughters*. Furthermore, her depictions of scientific professionals, from different classes and at different stages of their careers, also allow for a more complete representation of the struggles and successes of professional men than would the representation of a single professional man. Mr. Gibson, an already established surgeon with an almost-grown daughter, and Roger Hamley, a Cambridge University undergraduate when the novel begins, deal with different issues of being a professional in Victorian society. Mr. Gibson, though enjoying a distinguished reputation as a surgeon, finds intellectual stimulation hard to come by and seeks it out in the home of the county’s aristocratic family, the Cumnors, and through publication in medical journals. Roger is the second son of a squire, but has academic ambition exceeding his rank. Roger’s career is at a much earlier and thus more mobile stage than Gibson’s and so, during the course of the novel, he becomes a Trinity fellow and then receives a research grant taking him to Africa. Lord Hollingford, socially outranking both Mr. Gibson and Roger, proves to be an important career contact for both men. He is more of a presence than a developed character, however, and my examination of professional men in *Wives and Daughters* will only include analysis of Lord Hollingford in terms of his influence on Mr. Gibson and Roger.

<4>In this essay, I will first define the periodical context of *Wives and Daughters*, which includes both its publication in the *Cornhill* and the publications to which Mr. Gibson and Roger contribute, in addition to the readership of the *Cornhill*. I will then discuss how the periodical context contributes to Gaskell’s representations of the personal and professional communities that professional men must navigate throughout their lives. Finally, I will show that Gaskell’s representation anticipates aspects of feminist epistemology. Gaskell’s professional men blur boundaries between private and public spheres by conducting research in their homes and thereby bringing their public, professional work into the private, domestic sphere. Through her depictions of these professional men and her use of her periodical context, Gaskell helps to define and justify the epistemology of the periodical press itself, which is a conglomeration of different theories of knowledge.

The Reflexive Periodical Context of *Wives and Daughters*

<5>In addition to novels being published serially in periodicals, novels also reflected the periodical press by portraying periodical authorship in their pages. The reflexive relationship

between novel and periodical is important in delineating Gaskell's contributions to periodical epistemology in terms of her representations of professionals and professional communities. The periodical context of *Wives and Daughters*, therefore, includes two main kinds of periodicals: monthly family magazines like the *Cornhill* and professional journals like the unnamed medical journals in which Mr. Gibson publishes, and similarly unnamed natural history journals in which Roger Hamley publishes.

<6>Of course, the primary periodical context of *Wives and Daughters* is its publication as a serial novel in the *Cornhill*. Serial novels differ from other popular Victorian modes of writing in a variety of ways, including, as Linda Hughes and Michael Lund argue in *The Victorian Serial*, that “[s]erialization [...] fostered an approach to narrative as a gradually developing story and pattern of significance, with pauses between parts for additional reflection and speculation, rather than as a finished product to be read and considered as a whole all at once.” (7) It is through this lens that one should read *Wives and Daughters* even today because it remains unfinished. Its incompleteness means, for modern readers, that it remains in the state of reflection and speculation that Hughes and Lund discuss. For Gaskell's contemporary readership, however, unfinished novels were not out of the ordinary.(1)

<7>The *Cornhill*, founded by George Smith in 1859 and first published in 1860, (Wynne 31) was billed as an entertainment magazine. Deborah Wynne, in *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*, reports that Smith “recruited Thackeray as editor, and together they developed a successful journal based on the provision of ‘respectable middle-class family reading of the highest quality, a mixture of good serial novels and intelligent instructive articles on noncontroversial subjects.’” (31-32) Thackeray imagined a variety of readers who would have been generally termed, in the nineteenth century, the “common reader” or “reading public.”

<8>Helen Small, in “A Pulse of 124,” turns to mid-Victorian usage of these terms as ones “employed by the professional critic to designate the mass of unprofessional readers whose sheer market power could nevertheless be the final and most materially effective form of criticism.” (264) Recent scholarly work, however, has taken a stand in “opposition to the idea of a homogenous readership” and instead seeks to understand readers as diverse groups of people with equally diverse interests. (263) Because Smith and Thackeray did explicitly target an educated, middle-class audience, however, Umberto Eco's conception of the Model Reader is an appropriate term for the (mostly female) ideal readership I discuss. According to Eco, the author creates the Model Reader for his or her own text:

To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them. (7)

<9>The problem that arises with his theory when one considers the periodical press and serial novels is that it is not only the novelist who creates the Model Reader, but the editor of the

magazine and other contributors. In this case, Thackeray explicitly defined his readers as “A professor, ever so learned, a curate in his country retirement, an artisan after work hours, a school-master or mistress when the children are gone home, or the young ones themselves when the lessons are over” (qtd. in Wynne 32-33). Thackeray’s Model Reader is the foundation for any *Cornhill* contributor’s Model Reader, but, as Gaskell’s novel demonstrates, an author is capable of further defining her Model Reader. Gaskell is able to focus on learned professionals in particular because of the magazine’s focus on a learned reader in general.

<10>Eco, further, distinguishes between open and closed texts to fully articulate the different kinds of Model readers. A closed text, being “a text so immoderately ‘open’ to every possible interpretation” (8), cannot anticipate the multitude of interpretations and a Model Reader is not necessarily a “good reader.” (8) In an open text, on the other hand, “An author can foresee an ‘ideal reader afflicted by an ideal insomnia’ (as happens in *Finnegan’s Wake*), able to master different codes and eager to deal with the texts as a maze of many issues [...] You cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it.” (9) The various readings and interpretations of an open text must be interdependent; readings of closed texts are independent of one another. As this essay demonstrates, even as I cover a variety of subjects and ideological underpinnings, my readings of gender, the professions and the press are dependent on one another. This is significant because it shows that Gaskell interwove these themes so closely that one cannot pull out only one of them; Gaskell’s organization of the text and Frederick Greenwood’s(2) organization of the numbers of the magazine containing her novel make that impossible.

<11>The organization of the text was theoretically within Gaskell’s control, and Gaskell’s letters to George Smith indicate that she insisted on some editorial control. In one particular letter, she wrote, “But would you please put *all* [double stress] *the Ball* into one number,—and if you can,—end no just after the Squire’s quarrel with Mr. Preston [...]—I have made a mark.” (267) Despite instructions like these, the organization of the magazine was left to its editors. Graham Law, in *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, notes that the *Cornhill* was one of the many monthly shilling magazines that appeared in the 1860s: “These journals were generally illustrated, ran to 120 pages or more, and carried at least one original serial novel, as well as a wealth of miscellaneous entertainment material.” (24) Much of the content of these journals was designed to be inoffensive to its “respectable middle-class” reader. Indeed, the *Cornhill*’s mission, according to Walter Graham’s *English Literary Periodicals*, “to combine the critical review and the serial novel [...] and give the result to the public at the prices of the cheapest magazine” (303) made the magazine one of the most successful literary periodicals among the middle-class. Such a combination meant that readers were granted access to the foremost thinking of their day in the critical review and the most popular authors in the serial novels.

<12>Smith and Thackeray imagined their Model Readers as not only educated and middle-class, but also female. This “female reader” is representative of mid-Victorian periodical marketing; Fraser, Green, and Johnston state that mid-century shilling monthlies were “making particular efforts to appeal to female readers.” (67) The focus in the home, or the domestic, is relevant to my study of *Wives and Daughters* because epistemological commitments to reason and perception (which guide the sciences in the nineteenth century) are, perhaps unexpectedly, also

rooted in the home. For example, as Lillian Furst explains in *Between Doctors and Patients*, the primary place of practice for doctors was in the home. (Furst, 19) As readers discover, Roger Hamley, too, begins and extends his work as a botanist at Hamley Hall. He takes advantage of the foliage and sets up a laboratory of sorts in the house where he can study botany and teach it to Molly. Roger and Molly, in fact, form a Master-Apprentice bond before they form any romantic bond. The focus on the home, therefore, does not necessarily indicate a strictly female audience for either the *Cornhill* or *Wives and Daughters* because the domestic sphere does not belong solely to women.

<13>Many professional men, not only scientists, used their homes as workspaces. They not only further collapsed boundaries between public and private, but also more perfectly fitted into Thackeray's construction of the magazine's Model Reader. The *Cornhill*, in 1864 alone, published such material as Wilkie Collins's sensation novel *Armadale*, "Charleston under Fire" which reports on the U.S. Civil War, "A Tête-à-Tête Social Science Discussion" which debates the place of women in the professions, and "A Convict's View of Penal Discipline" which calls for prison reform in penal colonies like Australia, among others. Based on this sampling, it seems that Thackeray was not imagining a strictly or literally female audience, but instead including pieces that would not offend even a female sensibility.⁽³⁾ For its female readers, however, as Jennifer Phegley's article "Clearing Away 'The Briars and Brambles'" makes them obvious, "the *Cornhill* went beyond offering light-weight entertainment for [them], and, indeed, provided a more open forum for women, maintaining not only that women were educable but that they should be educated for the good of the middle-class family and the British nation." (23) Phegley points to the printing of "serious articles on science, law, history, biography, literature, culture, art, and social institutions" (24) alongside serial novels as evidence that the *Cornhill* encouraged women to be articulate on a multitude of subjects. This does not inherently exclude a male readership. Thackeray's assumption of a female reader, though, is still a gendered issue, which Andrew King describes as Bowdlerization in *The London Journal*. Bowdlerization grants control of language to male editors. According to King, "[it] was therefore a sub-set of men's language made 'gentle' and available to non-men. In that sense, it was the common linguistic ground where genders could meet but men remained in control." (177) Bowdlerization remained the standard for subsequent editors and guided not only the content but also the critical review.

<14>This kind of critical review further complicates the novel's periodical context because these articles encouraged readers to consider other information and experiences. Gillian Beer remarks on the variety of subjects in Victorian periodicals in *Open Fields*: "The wonderful inclusiveness of generalist journals [...] meant that philosophers, lawyers, evolutionary theorists, [...] novelists, theologians, poets and language theorists all appeared alongside each other, more often with the effect of bricolage than synthesis, true enough. But their lying alongside the page encouraged the reader to infer connections between their activities by the simple scan of the eye and by the simultaneous availability of diverse ideas." (203) Although the *Cornhill*, as a general interest journal, did encompass, in its additional material, the broad spectrum to which Beer refers. These additional materials are termed "real world intrusions" by Hughes and Lund because they "complicated and enriched the imagine world when the work was resumed." (Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial* 9) These intrusions are, essentially, intrusions of society that help define the polyvalence of the epistemology of serial novel. One of the most significant intellectual pursuits providing new information and experiences came from

specialist groups in scientific fields. Gaskell's frequently discussed portrayal of social Darwinism in the novel demonstrates that cutting edge science was as much a part of everyday life as was any other "intrusion."⁽⁴⁾ My intention is not to discuss Gaskell's depictions or uses of Victorian science within *Wives and Daughters*. I focus, rather, on Gaskell's depictions and uses of the scientific professions including medicine and natural history; and one of the ways she creates this representation is through her characters' publications in professional periodicals.

<15>Mr. Gibson and Roger, as published authors, are using cutting-edge methods of disseminating information to increase their own cultural authority. Professional scientific periodicals, as Roy Porter notes in "The Rise of Medical Journalism," only began to be separate entities in the early decades of the nineteenth century. (9) Prior to publications like *The Lancet* in 1823, doctors published in general-interest magazines like *The Gentleman's Magazine* on topics such as disease prevention. Medicine and natural history, though related scientific fields, maintained separate periodicals devoted to the advancement of their professions. M. Jeanne Peterson notes that prior to the sudden increase of the periodical press in the first decades of the century, "The nineteenth century saw the explosive growth of lecturing and demonstrations as forms of medical teaching, and some lectures saw their way into print to serve as textbooks of medicine and surgery." (22) Publicly sharing one's medical discoveries, either in lectures or demonstrations, became part of medical epistemology in the nineteenth century. (Peterson, 22) The medical periodical, then, also becomes part of the field's epistemology because medical journals disseminate new information, theories, discoveries and treatments in the same kind of public forum as do lectures and demonstrations. Publishing doctors also sought to establish the importance of their profession—they created discourse about the profession in addition to the discourse of the profession. Porter describes the nineteenth-century publishing situation thus: "the rooting and shooting of the medical press was a prime medium for the attainment of greater collective professional self-consciousness and identity." (19) Discourse about the profession allowed medical practitioners a unified stance from which to command, and maintain, social authority. The combination of these discourses broadens the epistemological scope: the professional periodical becomes part of the epistemology of the professions and professional education in addition to continuing to reinforce periodical epistemology which relies on reading communities within the general population.

<16>In addition to the number of medical periodicals published during the Victorian period, other sciences, which Peterson calls "auxiliary to medicine," (Peterson 29) participated in the boom of periodical literature. Sciences such as physiology, chemistry and botany used periodical literature in much the same way that medicine did: to establish their work as professional, to discuss the current and future states of their profession, and to grant their work cultural authority.

Constructing Communities, Real and Fictional

<17>Thackeray's construction of the magazine's Model Reader places each potential reader in a community. At the core of this community is intellectual fervor: the curate is not only educated himself but also educates others; the artisan is no mere welder or carpenter but a master of his trade; the school-master and mistress, along with "the young ones," engage a master-student model of learning. The contributors to the *Cornhill* seek to create and reflect several kinds of

intellectual communities. Gaskell emphasizes the social community in her novel through her uses of the fictional town of Hollingford, the novel's setting. Her constructed communities within Hollingford consist of professionals and non-professionals alike. The social characteristics of the Hollingford community are significant here because sociability is important in scientific epistemology, as Karen Boiko shows: "Be it for personal or public gain, the pursuit of natural history was [...] an inherently social activity. Gaskell demonstrates this, too, in the way she portrays the relationships between Roger Hamley, Mr. Gibson, and Lord Hollingford, and even Roger and Molly." (92) Boiko emphasizes the sociability of the pursuit of natural history; I suggest that in this novel the pursuit of science, not limited to natural history, is social. Social interaction and communication unites the practicing professionals into a collective and thereby creates an intellectual fraternity. The idea of fraternity explicitly refers to social bonds between men and inherently excludes women. Intellectual fraternity, as Gaskell constructs it, also positions Lord Hollingford, Mr. Gibson, and Roger Hamley as equals, at least in intellectual pursuits, and creates a fictional community that reflects the new model of masculinity which is beginning to take hold in real communities in Victorian England. Inclusion in such a fraternity is a key marker of status in this new model. Gaskell's microcosmic depiction of this model does not ignore the exclusion of women from it, as I will demonstrate in my reading of Roger and Molly's intellectual relationship, but does emphasize the professional lives of men.

<18>Gaskell includes in her novel two kinds of communities of professional men: those men within close geographical proximity, as evidenced by the conversations Boiko mentions and by the apprentices that both Mr. Gibson and Roger take on; and those men which are rooted in the pages of professional periodicals, as evidenced by the articles that Mr. Gibson and Roger publish. These types of communities, because they emphasize the necessity of social interaction in order to sustain intellectual communities, become an intellectual fraternity which emphasizes brotherhood and equality. They are committed to their intellectual pursuits and hold each other accountable. This is, however, only part of scientific epistemology. Participation in formal education, as both student and teacher, also plays an integral role in the pursuit of knowledge. As a surgeon, Mr. Gibson is expected to take on apprentices. Mr. Gibson generally takes on "two 'pupils,' as they were called in the genteel language of Hollingford, 'apprentices,' as they were in fact—being bound by indentures, and paying a handsome premium to learn their business." (Gaskell 33) The habit of taking on apprentices for Mr. Gibson, however, while a professional duty, makes the doctor uncomfortable: "Beyond direct professional instruction, he did not know what to do with the succession of young men, whose mission seemed to be to plague their master consciously, and to plague him unconsciously." (33) Mr. Gibson is an excellent surgeon and can mould an equally excellent surgeon, but he lacks the interpersonal skills that would make this a comfortable venture. He is inadequate at casual conversation and, therefore, every interaction with his apprentices outside of the surgery is strained. At meal times, for example, the apprentices ate with Mr. Gibson and Molly, "and were felt to be terribly in the way; Mr. Gibson not being a man who could make conversation." (33) Despite his discomfort and his "once or twice [...] declin[ing] taking a fresh pupil, in the hopes of shaking himself free from the incubus," (33) Mr. Gibson continues to take them on. The narrator relates that "his reputation as a clever surgeon had spread so rapidly that his fees which he had thought prohibitory, were willingly paid, in order that the young man might make a start of his life, with the prestige of having been a pupil of Gibson of Hollingford." (33) The narrator makes it clear

that this practice has been professionally productive for Mr. Gibson and has earned him national renown, however agonizing he finds the practice.

<19>While Mr. Gibson takes on the formal role of master with his eager apprentices, Roger's master-apprentice relationship, with Molly acting as his apprentice, is entirely informal. Roger and Molly's master-apprentice relationship, in fact, is so informal that neither Roger nor Molly recognizes their relationship as such. Gaskell's narrator, however, has understood their relationship in this way. (Blair 71-110; Oulton 84; Yeazell 194-216; Wagner 224) When Roger recognizes Molly's intellectual capacity, he begins to distract her from her emotions with his own professional pursuits. The narrator tells readers: "[Roger] endeavoured to lead her out of morbid thought into interest in other than personal things; and, naturally enough, his own objects of interest came readiest to hand." (137) He begins to distract her with scientific books and looks into a microscope. Roger acts as a mentor would act with a promising pupil and the narrator notes that "the bond between the Mentor and his Telemachus strengthened every day." (137) Their relationship continues in this fashion throughout the novel until they begin to realize their feelings for each other. Gaskell's use of this masculine mythological model puts Molly in the position of Telemachus and grants her access to the intellectual fraternity, if only in Roger's mind. Further, Roger does not consider Molly's life experiences that lead her to science as a valid claim to knowledge. It is only after she exhibits a capacity for rational thought that he begins to take seriously his role as her mentor.

<20>It is important to note that neither Roger nor Molly outwardly display any signs of romantic feeling toward one another while they are acting as mentor and pupil. The focus for much of the novel is not on their impending romantic union, but on their intellectual bond. Roger does more than merely distract Molly with scientific pursuits; he also, as Emily Blair points out, "introduces Molly to the most innovative scientific thinking of his day [...]. He lends her books by Huber, the Swiss naturalist, and by George, Baron Cuvier, the French naturalist who pioneered modern zoology, comparative anatomy, and paleontology." (96) Roger teaches Molly to observe and record the behavior of bees, which serves as their joint research project. Roger, in effect, teaches Molly as much and in the same method as Mr. Gibson teaches his own formal apprentices.

<21>Roger's methods are valuable for my study not only because of the descriptions the narrator does include but also for the descriptions she does not. Roger and Molly's "research" together only grants authority to Roger's work; any explicit reference to or privileging of Molly's lived experiences is absent. Recalling Sandra Harding's question: "Who can be subjects, agents, of socially legitimate knowledge? (Only men in the dominant races and classes?)," (109) modern scholars might immediately answer that because Roger receives the credit and because Roger is the mentor, yes, in fact, only men of the dominant races and classes can produce socially legitimate knowledge. This answer is only part of what is at issue in *Wives and Daughters*, however. Harding's charge that science has distorted the biology and lives of women (105) offers another way to read Roger and Molly's intellectual relationship. The novel is an account of Molly's experience *and* it is an account of scientific professionals, both struggling to carve out spaces in their society. Gaskell anticipates feminist standpoint epistemology by using a both/and construction rather than an either/or construction. She writes Molly's life experiences, thereby granting authority to other middle-class women's lives, particularly those to whom the *Cornhill*

is written, and also depicts the struggle and frustration of women's lives not be recognized as valid claims to knowledge. This is clearly demonstrated in the passage above wherein Roger initiates their mentor-student relationship as a means to avoid taking Molly's experiences into account.

<22>This is a pattern with the scientific men in the novel, not only in Roger. As Molly grows into womanhood, readers witness her struggling to produce socially legitimate knowledge. Molly's struggle is rooted in her "failure" to suppress her emotions to the degree to which her father does. When she first learns of her father's engagement, she stays silent until she can gather her thoughts. When she does speak, she asks her father, "So I was sent out of the house that all this might be quietly arranged in my absence?" (112) Her biting accusation offends her father and he immediately leaves Hamley Hall. Molly regrets her words and attributes them to a failure to control her emotions. I would suggest, however, that her question, no matter how hurtful to her father, is evidence of Molly employing reason. She listened as her father rattled off Hyacinth's qualifications as a wife, mother, and housekeeper; and she considered the timing of their engagement to deduce that he sent her away so that he may quietly arrange his second marriage. Deprived of the true reason she was sent away (to protect her virtue against the advances of Mr. Gibson's young apprentice Mr. Coxe), what different conclusion could she have reached? Instead of a failure of reason, Molly demonstrates in this scene that she has inherited his deductive reasoning skills and has found situations to which she can apply them. In fact, when it comes to Hyacinth Kirkpatrick, Molly exhibits far more reason than her father.

<23>While Gaskell's model readers understand that Molly is more reasonable than her father gives her credit for, Gaskell also presents a more complicated subtext: scientific professionals are working to establish themselves in Victorian Britain, but they are doing so at the expense of the women. In order to establish their own work as valid claims to knowledge, they must also establish others' claims as invalid. In this case, Mr. Gibson particularly, blatantly disregards any application of the scientific principles to domestic matters. Unlike Roger, Mr. Gibson does not recognize Molly's access to their fraternity. He, in fact, denies her access by not allowing her to read the books in his surgery. (Gaskell 34) This action further demonstrates that Gibson does not see his daughter as anything but his daughter—she is not an apprentice, either formal or informal. One can account for their different reactions to Molly with considerations for their differences in age, class, and choice of specific scientific professions. Because Roger is younger, the likelihood of his exposure to more progressive thinking about women is greater. Although their "membership" in one intellectual fraternity would theoretically make them equals, their different class positions are still at work and undermine the perceived classlessness of professional organizations. Finally, Roger, as a natural scientist, does not have to adhere to a formal apprenticeship model of men teaching men.

<24>The formal and informal apprenticeship models Gaskell depicts represent two epistemologies—one privileging formal, guided experience and one privileging lived (or authentic) experience. This latter does not mean that, for example, informal apprenticeship requires no mentor, but that the mentee's experience is privileged over the mentor's. Gaskell adds another dimension to these two commitments—independent study at high intellectual levels—by depicting a community of writing professionals. This added dimension allows Mr. Gibson

to participate in conversations with the intellectual elite in a way that mimics the education men received at Universities. Mr. Gibson is not the most prestigious kind of doctor. He is a surgeon and, in 1864, surgeons still ranked in the middle of the hierarchy of medical practitioners, between high-ranking physicians and low-ranking apothecaries. Lillian Furst explains that “Physicians, the top category, were regarded as gentlemen; apothecaries, the lowest on the scale, were considered tradesmen; surgeons were rather precariously placed between the two.” (21) Physicians, further, learned their profession at Universities, whereas surgeons learned by the formal apprenticeship model outlined above. Mr. Gibson, therefore, occupies an ambiguous position both in the professional hierarchy and in the social hierarchy.

<25>Surgeons, as a collective, had been working since the late eighteenth century to gain the kind of social status that would allow such movement. Part of such work included the volumes of literature medical practitioners produced in that period, such as Samuel Ferris’s *A General View of the Establishment of Physic as a Science in England* in 1795, J.C. Lettsom’s *Hints Designed for the Beneficence, Temperance, and Medical Science* in 1801, and S. Bard’s *A Discourse on the Importance of Medical Education* in 1812. The boom of periodical literature in the nineteenth century, though, afforded surgeons and physicians regular opportunities to defend their profession and theorize on its importance. The *Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal (BMJ)* were considered the premiere journals for the profession in England.(5) More popular, less specialised journals like the *Cornhill* published scientific and medical studies as well. According to Peterson’s claims, it was through the medium of periodical literature that medicine established its elevated cultural standing. In professional journal writing, surgeons and physicians would publish articles that established their epistemological authority—whether at University or within their professional practices. Publishing medical practitioners, like Mr. Gibson, made it clear that their knowledge was superior to the general public’s knowledge. It was a mark of individual professional success to have an article published in either the popular or specialized periodicals, and the highest success, of course, was, to be published in a specialized journal.

<26>The seemingly throw-away details Gaskell includes in her opening chapters show that the novel was aware of the professional markers of individual success. Hollingford accepts Mr. Gibson as their new doctor on the authority of their current doctor, Mr. Hall, who tells them “that [Mr. Gibson’s] professional qualifications were as high as his moral character, and that both were far above average.” (Gaskell 30) For all of their concern over his birth, the town is ready and willing to accept his professional authority based on the testimony of one medical professional whom they know and trust. In fact, it is not long before the town recognizes that Mr. Gibson is younger, healthier, and, therefore, better-suited as the town’s surgeon. The changing of the guard, though, is rooted in traditional class systems and is not finalized until Mr. Gibson is invited “to dinner at the Towers, to dine with great Sir Astley, the head of the profession!” (Gaskell 31) It is here that Mr. Gibson’s professional identity is solidified. More than keeping the company of Sir Astley Cooper, though, Mr. Gibson “began to send contributions of his own to the more scientific of the medical journals, and thus partly in receiving, partly in giving out information and accurate thought, a new zest was added to his life.” (39) This “new zest” is due in part to his infrequent but deeply intellectual conversations with Lord Hollingford and to his publication in medical journals. It is significant that it is Lord Hollingford who fosters the intellectual atmosphere because he is representative of the younger

generation of aristocrats and, by using his status with the old system to grant the new system status, he ushers in a new era that privileges learning above birth. Publishing in “the more scientific of the medical journals” would have included publications as prestigious as the *Lancet*, which is professionally impressive, to be sure, but what Gaskell emphasizes with this information is the pleasure Mr. Gibson finds in the intellectual exchange of accurate information.

<27>Roger, like Mr. Gibson, is scientifically minded and privileges rational thought over outpourings of emotion. He thrives on intellectual conversation and enjoys the company of Hollingford’s professionals, such as Lord Hollingford and Mr. Gibson. Like Mr. Gibson, he too is invited to dine at the Towers early in his career and he publishes his theories and findings in scientific journals. His publications are turning points in the novel, in fact, because of the varied reactions to them. Roger’s major publication in the novel is an article on comparative anatomy. Gaskell does not single out a journal, instead writing only that his paper was published in “some scientific periodical.” (Gaskell 297) This ambiguity allows Model Readers to determine which magazine he publishes in and encourage them to participate in the narrative. The first time readers hear of the article is when Lord Hollingford tells Molly about it while they are dancing at a charity ball at the Towers. He tells Molly that the article “had excited considerable attention, as it was intended to confute some theory of a great French physiologist, and Roger’s article proved the writer to be possessed of a most unusual amount of knowledge on the subject.” (297) Lord Hollingford then goes on to tell the same information to Mr. Gibson; and Hollingford has equally intelligent conversations with both Gibsons. Lord Hollingford’s praise of Molly as “intelligent and full of interest in all sorts of sensible things; well read, too—she was up in *Le Règne Animal*—and very pretty” (297) demonstrates that not only is Molly capable of intelligent conversation, but also that Roger is quite a capable teacher. The article proves to be the catalyst that sets Roger’s professional career in motion. Because Roger’s article supports the views of Geoffroy St. Hilaire,⁽⁶⁾ the great natural historian requests a meeting with him while he is in England. Roger’s later expedition to Africa is also due in part to the publication of this article.

<28>The professionalization of medicine, law, religion, science, and other fields requires a community of professionals. To that end, they must also be recognized as professionals by the general public, adding another layer of social interaction. The public must grant to professions, specifically medical/scientific professions the kind of authority Peterson discusses. In short, Gaskell understands that professionals exist in relation to society, whether it is a national, regional, or even professional society. Mr. Gibson, as the town’s surgeon, must interact with the town. Roger’s work, on the other hand, is more independent and does not require interaction with Hollingford townsfolk. But because he does much of his work at Hamley Hall, he is required to interact with non-scientifically minded folk in his parents and his brother, Osborne.

<29>Gaskell’s depictions of the public acceptance of both Mr. Gibson’s and Roger’s authority develops from initial resistance to aristocratic acceptance to eventual admiration and respect. Lord Hollingford’s acceptance of them is crucial to their professional success. This pattern is detailed in Mr. Gibson’s narrative and repeated in Roger’s narrative. When Mr. Gibson first arrives in Hollingford, the inhabitants of the novel’s fictional town are primarily concerned with Mr. Gibson’s personal identity; it is only after the townspeople establish, amongst themselves,

that he is a good and moral person that they ponder his professional identity at all. When Mr. Gibson is first introduced into Hollingford, the most important question is, “What is his birth?” This question signals to the ideal reader that the town is committed to oligarchic systems of reward. Hollingford, of course, draws its own conclusions based on superficial observations of his appearance and behavior but they never directly ask Mr. Gibson. Gaskell’s narrator tells readers, “No one ever in all his life knew anything more of his antecedents than the Hollingford people might have found out the first day they saw him: that he was tall, grave, rather handsome than otherwise; thin enough to be called ‘a very genteel figure’ in those days[...]; speaking with a slight Scotch accent; and, as one good lady observed, ‘so very trite in his conversation,’ by which she meant sarcastic.” (Gaskell 30) His appearance is the first thing they observe, but, in terms of his profession, his “slight Scotch accent” is the feature which the *Cornhill’s* model readers would recognize as more significant because the state of Scottish medicine was superior to that of English medicine in the period when Gaskell sets her novel. That Gaskell does not record any particular public reaction linking his accent and his profession further demonstrates the town’s adherence to old systems of rank.

<30>Importantly, Gaskell does not rely on *one* townspeople to make these observations but refers to the town collective, singling out only “one good lady” to make an authoritative judgment about his conversational skills. By allowing readers to hear testimony from the townspeople and not from Gaskell’s narrator, Gaskell allows them to create Mr. Gibson’s personal identity, thereby employing testimony as an epistemological tool. These descriptions are significant because they emphasize the importance of appearances, gossip, and hearsay in the novel. All of these details are crucial in Gaskell’s construction of men as professionals because a professional reputation, like a personal one, is based on the public’s perception of a professional’s qualifications, and is not necessarily based in the fact and reason medical professionals value so highly. This combination of personal and professional reputations is exactly what Adam Smith termed “confidence” in *The Wealth of Nations*: “When a person employs only his own stock in trade, there is no trust; and the credit which he may get from other people, depends, not upon the nature of his trade, but upon the opinion of his fortune, probity, and providence.” (101-02) Mr. Gibson’s reputation is not only a matter of how well he does his job, but also a matter of how the town perceives him as a person.

<31>While Mr. Gibson’s introduction happens in the pre-history of the novel, Roger’s professional introduction occurs in the novel proper and is, thus, depicted in greater detail. In fact, the novel is as much about Roger’s professional development as it is about Molly’s personal development. The first time readers meet Roger Hamley, it is through a portrait hanging in Hamley. The portrait, depicting both Roger and his older brother Osborne, is outdated (showing the brothers ten years younger), but the representation of the two boys, coupled with Mrs. Hamley’s characterization of her sons, guide Molly’s initial reaction to them. Even as children, Osborne’s and Roger’s personalities are clear. Osborne sits, weakly and femininely, deeply engaged in the poetry he is reading; while Roger stands, robustly and impatiently, longing to engage with the natural landscape. Mrs. Hamley recalls when the portrait was made, telling Molly that “the painter, Mr. Green, once saw Osborne reading some poetry, while Roger was trying to persuade him to come out and have a ride in the hay-cart.” (65) Her memory is significant here because it emphasizes that the boys’ respective activities were so characteristic of them, even at a young age.

<32>Gaskell's model readers understand from this depiction that Roger is already poised to survive Osborne, being the stronger, more active of the two. Mrs. Hamley, however, describes her younger son to Molly in terms of his academic interests, but fails to see his ambition, intellect, or academic potential: "[Roger] is so fond of natural history; and that takes him [...] a great deal out of doors; and when he is in, he is always reading scientific books that bear upon his pursuits. He is a good, steady fellow, though, and gives us great satisfaction, but he is not likely to have such a brilliant career as Osborne." (66) Neither the squire nor Mrs. Hamley assume that Osborne will enjoy a career writing poetry and that his career will be brilliant and deserving of his rank. What neither parent understands is that Osborne's poetry is not good enough to sustain a family (which Gaskell makes this clear in her representation of his publishing woes). When readers discover his secret marriage, Gaskell reveals that he writes poetry in the interest of making money and not in the interest of artistry. He, unlike Roger, does not wish to enhance the integrity of his profession; he wishes to exploit it in order to secure financial stability.(7)

<33>The professional nature of Roger's interests—that he is not merely collecting bugs (as those outside his field might say), but *reading* scientific works on them—suggests class-based prejudices. The initial characterization of Roger as inferior to Osborne quickly proves false, but, because Roger is his second son, Squire Hamley recognizes far later than readers and other characters that Roger is the one with a promising life and career. When the Squire learns of Roger's invitation to dine with Geoffroy and Lord Hollingford at the Towers, he assumes that, first, it is because "the election is coming on" (301) and, second, that the invitation is mislabeled and actually intended for Osborne. Osborne corrects him, saying "it is not me Lord Hollingford is inviting; it is Roger. Roger is making himself known for what he is, a first-rate fellow, [...] and he is getting himself a name; he's been writing about these new French theories and discoveries, and this foreign savant very naturally wants to make his acquaintance, and so Lord Hollingford asks him to dine." (301-302) The Squire is resistant to Osborne's explanation and addresses his sons in anger and frustration:

But it's just like your conceit, Osborne, setting yourself up to say it's your younger brother they're asking, and not you; I tell you it's you. [...] What business had you to go writing about the French, Roger? I should have thought you were too sensible to take any notice of their fancies and theories; but if it is you they've asked, I'll not have you going and meeting these foreigners. (302)

Squire Hamley's demand is only temporary and he rescinds it the following day, but his reasons for initially forbidding Roger are significant. Squire Hamley does not oppose Roger's professional development but does think that Osborne, as the oldest son, is more deserving of dinner invitation. The Squire is so committed to birth-based systems that a merit-based invitation does not occur to him. Hollingford clearly values meritocratic systems of and he invites Roger because the latter earned his invitation by publishing his own scientific theories. Squire Hamley eventually recognizes that the old ways of thinking, paying respect and giving rewards and occupations (like poetry) to men based on their birth and rank, are outdated and being replaced by merit-based respect and reward.

Conclusion

<34>In *Wives and Daughters*, Gaskell moves towards resolving the major issue facing the development of the epistemology of the periodical press: that it is a “borrowed” epistemology. The periodical press can incorporate any and all epistemological commitments because of the varied fields represented within its pages. Gaskell anticipates aspects of feminist epistemology by blending epistemologies that give equal credit to scientific and domestic claims to knowledge. Mr. Gibson and Roger Hamley represent resistance from the scientific professional community to accepting women’s lived experiences as socially legitimate knowledge, but Roger does recognize Molly’s intellectual capacity for accepted claims to knowledge. Gaskell’s juxtaposition of professional men and Molly’s *Bildungsroman* suggests to model readers that professional development and female development are not incompatible but actually run similar paths.

<35>Gaskell exploits the social aspects of already existing epistemological commitments by depicting, at length, apprentice-master relationships and the professional necessity of participating in periodical publication. Furthermore, she constructs in the pages of her novel various communities that also reflect the reading community constructed in the pages of the *Cornhill*. Her emphasis does not privilege a particular epistemology, but does begin to create spaces from which to understand the plural epistemologies at work. Gaskell’s depiction of communities of professional men helps to establish that the periodical press is dependent upon its own sociability in order to disseminate knowledge. In her portrayal of a new form of masculinity, embodied in Roger Hamley, Gaskell represents to her readers a new social system hinging on the accessibility of new kinds of knowledge. In doing so, she creates a human understanding of the professional class by infusing her novel with periodicals. Formal education and dissemination of that education into periodicals for public or popular consumption seem to be equally valid epistemologies.

Endnotes

(1) Serial novels were not only published in parts, but were also frequently written in parts. Serial novels were, therefore, under greater threat of public interruption than single volume novels.(^)

(2) Frederick Greenwood and G.H. Lewes were appointed joint editors after Thackeray resigned the post in 1862. Greenwood was appointed sole editor in 1864, with Edward Cook as assistant editor.(^)

(3) For a discussion of the magazine’s female readership, see Phegley.(^)

(4) For Social Darwinism see D’Albertis; Schor.(^)

(5) This hierarchy of medical journals applies only to England in the nineteenth century: see e.g. “Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal”, *DNCJ*.^(^)

(6) For a reading of Gaskell’s political motivations for aligning Roger with Geoffroy, see Boiko 92-95.^(^)

(7) Although Osborne is the first son and will inherit Hamley Hall, the Hamleys have only a modest, and diminishing, income.^(^)

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