

## Is *Mary Barton* an Industrial Novel?

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### I. Introduction

“John Barton” was the original title’, confesses Elizabeth Gaskell to Mary Greg, the sister-in-law of W. R. Greg, the most eminent detractor of *Mary Barton* (1848), ‘Round the character of John Barton all the others formed themselves; he was my hero, *the* person with whom all my sympathies went, with whom I tried to identify myself at the time [of writing]’.<sup>1</sup> A confession of a similar intention is made in a letter to Julia Lamont, her friend.<sup>2</sup> In her Preface to this novel, moreover, Gaskell declares that her compassion towards Manchester labourers motivated her writing it.

Critics’ opinions about its protagonist differ depending on their responses to these authorial avowals. Some favour John Barton, the epitome of Manchester’s poverty-stricken workers; others the eponymous heroine Mary Barton, his daughter.<sup>3</sup>

These interpretations, advanced through their own individual approaches, are all sound and enlightening. Regrettably, however, none of the critics I have consulted take a formal approach to determining the novel’s protagonist. The understanding of a novel will be greatly promoted if its structure is seen clearly alongside its theme, because theme and structure are usually intricately interwoven, as themes are conveyed only through structural elements, and as structure invariably mirrors the

author's intentions. Accordingly, if her intentions regarding her protagonist, hidden in the novel's structure, were explained, we might be able to end the debate as to who her central character is.

In the following argument, we are trying to demonstrate that Mary Barton and her love are central to the design of the novel, and that her father's tragedy constitutes only one of its two main plots. This discussion depends on the result of the investigations made of the frequency of the main characters' appearances. We are also trying to show that the author's own remarks on this fiction before and after its publication are misleading. Our analysis, if successfully conducted, will affect the reading of *Mary Barton* as an industrial novel.

## II. Characters' Activities

To clarify the novel's formal scheme, I have constructed as precise a chronology as possible by checking calendar facts and figures scattered over the whole text.<sup>4</sup> As scene progress is not always in parallel with chapter progress, some chapters are divided into appropriate numbers of scenes, to which Scene Numbers are allocated. In addition, the length of each scene is specified by the number of pages for the later analysis of scene proportions. Emphasis is placed on the cells corresponding to Mary's adventurous six-days to establish Jem's innocence by colouring them grey since this period plays a significant part in the structure of this fiction. The subsequent explanation will be better understood if 'Table 1: Chronology and Scenes in *Mary Barton*' is referred to whenever necessary, together with 'Figure 1: Main Characters in *Mary Barton*'.

Table 1: Chronology and Scenes in *Mary Barton*

Chapter	Time Inferred			Scene				Brief Summary of Each Scene	
	Year	Month	Day	Num-ber	open	end	pages		
1	1834	5	one day	1	1	11	10	At Green Hey Fields, John Barton tells George Wilson about missing Esther and pitiless masters.	
2				2	11	18	7.5	A tea-party at the Bartons	
3				3	18	22	4	the death of Mrs Barton	
3	1837			4	22	28	6	Mary is apprenticed to Mrs Simmonds.	
4				5	28	30	1	Another year passes on.	
4	1838	win-ter	one day	6	30	40	11	Mary's first meeting with Margaret Jennings at old Alice's dwelling	
5				7	40	45	5.5	Job Leigh appears.	
5	1839	2	one evening	8	45	48	2	Mary and Margaret become close friends.	
6				9	48	62	15	Jem saves his father from the fire at Carsons' mill.	
6				10	63	74	11.5	the plight of the starving Davenports	
6	3	one evening	next day	11	74	82	8	George Wilson calls on John Carson to have an infirmary order for Ben Davenport.	
			a few days later	12	82	83	0.5	Ben's funeral	
7	3 or 4	one day	13	83	85	2	Mrs Davenport's recovery		
			14	85	90	5	the death of the Wilson twins; Jem's confession of love to Mary		
			15	90	92	3	Mary prefers Harry Carson to Jem as her marriage partner.		
8	4	one Sunday	16	93	96	3	Jem's fruitless visit to Mary		
			spring	17	96	98	2.5	Barton is appointed a Manchester delegate to the Chartist petition.	
			5	one night	18	98	102	4	Neighbours come to Barton's house with their demands on the Parliament.
				next morning	19	102	104	2	Barton's departure for London; Sally Leadbitter appears.
			7	one evening	20	104	111	7	George Wilson's sudden death; Margaret tells Mary her debut as a singer.
next evening	21	111		129	18	Barton tells Job, Margaret, and Mary his bitter experiences in London.			
9			22	130	136	6.5	Barton becomes opium-addicted.		
10	1840	1	one afternoon	23	136	142	6.5	Mary's visit to Jane Wilson	
				2	11	24	142	145	3

11		2		25	146	148	3	Barton's search for Esther	
			one evening	26	148	154	5.5	Soon after rejecting Jem's proposal, Mary discovers he is the man she truly loves.	
			next day	27	154	155	0.5	Mary's avoidance of Harry	
			evening	28	155	162	7.5	Harry's vicious intentions revealed	
12				29	162	164	2	Harry and Jem's contrastive approaches to Mary	
			4	30	164	169	4.5	Mary confides her love for Jem to Margaret.	
13			5	31	169	172	4	Mary meets Will at Jane Wilson's house.	
14			9	32	173	183	11	Will entertains his new friends with his tales.	
15				33	184	186	2.5	Esther's release	
			10	34	186	197	11	Jem's interview with Esther	
16				35	197	204	8	mutual distrust between masters and workers	
			14	36	204	206	1.5	Mary notices Will's love for Margaret.	
17				15	37	206	211	5.5	the scuffle between Harry and Jem
			16 Tue	38	211	217	5.5	Harry draws a caricature of worker delegates.	
18				39	217	224	7	An assassin is chosen.	
			18 Thu	40	224	230	6.5	Will's farewell visit to Mary	
19				41	230	236	6	Barton's assassination of Harry	
			19 Fri	42	237	250	13	Harry's body is brought home	
20				43	250	251	1	Carson swears vengeance on the murderer.	
			20 Sat	44	251	255	4.5	Mary calls at Jane Wilson's house to see decaying Alice.	
21				45	255	258	3	Mary hears Harry's death from Sally.	
			21 Sun	46	258	265	6.5	a disguised policeman's interview with Jane	
22				47	265	272	7.5	Mary hears from Jane that her son was arrested on suspicion of murdering Harry.	
			22 Mon	48	272	273	1	Mary dreams of her mother.	
23				49	273	285	12	Esther's visit to Mary	
			23 Tue	50	285	290	5.5	The scrap of paper her aunt has brought reveals to Mary that the murderer is her father.	
24				51	290	298	7.5	Mary's efforts to prove Jem's alibi begin.	
			24 Wed	52	298	312	14	Mary receives a subpoena.	
25				53	312	317	4.5	Mary finds that Jane also has received a subpoena; Alice becomes unconscious.	
			25 Thu	54	317	319	2.5	Mary tells Jane her plan of rescuing Jem.	
26				55	319	322	3	Mary's anxiety about Jane's strength	
			26 Fri	56	323	332	9	Jane's determination to go to the trial	
27				57	332	336	4	Mary discovers in Liverpool that Will has already left his lodging.	
			27 Sat	58	336	345	9	Mary sits in a boat to catch the John Cropper.	

28	1840	3		59	345	351	6.5	Mary's message is heard by Will.			
				60	351	353	2.5	Ben Sturgis takes Mary home.			
29			22 Mon	61	354	357	4	Mr Bridgenorth, Jem's attorney, inclines to think him innocent.			
				62	357	360	2.5	Job goes to Will's lodging to find Mary's action of the day.			
				30	63	360	365	5.5	Job Legh deceives Jane to assure her of her son's safety.		
					31	64	366	371	5.5	Mary spends the night at the Sturgises's home.	
32			23 Tue	65		371	371	0.5	Mary's sleepless night		
				66	372	394	22	Jem wins the verdict of 'Not Guilty'.			
33					67	394	395	2	Mary becomes delirious.		
					24	68	395	399	3	The Wilsons return home to see dying Alice.	
								69	399	400	1.5
		28 Sun			70	400	405	5	Alice's funeral		
					71	405	408	3.5	John Barton reappears.		
34				29	72	409	412	4	Jem nurses Mary at the Sturgises's house.		
				one day	73	412	413	1	Mary gradually recovers.		
				5 [?]	74	413	419	6	Jem and Mary return home.		
					7	75	419	421	1.5	Barton's agony	
				35				76	421	424	3
8		77	424					426	2.5	Jem discloses to Mary his plan of emigration.	
		78	426					427	1	Jane Wilson gives Mary a hearty welcome.	
79		427	433					5.5	Barton's confession of his guilt		
80		433	438					5	Carson reads the Bible.		
36					9	81	438	439	1	Barton dies in Carson's arms.	
						82	439	442	2.5	Jem hides the truth from his mother for Mary's sake.	
					10	83	442	444	3	Jem's talk with his former master	
84		444	447	2.5		Jane's condolatory visit to Mary.					
37					85	447	458	11	Carson asks Job and Jem about the details of the murder.		
38						86	458	459	1	The emigration plan is arranged.	
	one evening				87	459	460	1.5	Mary and Jem talk about Esther.		
	next day				88	460	463	2.5	the death of Esther		
	1842 or 43 [?]	late autumn		89	463	464	1	Mary and Jem live a happy life in Canada.			
total pages							463				

Page references are to the World's Classics edition.

'Table 2: Character's Activities in *Mary Barton*' is a device to display who is active in each of the scenes which Table 1 provides. If a character appears in a certain scene, his or her cell is painted deep grey. If not, it is blank. If he or she is only referred to by others including the narrator, it is coloured light grey. In a scene in which a character dies, the relevant cell is crossed.

For example, Chapter 1, which relates the afternoon excursion of the Bartons and the Wilsons to Green Heys Fields, features all members of both families, so that their cells are shaded deep grey. On the other hand, Esther and Alice Wilson are only spoken of in the conversation between John Barton and George Wilson;<sup>5</sup> thus, their cells are coloured light grey. No mention is made of other main characters in this chapter; therefore, their cells are blank. Because the first two pages (83-85) of Chapter 7, or Scene 13, give only the narrator's explanation of Mrs Davenport's recovery, and her brief allusions to the Wilsons, Alice, Margaret, Mr and Mrs Barton, and Mary's flirtation with Harry Carson, these characters' cells are all tinted light grey. The light grey cells which sometimes appear in Mrs Barton's column after Scene 3 show that she is still mentioned even after her death.

Table 2 also helps to show the progress of an episode in the plot: for instance, Mary's first reunion with Jem since her rejection of his proposal on an evening in February 1840 (Chapter 11: Scene 26) takes place during the assizes of 23 March 1840 (Chapter 32: Scene 66), inasmuch as Scene 66 is the first scene after Scene 26 for which their cells are both imbued with deep grey. Likewise, Table 2 shows that

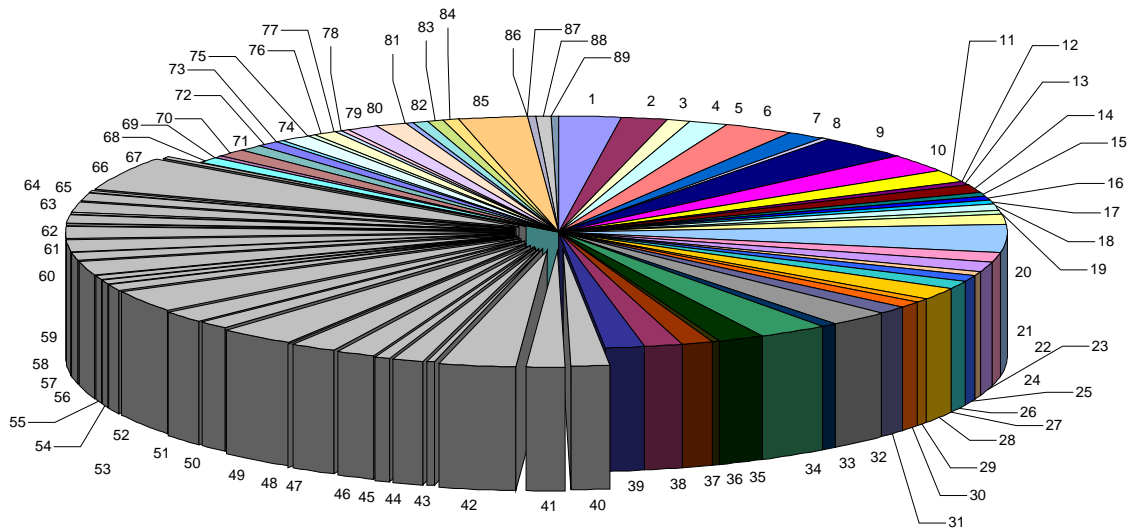


Part I		1840		3		subtotal 1						
Part II	17	1840	3	18 Thu	40	1.4						
	18				41	1.3						
					42	2.8						
	19				19 Fri	43	0.2					
						44	1					
						45	0.6					
						46	1.4					
						47	1.6					
	20				20 Sat	48	0.2					
						49	2.6					
						50	1.2					
						51	1.6					
						52	3					
						53	1					
	21				21 Sun	54	0.5					
						55	0.6					
						56	1.9					
22	22 Mon	57	0.9									
		58	1.9									
		59	1.4									
		60	0.5									
		61	0.9									
		62	0.5									
		63	1.2									
		64	1.2									
23	23 Tue	65	0.1									
		66	4.8									
		67	0.4									
active				21								
referred				5	4	1	2					
subtotal 2				26	4	3	3	0				
Part III	33	1842 or 43 [?]	4	24	68	0.6						
					69	0.3						
					70	1.1						
	28			Sun	71	0.8						
					72	0.9						
	34			one day 5[?]	73	0.2						
					74	1.3						
	35			8	75	0.3						
					76	0.6						
					77	0.5						
					78	0.2						
					79	1.2						
					80	1.1						
					81	0.2						
					82	0.5						
	36			9	83	0.6						
					84	0.5						
85		2.4										
37	10	86	0.2									
		87	0.3									
		88	0.5									
38	one evening next day	89	0.2									
		90	0.2									
active				16								
referred				6	1	1	2	0				
subtotal 3				22	1	3	2	0				
Active Scenes				58	3	5	6	25				
Referred Scenes				24	11	11	18	22				
Grand Total				82	14	16	24	47				
Main Characters				MB	Mrs B	Esther	GW	JW				
				AW	Jem	Will	MJ	JL				
				Mrs D	SL	HC	JC	JB				
				99.2	82	14	16	24				
				3	1	3	2	13				
				22	1	3	2	44				
				58	3	5	6	22				
				24	11	11	18	22				
				82	14	16	24	47				
				MB	Mrs B	Esther	GW	JW				
				AW	Jem	Will	MJ	JL				
				Mrs D	SL	HC	JC	JB				



Mary's meeting with her father on 5 April (Chapter 34: Scene 74) comes about 18 days after his disappearance on 18 March (Chapter 17: Scene 40). Nevertheless, the most interesting result demonstrated by Table 2 is that it is not *John* Barton but *Mary* Barton who is most active throughout the novel,<sup>6</sup> and that Jem Wilson is one of the three major characters.<sup>7</sup> This is distinctly shown by the numbers in the 'Grand Total' box at the bottom of Table 2. They also bring into sharp relief the existence of the two plots focusing on John and Mary, and Jem's deep involvement in them. Before moving on to a closer examination of the novel's double-plot composition, a few remarks should be made concerning 'Figure 2: Scene Percentage in *Mary Barton*'.

Figure 2: Scene Percentage in *Mary Barton*



This 3-D pie chart pictures the percentage of each of the scenes which are provided in Table 2. Figure 2 throws light on two significant features of the novel's structure. First, more than one third of the total

number of pages is assigned to Chapters 17-33, or Scenes 40-67, which portray John Barton's murder of Harry Carson, Mary's frantic efforts to prove Jem's innocence, his trial, and her collapse.<sup>8</sup> That 37 percent of the story is spent narrating only six days from 18 to 23 March 1840, although the book as it stands covers eight or nine years in total—this fact is curious enough to make us suspect that it conceals an important key to understanding of the author's purpose.<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 also suggests that the novel is constructed in three parts: Introduction (Chapters 1-16: Scenes 1-39), Development (Chapters 17-33: Scenes 40-67), and Finale (Chapters 33-38: Scenes 68-89). The percentage of the text afforded to each part is roughly 48%, 37%, and 15%.

It has long been highlighted that *Mary Barton* has two main plots: John Barton's murder plot and Mary Barton's romance plot.<sup>10</sup> A brief summary of each would be as follows:

JOHN'S PLOT: rich people's lack of sympathy for the poor—John Barton's murder of Harry Carson—Jem Wilson's trial—John Barton's confession—John Carson's forgiveness—John Barton's death;

MARY'S PLOT: Jem's love for Mary—her association with Harry—her recognition of her love for Jem—the murder of Harry—her efforts to prove Jem's innocence—his trial—her marriage to him.

The first plot's apparently sudden disappearance after John Barton's act of violence has been criticized especially by those who favour John Barton as the novel's central character.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, this duality is eulo-

gized by other critics, particularly feminists, who recognize Mary's *raison d'être* in the double-plot framework.<sup>12</sup>

The opinions of both groups are insightful enough to aid our comprehension of the novel. The only drawback, however, is that they pay little attention to the two points Figure 2 advances: Mary's constant appearance in the first half (or, as I put it, Part I) as well as in the second (Parts II and III), and the novel's construction in three parts, not two. As the 'subtotal 1' box in Table 2 shows, Mary is involved in the story (34 scenes) as closely as her father is (36 scenes); furthermore, the 'active' box reveals that she appears more often (21 scenes) than he does (15 scenes) in Part I. These facts remind us that, however ardently critics may underline the graphic representation of John Barton's increasing indignation against the industrial masters in Part I, Mary's love for two young men is also depicted as one of its two main streams. Almost all critics are ambiguous about the existence of the third part.<sup>13</sup> As Table 2 and Figure 2 nonetheless display, there is a definite distinction between the contents of Part II and Part III. Mary's six-day ordeal ends when Part III begins, as her father reappears to complete his own plot.

Table 2 demonstrates John Barton's virtual disappearance from the drama and his daughter's monopolization of the narrative (as represented in the 'active' box for Part II, he appears only in one scene while Mary appears in twenty one). This is why Mary, 'a decidedly minor figure, a rather negligible personality'<sup>14</sup> in the first part, appears suddenly to emerge from the book 'with increased stature'<sup>15</sup> in the second. In effect, however, John Barton's plot does not vanish altogether but is incorpo-

rated into his daughter's plot: Mary must prove her lover's innocence without disclosing her father's guilt.

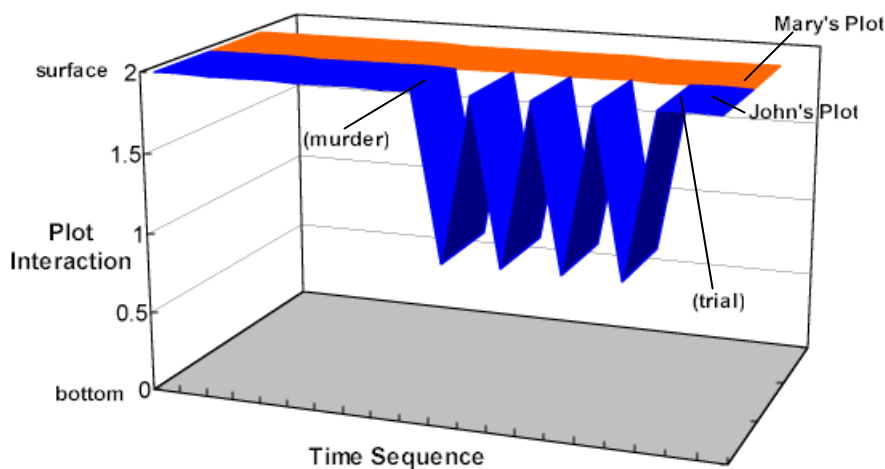
The plots' interactions are prompted by the killing of Harry Carson, because the enemy of the weavers is, in reality, Jem Wilson's rival for Mary's heart. The suspicion of murder is cast upon Jem, who had his scuffle with Harry witnessed by a constable three days before the latter's death. The wadding paper Esther brings from the scene of the crime serves to convince Mary of the true criminal; thus begins her tough task of proving Jem's innocence without sacrificing her father, a 'situation fit for the highest Greek tragedy'.<sup>16</sup> The close interlacing of the two strands weakens after the trial scene in which she fulfils her mission with complete success.<sup>17</sup>

John Barton's assassination of the mill-owner's son lies at the heart of Mary's endeavour to save her lover's life which simultaneously involves her attempt to keep her father's guilt secret; in other words, his industrial plot helps his daughter's romance plot flow, and vice versa. This arrangement is pivotal to advance both plots effectively: to end hers in marriage, his in death. This principal design underlies the author's interlinking of the two plots. It is for this reason that she allocated two fifths of the total page count to the narration of 'Mary's great test and the novel's climax'.<sup>18</sup> The author's intention to emphasize the significance of Part II is also hinted at in the fact that Chapter 32, centring on Jem's trial scene, 'a great showpiece in the novel',<sup>19</sup> is the longest chapter in the book.<sup>20</sup>

This idea of the interweaving of storylines is shown in 'Figure 3: Im-

age of Plot Flow'. In the first part, the two plots are introduced in parallel. In the middle section, their threads are cleverly condensed into Mary's dilemma. In the final part, the love between Mary and Jem ripens into marriage, whereas John Barton's confession and death bring about John Carson's understanding of the workers; thus end both plots. Some

Figure 3: Image of Plot Flow



critics evaluate Mary's plot as 'less arresting, less strikingly original',<sup>21</sup> '[dealing] with secondary characters',<sup>22</sup> and 'of secondary importance'.<sup>23</sup> Hopkins disparages it: 'Although the title directs that Mary should bear the responsibility of the central figure, she does not step forward in this role until the latter part of the story'.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Shelston finds a positive and deeper meaning in her storyline: 'Mary's story is integral from the start'.<sup>25</sup> So does Colby: 'Throughout the novel Mary is portrayed as *acting*';<sup>26</sup> his remark is upheld by Fryckstedt<sup>27</sup> and Uglow.<sup>28</sup>

Our scrutiny of the novel's structure reveals that Mary is present

throughout the novel, and that, even if the focus appears to shift in the middle from John's conflict to Mary's romance, it is because he temporarily hides himself from the readers' eyes, not because she makes a sudden appearance in the limelight. 'Whatever Gaskell's later feelings about the centrality of John Barton,' Easson writes, 'she did accept the title *Mary Barton* and Mary's is the dominant consciousness, through which much of the action is mediated'.<sup>29</sup> Our structural analysis endorses his assertion.

### III. Conclusion

To elucidate the structure of *Mary Barton*, we first concentrated on the details of dates and times in the novel to construct an accurate chronology. This demonstrated that the story opened in May 1834 and ended in the autumn of 1842 or 1843. Next, we examined the main characters' appearances in each scene the chronology provided. 'Table 2: Characters' Activities in *Mary Barton*' showed that it was Mary Barton not John Barton who was most active in the story, and that Jem Wilson was one of the three leading characters. 'Figure 2: Scene Percentage in *Mary Barton*' displayed that Gaskell used thirty-seven percent of her total number of pages to describe Mary's six-days of desperate efforts to prove Jem's alibi. Figure 2 also showed that the story consisted of three parts: introduction, development, and finale. According to Table 2, Mary and John were the most active characters in the introductory part; Mary in the development part; and, Mary and Jem in the finale. This three-part structure faithfully reflects the content of each part, and the author's design

for weaving the two plots together.

Since the date of its publication, *Mary Barton* has been considered as one of those so-called 'industrial', 'social', or 'Condition of England' novels. The most feasible reasons for this interpretation would be: the author's announcement in the Preface that she has written her book to give some utterance to the Manchester factory-workers' agony of suffering for which the rich have shown little sympathy;<sup>30</sup> the early reviewers' condemnations of her account of industrial employers' lack of compassion for their employees; and, her naive response to these reviews, especially W. R. Greg's. The Manchester magnates' refutations of the charges which Gaskell's industrial plot levelled against them was vented by some of the early reviewers.<sup>31</sup> One of the most prominent critics among them was W. R. Greg, the essayist and industrialist, who allocated most of his essay<sup>32</sup> to a defence of the employers rather than to any literary appreciation of the work.<sup>33</sup>

It would not be unfair to say these early judgements decided the direction of *Mary Barton's* reception. The structural analysis of the book, however, shows that the true protagonist is not John Barton but his daughter. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the main purpose of the novel is not to spotlight the plight of John Barton in order to stress the industrial masters' mercilessness, but to tell a love story, against the background of the everyday life of Manchester's poverty-stricken people, with John and Mary as their representatives.<sup>34</sup>

We must recall that Gaskell's confession that John Barton was her hero, as quoted at the beginning of this paper, was made in response to

W. R. Greg's biased reading of *Mary Barton*—he could not but be a bitter critic especially because of the bankruptcy of his brother Samuel, cotton-spinner and philanthropist: this adversity befell him months before the appearance of this fiction, and due to his workers' strike.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Gaskell's comments to Miss Lamont were made when she was upset by people's disapproval of John Barton.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the author's Preface to the novel was unwillingly 'concocted'<sup>37</sup> at her publisher's request a few weeks before its publication.<sup>38</sup>

'Despite Gaskell's claim after publication that "John Barton" was the original title,' claims Easson, 'the original names ['A Manchester Love Story' and 'A Tale of Manchester Life'] suggest that Mary's love was, along with Manchester life, always central to her design'.<sup>39</sup> Our analysis has produced an outcome which confirms Easson's remarks. John Barton's tragedy should be interpreted as only one of two main plots in this pageant of Manchester's poor people. Otherwise, *Mary Barton* would turn out to be a failure, because we should have to admit that the author's intention to write about John Barton was not properly reflected in its structure.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p. 74. At the beginning of this often-quoted letter, Gaskell mistakenly conjectures that the writer of the critical remarks is Samuel Greg, her corespondent's husband and W. R. Greg's brother (*Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Angus Easson (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 163; Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 160; A. W. Ward, Introduction, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, by Elizabeth Gaskell, Vol. 1 of *The Works of Mrs Gaskell*, 8 vols (New York: AMS Press, 1972), p. lxx).

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Comments in favour of John are found in W. A. Craik (*Elizabeth Gaskell and the English Provincial Novel* (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 35), Monica Correa Fryckstedt (*Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth: A Challenge to Christian England* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), p. 98, p.102), Margaret Ganz (*Elizabeth Gaskell: The Artist in Conflict* (New York: Twayne, 1969), p. 63), Winifred Gérin (*Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 87-88), A. B Hopkins (*Elizabeth Gaskell: Her Life and Work* (London: John Lehmann, 1952), pp. 76-77), Margaret Lane (Introduction, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, by Elizabeth Gaskell (London: Dent, 1977), p. vii), Arthur Pollard (*Mrs Gaskell: Novelist and Biographer* (Cambridge,

MA: Harvard UP, 1967), pp. 109-10), Thomas E. Recchio ('The Problem of Form in Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton*: A Study of Mythic Patterning in Realistic Fiction', *Studies in English Literature: English Number* (1985), p. 30), Aina Rubenius (*The Woman Question in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works* (Upsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950), p. 230), John Geoffrey Sharps (*Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention: A Study of Her Non-Biographic Works* (Frontwell, Sussex: Linden Press, 1970), p. 57, p. 59, pp. 67-68), Kathleen Tillotson (*Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 211), Anna Unsworth (*Elizabeth Gaskell: An Independent Woman* (London: Minerva Press, 1996), pp. 42-43), and Edgar Wright (*Mrs Gaskell: The Basis for Reassessment* (London: OUP, 1965) p. 31, p. 35, p. 233; Introduction, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, by Elizabeth Gaskell (Oxford: OUP, 1987), p. xv). Meanwhile, those for Mary in Tessa Brodetsky (*Elizabeth Gaskell* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986) p. 16), Robin B. Colby ("Some Appointed Work to Do": *Women and Vocation in the Fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 36, p. 40, pp. 44-45), Deirdre d'Albertis (*Dissembling Fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997) p. 50), Angus Easson (*Elizabeth Gaskell* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 73, p. 78; Introduction, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (Krumlin, Halifax: Ryburn Publishing, 1993), pp. 15-16), Coral Lansbury (*Elizabeth Gaskell* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), p. 17), Hilary M. Schor (*Scheherezade in the Marketplace: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Novel*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 18, p. 38), Alan Shelston (Introduction, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, by Elizabeth Gaskell (New York: Dent, 1996), p. xxiv), Uglow (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 200), and Ward (Introduction, p. lxxiv).

<sup>4</sup> For detailed explanation of the chronology construction process, see my article: 'Mary Barton's Chronology'. *Gaskell Studies*, Vol. 9 (1999), pp. 1-13.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, ed. Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 4-8, p. 10. Subsequent references to this novel are to this edition.

<sup>6</sup> This aspect is also noted by Craik: '[T]he novel as it stands spends less time on him [John] than on Mary' (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 32).

<sup>7</sup> Thus, Donald D. Stone's assertion that Alice Wilson is the third significant character (*The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 149) contradicts the result of our examination. Jem is regarded by some readers as the novel's hero (J. G. Sharps, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, p. 57).

<sup>8</sup> That the death of Harry Carson marks the beginning of the second part is agreed by Easson (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 79; Introduction, p. 11), Catherine Gallagher (*The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction 1832-1867* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 67), Tillotson (*Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, p. 213), and Edgar Wright (Introduction, p. xvii).

<sup>9</sup> The second part's baffling length is also noted by Colby: 'This sec-

tion is given a significant amount of space in the novel, spanning several chapters. It is clear that Gaskell viewed these events as a crucial expression of Mary's identity' ("Some Appointed Work to Do", p. 41), and by Edgar Wright (*Mrs Gaskell*, p. 233).

<sup>10</sup> Particularly by Chris Baldick (*In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 84), Craik (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 5, p. 31), d'Albertis (*Dissembling Fictions*, p. 50), Kate Flint (*Elizabeth Gaskell, Writers and Their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1995), p. 15, p. 17), Gallagher (*The Industrial Reformation*, p. 67, pp. 75-78, pp. 81-82, p. 280), Ganz (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 69, p. 73), Stephen Gill (Introduction, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, by Elizabeth Gaskell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 21-22), Hopkins (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 76), Lansbury (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 10, p. 17), Recchio ('The Problem of Form', p. 20, p. 29), Schor (*Scheherezade in the Marketplace*, pp. 14-15, p. 17, p. 20, p. 33, pp. 37-38), Shelston (Introduction, p. xxvi), Patsy Stoneman (*Elizabeth Gaskell* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1987), p. 84), Tillotson (*Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, pp. 213-14), Uglow (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 206), Michael Wheeler (*The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 46, pp. 59-60; *English Fiction of the Victorian Period 1830-1890*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (London: Longman, 1994), p. 40), Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 100-01), and Edgar Wright (Introduction, p. xiv, pp. xvii-xviii).

<sup>11</sup> Craik (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 5) and Ganz (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 69) assert that two plots are too much for a single work, while Ganz (*Elizabeth Gaskell* p. 73), Gill (Introduction, pp. 20-21), Hopkins (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, pp. 76-77), Tillotson (*Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, p. 213), and Williams (*Culture and Society*, pp. 100-02) lament that the change of emphasis halfway through the novel represents a flaw in its theme and shape.

<sup>12</sup> Lansbury argues that John Barton's decline offers a vivid contrast to his daughter's rise (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 17); Schor (*Scheherezade in the Marketplace*, p. 15) and Stoneman (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 79) observe that Mary's whole story unfolds the process of her acquiring the ability to speak for her own self.

<sup>13</sup> Exceptions are, if any, Fryckstedt ('John Barton is absent from the moment he murders Henry Carson until he returns at the end' (*Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth*, p. 98)), Gallagher ('The concluding chapters of *Mary Barton* return us to the story of John' (*The Industrial Reformation*, p. 83)), and Schor ('[T]he workers' plot [is] revealed again at the novel's end' (*Scheherezade in the Marketplace*, p. 16)).

<sup>14</sup> Hopkins, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Lane, Introduction, p. viii.

<sup>16</sup> Maria Edgeworth qtd. in Easson, *Critical Heritage*, p. 90. Unmitigated praise is bestowed upon the author's portrayal of Mary's breathtaking expedition especially by Ellis H. Chadwick (*Mrs Gaskell: Haunts, Homes, and Stories* (London: Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, 1913), p. 166)

and Edgar Wright (*Mrs Gaskell*, p. 268).

<sup>17</sup> The plot interrelation in Part II is discussed by Craik (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 31, p. 35), Gallagher (*The Industrial Reformation*, p. 83), Ganz (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 69), Hopkins (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 76), E. Holly Pike (*Family and Society in the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* (New York: Peter Lang, 1955), p. 41), Schor (*Scheherezade in the Marketplace*, p. 40), and Wheeler (*English Fiction*, p. 40). Besides, its occurrence even in Parts I and III is suggested by Craik (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 35), Gallagher (*The Industrial Reformation*, p. 82), Shelston (Introduction, p. xxvi), Uglow (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 206), Wheeler (*The Art of Illusion*, p. 59), and Edgar Wright (Introduction, p. xiv).

<sup>18</sup> Craik, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Easson, Introduction, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Strictly speaking, Chapter 5 is the longest, but it is composed of two scenes.

<sup>21</sup> Craik, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Gerald Dewitt Sanders, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (1929; New York: Russell & Russell, 1971), p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> J. G. Sharps, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Introduction, p. xxiv.

<sup>26</sup> "Some Appointed Work to Do", p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> *Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth*, p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 200.

<sup>29</sup> *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 78. He is championed by Brodetsky: '[T]he change of title was reasonable, and it was obviously considered a more attractive one' (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 16).

<sup>30</sup> *MB*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>31</sup> Item Nos. 16, 17, 19, and 23 in Easson's *Critical Heritage*.

<sup>32</sup> Item No. 23 of Easson's *Critical Heritage*.

<sup>33</sup> He is deprecated by J. G. Sharps: 'Greg is guilty misreading in regarding John Barton's attitude as that of the average workman' (*Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, p. 65).

<sup>34</sup> Tillotson's assertion that Manchester life is the keystone which gives the novel the unity (*Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, p. 210, p. 214) is convincing enough; so are Williams's and Edgar Wright's: 'The really impressive thing about the book is the intensity of the effort to record, in its own terms, the feel of everyday life in the working-class homes' (*Culture and Society*, p. 99); '[C]onstantly present as an essential setting for the characters and the complicated plot is Manchester' (*Mrs Gaskell*, p. 32). Opinions which support these are found in Easson (*Critical Heritage*, p. 14; Introduction, p. 12), Hopkins (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 71, p. 73), Lansbury (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 12), Shelston (Introduction, p. xxii), Sheila M. Smith (*The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 84), Jane Spencer (*Elizabeth Gaskell*, *Women Writers* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 34, p. 40), and Edgar Wright (Introduction, p. xvii).

<sup>35</sup> *Letters*, p. 120; Valentine Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against:*

*Dissent in the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 135.

<sup>36</sup> *Letters*, p. 70.

<sup>37</sup> *Letters*, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Gérin, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 74; Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 191.

<sup>39</sup> *Elizabeth Gaskell*, p. 73.



affinity with Mary Barton. Yet it incited two writers to compose novels refuting Mrs Trollope's picture of mills and millowners: Frederic Montagu and Elizabeth Stone. Of these, Montagu's *Mary Ashley, the Factory Girl: Or Facts upon Factories* (1839), a deservedly forgotten novel of whose existence few critics seem to be aware, bears little resemblance to Mary Barton. An industrial novel-I hope to show why Mancunians should have been misled in 1848. Mrs Stone was the first Manchester resident to write a novel about the manufacturing districts. In William Langshawe, almost entirely neglected by scholars, with her first-hand knowledge of Manchester society, she conveys a vivid picture of the rising. Mary Barton is the very first novel written by Elizabeth Gaskell. Living in the industrial city of Manchester and having first hand witnessed the poor living condition and suffering of the working class, Gaskell was inspired to write a novel bringing to light their poverty and suffering. In *Mary Barton*, Gaskell gives a true and heartfelt account on the lives of these working class men and women. The suffering they undergo due to want of the basic needs for human survival such as food, Mary Barton is the very first novel written by Elizabeth Gaskell. Living in the industrial city of Manchester