In the past few decades, Elizabeth Gaskell has become a figure of growing importance in the field of Victorian literary studies. She produced work of great variety and scope in the course of a highly successful writing career that lasted for about twenty years from the mid-1840s to her unexpected death in 1865. The essays in this Companion draw on recent advances in biographical and bibliographical studies of Gaskell and cover the range of her impressive and varied output as a writer of novels, biography, short stories, and letters. The volume, which features well-known scholars in the field of Gaskell studies, focuses throughout on her narrative versatility and her literary responses to the social, cultural, and intellectual transformations of her time. This Companion will be invaluable for students and scholars of Victorian literature, and includes a chronology and guide to further reading.

JILL L. MATUS is Professor of English at the University of Toronto.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
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NANCY S. WEYANT is Associate Professor/coordinator of reference services at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. Her publications on Gaskell include *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Sources 1976–1991* and *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Annotated Guide to English Language Sources, 1992–2001*. She posts annual bibliographic supplements on her webpage (http:\library.bloomu.edu\weyant\).
I would like first to thank the contributors to this volume, not only for their expertise but also for the considerable time and effort each has devoted to this project. It has been a pleasure to work with such well-organized and responsive colleagues. We are all indebted to the able and painstaking work of my research assistant at the University of Toronto, Natalie Rose, who brought our references into conformity and helped to prepare the “Guide to further reading.” My thanks go also to our editors Linda Bree and Maartje Scheltens at Cambridge University Press. Linda’s wisdom and professional experience in producing many excellent Companions have made her an invaluable resource at every stage of the project, not least its conception. I like to think of the beginning of this project as being our conversation entitled “What about Gaskell?” at the launch in Haworth of The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës. I would like, too, to thank the outside readers of the proposal, many of whose savvy suggestions have been incorporated. My gratitude goes finally to the friends and colleagues who read sections of the volume and offered advice and support along the way.
CHRONOLOGY

NANCY S. WEYANT

1797  December 1  William Stevenson (WS) marries Elizabeth Holland (EHS), daughter of Samuel and Mary Holland. The Holland family plays a significant role in the intellectual, cultural and social development of Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson (ECS).

1798  November 27  John Stevenson (JS), first child of WS and EHS, born.

1806  Founding of the Portico Library, a subscription library for which William Gaskell (WG) served as chairman from 1849 until his death in 1884. The Portico was an important resource for both WG and Elizabeth Gaskell.

1810  September 29  ECS born.

1811  October 29  (?)  EHS dies, her sister Hannah Lumb (née Holland) in attendance.

November 1 or 2  Marianne Lumb writes to her mother Hannah, proposing that ECS live with them.

November (early)  ECS taken to live with the Lumbs in Knutsford.

1812  March 31  Marianne Lumb dies at the age of twenty-one.

1814  April 11  WS remarries (Catherine Thompson).

1815  Corn Laws passed. A tariff on imported grains drives up prices with devastating consequences for the poor.

1816  March 19  JS writes the first extant letter to his sister before sailing for Bombay. Vividly describes activities in Berwick and his excitement about going to sea. Reports he will be sending her two books. Over the next eight years, JS is an attentive older brother, corresponding about his experiences in India, pleading for her to write with news from home, and generally encouraging his younger sister in her studies.

1821  September ECS begins formal studies at the Miss Byerlys’ school at Barford House, later relocated to Avonbank, Stratford-upon-Avon.
Chronology

1824 Founding of the Mechanics’ Institute in Manchester. WG would serve on its board and teach English literature at the Institute.

June 21 Repeal of the Combination Acts of 1799–1800 that outlawed trade unions and labour strikes.

1825 JS writes to ECS and Aunt Lumb, proposing that ECS keep a diary to provide her with material for letters to him.

June 15 Date on ECS’s first “music book” in which she transcribes music, lyrics, and dance notes.

1826 June ECS leaves Avonbank, ending her formal education.

Winter ECS in London with WS and her stepmother. WS tutors her in Latin, Italian, and French.

1827 July 2 WS writes the only extant letter to his daughter in Knutsford, forwarding a letter from JS. Encourages her to write to her brother and to continue her studies, especially Latin and Italian. Suggests she keep a journal if she holidays with the Holland family in Wales.

1828 July 30 JS writes to ECS, complimenting her on her “rescue story” of Captain Barton, noting “it would almost make the foundation of a novel.” This tale has not survived.

August 3 WG appointed assistant minister to John Gooch Robberds at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester.

August 15 JS writes to ECS, suggesting he may stay in India. Informs her that Smith, Elder rejected his manuscript and that his hopes of being an author are ended.

Autumn (?) JS is either lost at sea or disappears in India. Although ECS scarcely refers to her brother in her letters, the lost and/or returning male character motif is repeated in her fiction.

1829 March 20 WS has a stroke, dying two days later. ECS is with him when he dies.

Late autumn ECS visits William Turner and daughter Ann in Newcastle upon Tyne. While there, participates in the active social, cultural, and intellectual world of her relatives. Possible modeling of portrait bust of ECS by David Dunbar. Turner, a Unitarian minister who had married into the Holland family, is considered in part the source for the character of Thurston Benson in Ruth.

1830 Autumn ECS travels to Edinburgh with Ann Turner, staying through the early months of 1831.

1831 Ebenezer Elliott publishes Corn Law Rhymes, verses condemning the exorbitant tax on bread.

Chronology

June Earliest extant letter from ECS, written to Anne Burnett. ECS/ECG (Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell) was a prolific correspondent. In spite of large-scale destruction of her letters by her daughters, almost 950 survived to be published.

June 18, August 31, October 20 Series of three lengthy letters written by ECS to Harriet Carr that display the pattern of wit, humor, chatty gossip, and observational skills which characterize her correspondence. They include numerous references to authors she read, her awareness of current events, her early interest in popular music and her sensitivity to acquaintances in distress.

September–October ECS travels between Knutsford, Liverpool, Sandlebridge, and Manchester with Ann Turner, staying with Reverend and Mrs. Robberds in Manchester, where it is assumed that ECS meets WG.

1832 Cholera epidemic spreads dramatically.
Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth publishes *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester.*

March Engagement of ECS to WG.
April Publication of Thomas Carlyle’s essay on biography, quoted in *Mary Barton*.

June 4 First Reform Bill passed.
June ECS in Edinburgh, where W. J. Thompson paints her portrait in miniature.

August 30 Marriage of ECS (henceforward ECG) to WG at St. John’s parish church, Knutsford. After a month of travel in Wales, the couple take up residence in Manchester.

1833 July ECG gives birth to a stillborn daughter (later eulogized in her sonnet “On Visiting the Grave of My Stillborn Little Girl”).

1834 September 12 Marianne Gaskell born.

1835 March 10 ECG starts *My Diary*, documenting her daughter’s development, her views of herself and WG as parents, the value she assigns to her role as a mother, her faith in God, and (later) the dynamics between Marianne and her sister, Margaret (Meta) Emily.

1836 ECG and WG co-author “Sketches among the Poor,” published in *Blackwood’s Magazine* (January 1837).

1837 February 5 Margaret (Meta) Emily Gaskell born.
March 8 Aunt Lumb has a stroke. ECG and daughters go to Knutsford to be with her. She dies on May 1.
June 20 Death of King William IV. Accession of Queen Victoria.
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<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>May ECG first writes to William and Mary Howitt, lovingly describing the town in which she lived as a child. September 23 Formation of Anti-Corn Law League. November 15 WG’s sister Elizabeth marries Charles Holland, further cementing a life-long close relationship between ECG and Elizabeth Gaskell Holland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>WG anonymously publishes <em>Temperance Rhymes</em>. June 14 Petition of the National Convention presented by working men’s delegates to the House of Commons (portrayed in MB). Rejected one month later. December 28 Carlyle’s <em>Chartism</em> published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Economic recession results in high unemployment, debilitating poverty, and suffering in Manchester. (Early) Publication of William Howitt’s <em>Visits to Remarkable Places</em> containing a contribution on Clopton Hall by “a lady” (ECG). April Publication of Howitt’s <em>The Rural Life of England</em> with ECG’s “Notes on Cheshire Customs.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>July ECG and WG travel to Belgium and Germany. Germany had a strong influence on ECG’s short-story writing in both theme and structure. Makes important connections.</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>May 2 Chartists present second petition to the House of Commons. Hearing denied. August Labour unrest in Manchester, including strikes, mob gatherings and riots. October 7 Florence (Flossy) Elizabeth Gaskell born. December (late) Winkworth sisters meet the Gaskells.</td>
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<td>1843</td>
<td>July Month-long Gaskell family holiday at Gibraltar Farm, Silverdale, Morecambe Bay. Includes visits with the Winkworths.</td>
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<td>1844</td>
<td>October 23 William (Willie) Gaskell born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>June 5, 12, 19 Publication dates of each “era” of “Libbie Marsh’s Three Eras” in <em>Howitt’s Journal (HJ)</em>. ECG uses pseudonym Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.</td>
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Chronology

September 4 “The Sexton’s Hero” appears in *HJ* under same pseudonym.

October 16 Charlotte Brontë’s (CB) *Jane Eyre* published.

1848


March–July Letters from ECG to Edward Chapman regarding *MB*, including ECG’s wish to have the novel published anonymously.

October 18 *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* published.

October 21–November 30 Positive reviews of *MB*, praising it for its truthful portrayal of the working class, its handling of dialect, its adherence to truths, and its sympathetic tone. Extensive speculation regarding author’s identity.

November 11 ECG replies to a letter from Carlyle praising *MB*, acknowledging she is the author.

December 1 First American edition of *MB* published.

1849

April–May ECG “lionized” in London, meeting and socializing with Edward Chapman, her publisher, and a broad range of prominent people – Eliza (Tottie) Fox, the Dickenses, the Howitts, the Carlyles, etc.

July “The Last Generation in England” appears in *Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art*.


November (late) ECG asks Tottie Fox for help in identifying the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*.

1850

January 8 ECG solicits Charles Dickens’s advice about assisting Pasley (a seduced girl whom she has been visiting in prison). Draws on Pasley for title character of *Ruth*.

February “Martha Preston” published in *Sartain’s Union Magazine* (later reworked and published as “Half a Lifetime Ago” in *Household Words [HW]*)

February–March ECG and Dickens negotiate revisions to “Lizzie Leigh,” the first part of which is published March 27 in the first issue of *HW*. Parts 2 and 3 follow on April 6 and April 13.

June Gaskell family moves to Plymouth Grove in Manchester. ECG meets Charles Eliot Norton, a Boston Unitarian. They later become close friends and regular correspondents.

August 29 ECG invited by Lady Kay-Shuttleworth to Briery Close to meet CB. Stays for three days.

September (late) ECG returns to Manchester after an absence of some four months with only intermittent returns home.

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<td>1852</td>
<td>January–March Series of compassionate initiatives on behalf of an elderly impoverished Knutsford author and the ailing prison reformer Thomas Wright. January–April “Bessy’s Troubles at Home” published in <em>Sunday School Penny Magazine</em>. October ECG writes “The Old Nurse’s Story” for <em>HW</em>. Dickens, unhappy with ending, pushes for revisions, finally publishing it in the Christmas issue as submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>ECG begins writing <em>North and South</em> (<em>NS</em>). Mid-January ECG travels to Paris with Marianne. March 27 Crimean War begins, lasting until February 28, 1856. Mid-late April Series of letters from CB regarding her engagement to Marianne.</td>
</tr>
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Chronology

Arthur Bell Nicholls and a May visit to Plymouth Grove.
April 1–August 12 Dickens’s Hard Times published in HW.
May 1–4 CB at Plymouth Grove. Expresses reservations about impending marriage.
May 3 Fifth edition of MB issued with WG’s lectures on the Lancashire dialect.
May 20 “Company Manners” published in HW.
June 1–13 ECG in London, staying with Emily (Winkworth) and William Shaen. Numerous dinner parties, visits to theater, and cultural events.
June 29 CB marries Arthur Bell Nicholls.
June–August Letters document conflicts between ECG and Dickens regarding NS: its title, her failure to make recommended cuts and revisions, length of sections, etc.
August (late) ECG meets Florence Nightingale.
August (late) – September 13 ECG in Isle of Man, focusing on her writing.

1855

September 2 First installment of NS published in HW. Serialized version concludes in January, 1855.
September–December Reports from Crimea record military failures, significant casualties, and rampant disease.
Mid-to-late October ECG stays at Lea Hurst, the Nightingales’ summer home, focusing on writing NS.

ECG writes a series of letters addressing her dissatisfaction with the pace of NS and its rushed ending.
February 14 Harper’s publishes two-volume version of NS.
Mid-February–April 4 ECG in Paris with Meta. Letters record social and cultural activities and document breadth of reading.
March 26 Revised and expanded NS published by Chapman and Hall.
March 31 CB dies.
April 3 ECG returns to England, devastated by her friend’s death.
April-May Mixed reviews of NS. ECG begins gathering information about CB with hope of writing a memoir.
June 16 Patrick Brontë asks ECG to write a brief life of CB.
June–December ECG purposefully gathers information to write a truthful life of CB. Contacts John Greenwood, Ellen Nussey, Mary Taylor, makes multiple visits to Haworth, and travels to Glasgow with Marianne.
August 25 “An Accursed Race” appears in HW.
September Lizzie Leigh and Other Tales published by Chapman and Hall.
October 6, 13, and 20 “Half a Lifetime Ago” serialized in HW.
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<td>1856</td>
<td>ECG intensely researching and writing <em>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</em> (LCB). December 13, 20, 27 “The Poor Clare” serialized in <em>HW</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>February 1 <em>Adam Bede</em> published. ECG laudatory, recommending it to many. March 19 <em>Round the Sofa and Other Tales</em> published. In addition to previously published stories, it includes “The Half Brothers”; second edition published May 7. October 8, 15, 22 Serialization of <em>Lois the Witch</em> in <em>All the Year Round</em> (ATYR). November 2–12 ECG in Whitby with Meta and Julia, researching setting for <em>Sylvia’s Lovers</em> (SL). December 30 “The Ghost in the Garden Room” (later “The Crooked Branch”) published in ATYR.</td>
</tr>
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1860
February “Curious If True” published in Cornhill Magazine.
April 8–January 1863 ECG writing SL while continuing background historical research.
July–mid-August ECG in Heidelberg with Flossy and Julia. They make trips to Cologne and Mannheim.

1861
January 5, 12, 19 “The Grey Woman” serialized in ATYR.
March 14 Lois the Witch and Other Tales published by Tauchnitz.
May 17–June 3 ECG travels to France, visiting sites associated with Madame de Sévigné.

1863
February 20 SL published. Second edition follows on April 1.
March (early) ECG in Paris with Julia. When joined by Meta and Flossy, they visit Versailles and Avignon before continuing to Italy for ten weeks, going to Rome, Assisi, Florence, and Venice.
Mid-March Flossy engaged to Charles Crompton.
August 29 ECG writes to Mrs. Sarah Gould Shaw, mother of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw who was killed leading a black regiment in American Civil War. Later writes a memorializing obituary for Macmillan’s Magazine.
September 8 Flossy marries Charles Crompton.
November–February 1864 Cousin Phillis serialized in Cornhill Magazine.

1864
April–June “French Life” serialized in Fraser’s Magazine.
June 11 Book version of Cousin Phillis published by Harper’s.
August Monthly serialization of Wives and Daughters (WD) begins in Cornhill Magazine. ECG travels to Switzerland with daughters.
Autumn ECG ill for three months.
December ECG tells George Smith she is setting aside money to purchase a house.

1865
March 10 ECG travels to Paris, staying with Madame Mohl until April 20.
August 11–September 5 “A Parson’s Holiday” serialized in five parts in PMM.
August 23 ECG tells George Smith about purchase of a house (The Lawn) and need for a tenant.
September ECG speculates on the relationship between her poor health and the drains in Plymouth Grove.

October ECG travels to Dieppe.

October 21 The Grey Woman and Other Tales published.

November 12 ECG dies suddenly and unexpectedly.

1866 February 2 First American edition of WD published with ending provided by Meta. First English edition follows ten days later.
ABBREVIATIONS

Except in the case of the following abbreviations, full details of works referred to are given after each chapter in the notes.


